

The Night of Qadr:

A Night Better than A Thousand Months!

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Many Scholars have tried to translate the Qur'anic term Lailatul Qadr in many ways. They called it the Night of Power, the Night of Decrees, the Night of Majesty, the Night of Destiny, the Night of Almightyness and the Grand Night etc., etc., However, the real sense of the word Qadr could not be conveyed.

The Arabic word Qadr used in the Suratul Qadr (chapter of Qadr) in the Qur'an consists of several shades of meaning. There is no single word in English, which can be used as an alternative of Qadr. Therefore, let us call it the Night of Qadr as it is.

Human life is a limited span of time. If one amongst us lives for more than 80 years, it is said that he lived a full life.

Lailatul Qadr is a tiny capsule of time. It is a night apparently just like any other night but every moment of this night is so rewarding for a devoted and dedicated believer that Qur'an calls it better than a thousand months. How much better it is, has not been revealed. God alone knows how much better it is. So the value of this small capsule of time is beyond our estimation. For all practical purposes, it can be said that it must be invaluable for those who spend it in whole-hearted worship of their Lord. Hence, from the point of view of Sawab (reward) it is a full life within our lives. It holds a promise of reward for the devotees and lovers of God, which is beyond our comprehension.

The Last book of our Lord enlightens us in this way:

"Verily, We have sent it down (The Qur'an) in the Night of Al-Qadr.

And what will make you know (O Muhammad!) what the night of Al-Qadr is?

The Night of Al-Qadr is better than a thousand months (i.e. Worshiping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months.)

Therein descend the Angles and the Ruh (Gabriel) by Allah's permission with all Decrees.

Peace! (All that night there is Peace and Goodness from Allah to His believing slaves) until the appearance of dawn!"

(Surah 97- Al-Qadr translation by Dr. Taqiuddin Al Hilali and Dr. Muhsin Khan)

The Night of Qadr or Lailatul Qadr is the most sacred of nights in Islam and it has a very special significance to the Mahdavia Community. The importance of this night cannot be overemphasized as Qur'an, the Book of Allah, was sent down in this month and in this night. Also, the Holy Book contains a Surah named as Suratul Qadr in which, how invaluable is the night has been disclosed.

A study of Qur'an clearly shows the importance of Ibadah - worship at night, and when it comes to the question of such a great night, one can understand how important and rewarding it would be.

There are several traditions (Ahadith) explaining the importance of this night from the point of view of worship and its rewards.

Our beloved Prophet Mohammed^{PBUH} said that:

"One who believed in Allah and performed Ibadah (prayer) in this night with the clear purpose of Sawab, Allah forgives his/her sins." (Bukhari)

In another Hadith, Prophet^{PBUH} said that:

"One who finds this night and offers prayers, his past sins would be forgiven."
(Kanzul – Ummaal)

Even though this night is so rewarding yet neither Qur'an nor any Hadith clearly indicates the exact date of this night in the year. The Ummah is divided on this issue. Prophet^{PBUH} asked the Ummah to search for this night in the odd nights of Ramadan. Different Islamic scholars viewed this differently. But some people believe that this night rotates in the whole year and it is not necessary to be only in Ramadan. Ibn Abbas^{RZ} said it could be the 27th of Ramadan. His logic being that the word "Lailat-ul-Qadr" consist of nine Arabic letters and it occurred three times in that Surah. Therefore, it could be the 27th. So also, the great saint of the fifth century Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani^{RA} believed that this Night is the 27th Night of Ramazan.

However, these are all assumptions and opinions of great Islamic scholars and no one could definitely say as to when this night occurs.

In a tradition recorded in Saheeh Al- Bukhari, a companion of Prophet^{PBUH}, Samith bin Ubadah^{RZ} reported that:

"The Prophet of Allah came out to inform us about the date of "Lailatul Qadr". (He found that) two Muslims were quarreling with each other. The Prophet^{PBUH} said that I had come out to inform you about the Qadr Night. However, on account of the quarreling of so and so the identity of the Night has been Rufiat - lifted or taken away. Perhaps it may be better for you, to try to find it on the 29th, 27th and 25th (nights of Ramadan)."

This tradition shows that the Prophet of Allah was himself aware of the night of Lailatul Qadr. However, its definite identity was held back on account of quarrel between two Muslims. The Prophet^{PBUH} was fully aware of the exact date that is why he especially gathered men and women on the 27th of Ramazan and prayed until late in the night. This was a clear indication of the night.

Abu Zar Gifari^{RZ} narrated the events, as an eyewitness, in a well-known tradition, recorded in Sihah (sound collections of Ahadith) namely, Sunan Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasai and Ibn Maja, as follows:

"When three nights of Ramadan were left i.e., on the 27th night, he (the Prophet^{PBUH}) gathered all the members of his household and women, and all the people and prayed with us so long that we feared that we might miss "Falah". When Abu Zar Gifari^{RZ} was asked what was "Falah", he said, "Suhoor"- breakfast before dawn. Then the Prophet^{PBUH} did not

lead us in prayers in the remaining nights of Ramadan."

It was in 908 Hijri, when the Caliph of Allah, the Promised Mehdi^{PBUH} was in Kaha when Allah revealed to him that the 27th of Ramadan is the Night of Qadr (Lailatul Qadr). Allah also ordained him to offer two Rak'ahs of prayer as a thanksgiving for this bounty given to him. Thus, Imam Mehdi^{PBUH} offered this prayer after midnight along with his members of family and all the members of his Dairah (Community Circle) following the practice of the Prophet^{PBUH}. It is for this invaluable blessing of the Almighty Allah that every Mahdavi performs Dhikrullah during the whole night and offers this two Rak'ahs of prayer on this night as an obligatory thanksgiving, after Isha prayer in Congregation.

Thus Mahdavia community believes with certainty that the exact date of this night is the 27th night of Ramadan because we believe in our beloved Imam Hazrat Syed Mohammad as the Caliph of Allah, the Promised Mehdi and the Savior of the Ummah.

Keeping in mind the importance of this night, we should not waste even a single moment. Each and every moment of this night is precious. So we should spend it as Allah commanded us in the Qur'an, that:

"Remember Me, I will remember you...." (2:152)

"Lo! Worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity, but verily remembrance of Allah is the greatest. And Allah knoweth what ye do." (29:45)

Since we believe that Dikhurallah (remembrance of Allah) is Fard, we should spend every moment of this night in the continuous remembrance of Allah and offer the Isha prayer after midnight followed by two rak'ahs of Lailatul Qadr (Dugana-e-Lailatul Qadr) in congregation, the two Rak'ahs of Sunnah and then three Rak'ahs of Witr Wajib again in congregation.

Some people, who do not believe in our Imam, the Promised Mahdi^{SAS}, raise objections. They argue that how, in addition to the five obligatory daily prayers a sixth prayer can be made obligatory- Farz? This objection stems from their disbelief in our Imam as a Caliph of God. We believe our Imam to be Caliph of God and Free from Sin – Masoom Anil Khata as he has been mentioned in the Ahadith – traditions of the last of all Prophets^{SAS}. We believe that our Imam was commanded by God to offer two Rak'ahs in thanksgiving. As such, he asked his followers to offer this prayer. Hence, we believe that, the Divine Command of Allah made this prayer obligatory.

There are two aspects of this Command. One is worship in this night and prayer being obligatory. The other is the 27th night of Ramazan being the Lailatul Qadr.

As for the first aspect, let us refer to the Qur'an and the Sunnah to find out if they are in favor of this or not.

When Qur'an describes great rewards for something its intrinsic meaning is to perform that thing. If Qur'an describes fearful punishment for a thing it implies that it is forbidding from doing that thing.

God has specifically asserted the tremendous grace as well as the enormous value of this night in Suratul Qadr as follows:

1) The Qur'an was sent down in this night.

The Qur'an is the sacred word of God. Hence, the night in which it was sent down is also sacred. The Qur'an being the last of His Books, it is the greatest bounty of God for the mankind in general and for the Muslims in particular. So also, this sacred night, which is better than thousand months is a great bounty.

2) God questions the greatest of his Prophets

"What will make you understand what (a great thing) is Lailatul Qadr?"

The question does not mean that His Prophet^{PBUH} could not appreciate the greatness of this night. The interrogative form of the sentence has been adopted only to call full attention of the listener and to emphasize the significance of the answer coming next. Thus the question divinely raised has been answered divinely.

3) The huge value of the night has been described as the night of Qadr which is better than a thousand months.

Please note that it is better than how many months more is not mentioned. That means that the value of the night is limitless.

4) Then it is revealed that the angels and the Spirit (Arch Angle Gabriel) descend in this night by the permission of their Lord with all Decrees. And there is Peace and Goodness from Allah to His believing slaves until the appearance of dawn!

The emphatic description of the grace of this night is indeed an stressed persuasion to worship in this night. When God persuades His humble slaves with promise of great rewards it becomes a Textually Implied Command of the Lord. If it is not so, the whole praise of the night would be meaningless. Hence, it is a Command to worship Him and establish prayer in the night. Of course the Command is in the form of a stressed persuasion.

There is a very large number of sound traditions (Ahadith) in which the Prophet^{SAS} has educated his Ummah about the immense rewards, this great night holds for them. He has in fact instructed the Ummah as to how this night should be spent. Take for instance a well known tradition which reads as follows:

The Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace said that:

"Whoever worships in the Night of Qadr with Faith in Allah and seeking rewards, all his previous sins would be forgiven." (Sahih Bukhari 1773)

In another wording of the above tradition reads as under:

"A person who witnessed the Night of Qadr and worships in it, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Kanzul Ummal)

The above traditions guide us to understand the purport of Qur'anic verses noted above. In the light of the traditions we conclude:

1) That the divine praise of the glorious distinction of the night is meant to persuade the believers for worship in the said night.

2) That the stressed persuasion contains an implied Command for the believers to spend the night worshipping.

3) The traditions of the Prophet^{SAS}, make the so called "Implied Command" an open and express command.

4) The verses and the traditions put together demand from a believer that he should not waste the night by sleeping or by neglect of God.

5) The verses and the traditions together demand of a believer that he should keep himself awake in the night for "Qiamul Lail" – nightly worship including Salah – Prayers. The word "Qiyam" means standing, getting up, performance, carrying out, accomplishment etc.

Hence, the words of the Prophet^{SAS} –

"Man Qama Fi Lailatil Qadr" denote "Qiyamul Lail" only.

6) The Book of God says that the Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months, without saying how many months more!

One thousand months make 83 years and four months. Normally it is equal to a full human life. The glad tidings given by the Prophet^{SAS} to a person who spends the night of Qadr with Faith and seeking rewards is that all his past sins will be forgiven. So, even a person who has already lived for say about one hundred years and on account of his whole hearted devotion, if his worship and prayer in the night of Qadr was accepted by his Merciful Lord at the age of 100 years, for the first time, he can be assured of a new life, free from all stains of sins. Such is the invaluable bounty, the night of Qadr holds for a believer. In fact there are many more bounties described by the Prophet^{SAS} in several of his traditions (Ahadith).

The Practice of the Prophet^{SAS}, in this night is also very inspiring and illustrious. Abu Zar Gifiri's tradition has already been quoted. Some important points from this tradition reported in Mishkatul Masabeeh are stated below:

Abu Zar Gifari^{RZ} says that:

"When seven nights of the month of Ramazan were left i.e. on the 23rd night, the Prophet^{SAS} came out and led prayer up to the one third of the night. When six nights of Ramazan remained i.e. on the 24th night, he did not say prayer with us. When five nights of Ramadan were left i.e. on the 25th night, he came out and led us in prayer up to the half of the night. I submitted to the Prophet^{SAS}, O Messenger of God I wished you could continue leading the prayer for a longer time. He said that when a person, follows the Imam in a prayer, his prayer would be counted as his prayer for the whole night. When there were four nights left, the Prophet^{SAS} did not say the prayer with us. When three nights in Ramazan were left i.e. on the 27th night of Ramazan, he called for his family members and women and gathered the people and led us in Prayer till late in the night. We feared that we might miss the Falah (Narrators asked Hazrath Abu Zar^{RZ} what is Falah? He said Suhoor- Break fast taken before dawn) Then said Abu Zar^{RZ} that the Prophet did not say prayer with us after the said night i.e., the 27th night of Ramazan." (Mishkatul Masabeeh)

The above Hadith shows that the prayer on the 27th was given a distinct preference over the prayers on the 23rd and the 25th night. The Prophet called men and women including his own family members to join the congregation (Jama'at) of this Salat – Prayers. The preparation and the care taken for the congregation of this prayer is unique and clearly indicates the tremendous value of the 27th night and its prayer.

Here it may be questioned if the prayer in this night was so important why the Prophet did not declare it as Farz – Obligatory? The answer is that the Prophet did not declare the date of this night because God did not will. This is evident from the tradition in Saheeh Muslim narrated by Abu Sayeed Khudri^{RZ}.

"....The Prophet^{SAS}, came out of his tent and said: ' O people I was informed about the Night of Qadr and I had come out to inform you about it. Then came two people quarreling and there was devil with them! So, I forgot it. Therefore, look out for it in the last ten days of Ramazan. Try to search it on the 29th, 27th, and 25th of Ramazan...."

In another tradition Abu Sayeed Khudri^{RZ} narrated that:

"The Prophet^{SAS} said that I had seen the Night of Qadr but I forgot it or I was made to forget it." (Abridged) (Kitabus Sawm Saheeh Muslim)

This shows that a definite date was not declared and this happened by the will of God, Consequently, the prayer in the night was not declared as Farz – Obligatory! However, gathering men and women of the believers and offering prayer in Congregation remained as Sunnah of the Prophet^{SAS}. It was the same Sunnah which was revived by Imam Mehdi, the Promised^{SAS}.

Since the night of Qadr was not fixed, difference of opinion among the companions of the prophet^{SAS} took place. This continued in the subsequent generations. The leaders of Fiqh – Islamic Jurisprudence also differed from each other. While Imam Malik^{RA} maintains that it could fall in any night of the last ten days of Ramazan, Imam Shafei^{RA} says that it is the 21st night. According to a narrative Imam Azam Abu Hanifa^{RA} fixed it on the 27th. Most of the followers of Hanafia School of Fiqh observe it as the night of Qadr.

The numerous dates fixed by the various Scholars of the Ummah were based upon their own Qiyas or Analogical Reasoning. They were so honest and pious that they never said that this has been inspired to us from God. Moreover, they were not Ma'soom Anil Khata – divinely protected from error.

On the other hand, the Prophet^{SAS} informed the Ummah about the Promised Mahdi^{SAS} that:

"He is my descendant, he will follow in my foot- steps and he will not err."

Every Caliph of God is free from sin and he gets knowledge from his Lord.

Our Imam Hazrat Syed Muhammad, the Promised Mehdi^{AS} said that:

"I am instructed by God every day without any medium."

At Kaha, on the 27th night of Ramazan he was commanded by Allah, the Most High, "tonight is the night of Qadr, perform two Rak'at – Cycles of Prayer with your companions in thanksgiving. Hazarat Mahdi^{AS} came out of his room and called for all men and women of his Dayerah and told them about the Divine Command. The Imam himself led the prayers in Congregation (Jama'at). Later, he used to offer this Prayer of the night of Qadr in Congregation in large number of his followers at Farah, Afghanistan.

According to a Naqal – narrative in Insaf Namah, our Imam, the Promised Mahdi^{SAS} said that:

"Allah Commanded me, 'O Syed Muhammad, these two Raka'at (cycles of prayer) are Farz – Obligatory for you and the group of your followers.'"

We, the loving, loyal and humble followers of our divinely guided, Caliph of God, believe that what our Imam said is nothing but truth.

If some misguided people raise an objection to our belief and practice and say that: "this is the 6th obligatory prayer," we should patiently and politely tell them that this is not the sixth prayer. The prayer Witr which we offer every night after the Isha Prayer regularly, is held as Sunnah by Imam Malik^{RA}, Imam Shafai^{RA} and Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal^{RA}, Imam Azam Abu Hanifa designated it as Wajib. His two prominent disciples Imam Abu Yousuf^{RA} and Imam Muhammad^{RA} both hold it as a Sunnah only. Unlike all the great jurists named above Imam Zufar^{RA} holds Witr prayer as Farz or obligatory. Please note that this prayer is not mentioned in the Qur'an, nor it has any textually implied Command as in the case of the prayer in the night of Qadr. The Prophet^{SAS} did not call it Farz or wajib. Even some narrations related to Imam Azam also differ. Nevertheless, the Witr Prayer is regularly performed every night as a Wajib. We Mehdavis too offer this prayer as a Wajib because the Qiyas or analogical reasoning was based on the constant practice of the Law Giver i.e. the Prophet^{SAS}. If a prayer which is not even mentioned in the Qur'an and which was not called by the Prophet^{SAS} as Wajib can be treated as Wajib, why a prayer Commanded by God to his Vice-regent and which is in Taqleed – emulation of the Prayer of the Prophet on the 27th night of Ramzan should not be held as Farz? (For details please see Kuhl-ul Jawahir by Moulana Syed Nusrat^{RA}, Hyderabad).

If there is any objection to our Ihtimam or preparations for the Salat – prayer of the Night of Qadr like taking a bath, wearing new or clean clothes, applying scent etc. we may politely draw their attention to the following two verses of the Book of God:

Inna Anzalnahu Fi Lailatil Qadr

Verily we have sent it (the Qur'an) down in the night of Qadr. (97:1)

"O mankind! There has come to you a good advise from your Lord (i.e. the Qur'an, ordering all that is good, and forbidding all that is evil), and a healing for that (disease of ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy and differences etc.) in your breasts – a guidance and a mercy (explaining lawful and unlawful things etc.) for the believers.

Say: 'In the Bounty of Allah, and His Mercy (i.e. Islam and the Qur'an) – therein let them rejoice.' That is better than what (the wealth) they amass.'" (10:57-58)
(Translation by Dr. Taqi'ud Din Al- Hilali and Dr. Md. Muhsin Khan).

So we Mehdavis thank our Lord and rejoice by offering the prayer in the Night of Qadr. In obedience to our Lord's Command: "Fabi Zalika Fal Yafrahu- So in that they should rejoice."

We express our joy, congratulate and embrace each other. We are the only people who offer it in large congregations after the mid night, throughout the world. (Please refer to a very informative paper on this subject by Mr. Muhammad Namdar Khan Bozai, Pakistan, 'Chhatti Farz Namaz Kahan Say Aaie?' in Urdu.)

May Allah accept our Thanksgiving Prayer of the Night of Qadr and our Zikrullah throughout the night and make us follow His Book and Sunnah of His beloved Prophet^{SAS} and the teachings of His beloved Caliph Imam Mahdi^{AS}, Ameen!