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Lesson 16: Exegesis Of Surah Qadr

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّآ أَنزَلۡنَٰهُ فِى لَيۡلَةِ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ﴿١﴾ وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ﴿٢﴾ لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡ أَلۡفِ شَهۡرٍ﴿٣﴾ تَنَزَّلُ ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذۡنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمۡرٍ﴿٤﴾ سَلَٰمٌ هِىَ حَتَّىٰ مَطۡلَعِ ٱلۡفَجۡرِ﴿٥﴾

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate - Behold, We sent it down on the Night of Power; And what shall teach thee what is the Night of Power? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months; in it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, upon every command. Peace it is, till the rising of dawn. (***Al Qadr 97:1-5***).

The term "Qadr – قدر" in the Holy Qur'an is used to mean a number of things:

A) Status and position, such as in the following Ayah:

{وَمَا قَدَرُوا ٱللَّـهَ حَقَّ قَدۡرِهِۦٓ}

They measured not God with His true measure.)***Al Ana'm 6:91***).

B) Estimation and decree, such as in the following Ayah:

{جِئۡتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَـٰمُوسَىٰ}

Then camest hither (***to this sacred place***), ***Moses, according to a decree.*** (***Ta Ha 20:40***).

C) Constriction and difficulty, such as in the following Ayah:

{وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ}

As for him whose provision is stinted to him. (***At Talaq 65:7***).

The first two meanings are suitable for the term commonly translated as “Night of Power” (97:1), such as elsewhere in the Holy Holy Qur’an where it states, with regards to that night,

{فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ}

Therein every wise bidding. (***Ad Dukhan 44:4***).

Therefore, the “Night of Power” is not restricted to the night in which the Holy Qur’an descended nor to the time of the Prophet (pbuh), but rather every Holy month of Ramadhan there is a Night of Power in which the affairs of the year ahead through to the next Night of Power is determined.

Staying awake and keeping vigil on that night with supplication and prayers and reciting the Holy Qur’an is the advice given to us by the Prophet (pbuh) and the Ahlul Bayet (pbuh) and is considered to be one of three nights the night of the 23rd of the holy Month of Ramadhan being the one of most certainty. A person asked the Prophet (pbuh) that, due to the great distance from his house to the city, to advise him of which one night to come to the city (in the month of Ramadhan), to which his Holiness replied… come to the city on the Night of the 23rd.[1]

Imam Sadiq (pbuh), while he was ill, requested he be taken to the mosque on the night of the 23rd.[2] While Syeda Fatima Az Zahra (pbuh) on this night, would keep her children awake by sprinkling water on their faces.[3]

It has also come in to narrations that the Prophet (pbuh) would pack up his bed in the last ten nights of the Holy month of Ramadhan and keep vigil those ten nights.[4]

In a long narration from the Prophet (pbuh) we read that Prophet Moses (pbuh) implored Allah for nearness to which the reply was

قربي لمن استيقظ ليلة القدر

Nearness to Me is keeping vigil on the Night of Power.

He asked: Oh Nurturer, I implore your Mercy. The Answer, My Mercy is for those who were merciful to the needy on the Night of Power.

رحمتى لمن رحم المساكين ليلة القدر

He said: Oh My Lord, I seek permission to cross upon the Straight Path. The Answer: That is for those who give alms on the Night of Power.

ذلك لمن تصدق بصدقة في ليلة القدر

He said: My Lord, I seek the trees of paradise and the its fruits. The reply: that is for those who glorified a glorification on the Night of Power.

ذلك لمن سبح تسبيحه في ليلة القدر

He said: My Lord, I seek to be rescued from the Hellfire. The Answer: That is for those who sought forgiveness on the Night of Power.

ذلك لمن استغفر في ليلة القدر

In the end, he said: My Lord, I seek your satisfaction. The reply: My satisfaction is for those who prayed two raka'at prayers on the Night of Power.

رضاي لمن صلى ركعتين في ليلة القدر[5]

One of the strangest realities of history is the striking of Imam Ali (pbuh) on the Night of Power, in which he was in the sanctuary of worship and in the state of prayers. Yes, the most honorable of Gods creations, in the most honourable of places, in the most honorable of time and in the most honorable state, was martyred.

The length of time the Night of Power is a complete night on Earth which takes up 24 hours, not that it is particular to a specific place such as Mecca where a night may be for eight hours. Just as the Celebration of the end of Ramadhan, Eid Al Fitr, is a complete 24–hour cycle that every part of the world participates in.

Perhaps the comparison of the Night of Power for mankind with that of the Holy Qur'an descending to earth is a symbol of the relationship between mankind's decree and the Holy Qur'an. If one follows the Holy Qur'an, it leads to happiness and redemption, and if one is distant from it, it leads to adversity and misery for them.

Abu Dhar says: I asked the Prophet (pbuh) if the Night of Power was for the times of the Prophets and if it was for them and that after the departure of the world, that the Night of Power and the descent that

occurs on that night stops? To which he replied: The Night of Power will continue through to the Day of Resurrection.

Perhaps the secret behind which night is actually the Night of Power is so that people can keep Vigil on more than just the one night, for someone who keeps vigil one night does not become so proud and for the one who missed a night, does not become hopeless.

It has been stated in traditions that a good deed on the Night of Power is better than a good deed of a thousand months without the Night of Power.6

The decree on the Night of Power is with the decent and presence of angels:

{تَنَزَّلُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ}

In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, upon every command.

The meaning of Peace in this Surah is that of favour blessings from Allah upon his worshippers on this night who seek security, mercy and blessings and seek to close the doors of curse and punishment, as the whisperings of Satans in those nights have no effect. In the Night of Power, angels descend on earth and send their greetings upon every man and woman that is in the state of worship. Just as in the Day of Resurrection where the people of heaven are greeted with a "Salam":

{سَلَـٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَـٰلِدِينَ}

'Peace be upon you! Well you have fared; enter in, to dwell forever.' (***Az Zumar 39:73***).

The Angels in the Holy Qur'an

1. ***Angels are the honoured servants*** (***Holy Qur'an 21:26***).

2. ***Infallible and submissive to Allah*** (***Holy Qur'an 66:6***)

3. ***The running of certain affairs is in their hands*** (***Holy Qur'an 79:5, 51:4***)

4. ***Are watchful and vigilant as to what humans speak and say*** (***Holy Qur'an 50:18***).

5. ***Are the writers of the books of those in the world*** (***Holy Qur'an 43:80***).

6. ***Are the givers of good tidings to the warriors of war on the battlefield, providing the good tidings of answers to prayers and news of offspring and the good tidings to the believers at the moment of death*** (***Holy Qur'an 9:40, 19:7, 41:30***).

7. ***Are ordered to punish a divine punishment the criminals*** (***Holy Qur'an 11:77***).

8. ***Are the protectors of mankind*** (***Holy Qur'an 6:61***).

9. ***Ask forgiveness for those who believe*** (***Holy Qur'an 40:7***).

10. ***Provide intercession*** (***Holy Qur'an 53:26***).

11. ***Curse the disbelievers*** (***Holy Qur'an 2:161***).

12. ***Rescuers of battlefield warriors*** (***Holy Qur'an 3:125***).

13. ***Punish criminals at the time of their death*** (***Holy Qur'an 8:50***).

14. ***Greet those heavenly bound*** (***Holy Qur'an 13:24***).

15. ***Are responsible for punishment in Hell*** (***Holy Qur'an 74:30***).

16. ***Are responsible for taking the souls*** (***Holy Qur'an 6:61***).

17. ***Have class and position*** (***Holy Qur'an 37:164***).

18. ***Responsible for the bringing down of revelation*** (***Holy Qur'an 16:2***).

19. ***Sometimes appear in the form of human*** (***Holy Qur'an 19:17***).

20. ***Are tireless worshippers*** (***Holy Qur'an 41:38***).

21. ***Also communicate with those who are not Prophets*** (***Holy Qur'an 19:19***).

22. ***Some angels are selected over others*** (***Holy Qur'an 22:75***).

23. ***Faith for angels is a must*** (***Holy Qur'an 2:285, 4:136***).

It has come in narrations that one should protest those who reject the "Imams" with Surah Al Qadr, because on the basis of this Surah, angels descend upon the earth every year. At a time when the Prophet was on this earth, they would come down with his presence, however, after his passing upon whose presence will they descend?

It is clear that not everyone can host the heavenly angels and one who does, must be like the Prophet, divinely guided and guardian of the matters of mankind, and he is no other than a Divinely Guided Imam for which in our time, is the Honourable Mahdi# and angels descend upon earth on the Night of Power in his presence.

1. (Wasa'il Al Shia وسائل الشيعة) V3 P307
2. (Bihar Al Anwar بحار الأنوار) V95 P169

3. (Bihar Al Anwar بحار الأنوار) V94 P10
4. (Majmaul Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran مجمع البيان فى تفسير القرآن)
5. (Wasa'il Al Shia وسائل الشيعة) V8 P20
6. (Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih من لا يحضره الفقيه) V3 P158

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