

A Commentary of the verses of Sura Qadr

(Translated from Tafseer Noor - Hujjatul Islam Mohsin Qaraati)

Characteristics of Sura Qadr

Sura Qadr has been revealed in Makkah and just like other Makki surahs has short and rhythmical verses.

In the beginning, this surah refers to the revelation of the Holy Quran on the night of Qadr, continuing with explaining the importance of the night of Qadr and its superiority than a thousand months and concludes with peace and blessings of Allah (S.W.T) on that night.

There are numerous narrations on the excellence of reciting this surah after sura al-hamd in prayers and anyone who does recite this surah in his wajib prayers it is narrated that, "Allah (S.W.T) forgives his past, and starts afresh!"¹

Imam Ridha (A.S) narrates, "Anyone who recites this surah at a grave of a believer seven times, Allah (S.W.T) forgives both the deceased and the reciter of the surah."²

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Verily, We have sent it (this Qur'ân) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree)]

Points

- Allah (S.W.T) through angels ordains and reaches to fruition the affairs of this world. Therefore we notice in many verses of the Holy Quran, pronouns and verbs in connection to the actions of Allah (S.W.T). Thus in the beginning of Sura Qadr it states, "**We** revealed the Holy Quran."
- Some Quranic commentators (Allamah Tabatabai of Al-Mizan) have the view that the Holy Quran has been revealed twice. It was revealed once as a complete Quran on the night of Qadr, which this surah refers to, and secondly, as a gradual revelation, which took 23 years during the Holy Prophet's mission. The Holy Quran also refers to its own revelation in two manners. It sometimes refers it with the word "Anzalna" from the root verb "Inzaal" which takes the meaning of instantaneous revelation and other times with the word "Nazzalna" from the root word "tanzeel" meaning it has come as a gradual revelation.
- When comparing the verse "Verily, We have sent it (this Qur'ân) down in the night of Al-Qadr" with the verse "*The month of Ramadhan is one in which the Quran was sent down.*" (Baqarah-185), we can deduce that the night of Qadr is in the Holy Month of Ramadhan. However, which night of this holy month is it? The Quran itself does not provide any details or proofs but in narrations it is mentioned that it is one of three nights. When it was asked to the Sixth Holy Imam about the night of Qadr, he replied, "Search for it on the 19th, 21st and the 23rd." However in the Ahle Sunnat, it is more commonly believed that the 27th is the night of Qadr.

Messages

- The night of Qadr is a night of giving thanks and being grateful to Allah (S.W.T) because the greatest and most important Divine favour on man is the revelation of the Holy Quran. (Verily, We revealed it on the Night of Qadr)
- It is noteworthy that the best Book was revealed on the best night on the best human. (Verily, We revealed it on the Night of Qadr)

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

The night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months

Points

- The word “Qadr” in the Quran, has been used in a number of different meanings: -
 1. Position and rank as it is stated in the Quran, “*They did not regard Allah with the regard due to Him*” (Al-Anaam – 91)
 2. Destiny and fate as it is mentioned in the Quran, “*You turned up as ordained, O Moses!*” (Taha-40)
 3. Constriction and hardship as it is mentioned in the Quran “*and let he whose provision has been tightened*” (Talaq-7)

The first two meanings are suitable to the night of Qadr because it is a night of great loftiness and is also a night of destiny and fate.

- Existence has accounting, status and measurement. “*There is not a thing but that its sources are with us, and we do not send it down except in a known measurement.*” (Hijr-21) A small amount of rain from the sky has also been measured out. “*We sent down water from the sky in a measured manner.*” (Muminoon-18) Not only rain, all things near Allah (S.W.T) have an apportionment. “*And everything is by precise measure with Him.*” (Ra’ad-8). The sun and the moon in respect of their volume and weight and their orbits have a precise measurement. “*The Sun and the Moon are (disposed) calculatedly.*” (Rahman-5)
- Allah (S.W.T) on the night of Qadr destines affairs for the next one year as the Holy Quran mentions, “*Every definitive matter is resolved in it (night of Qadr)*” (Dukhan-4). The night of Qadr therefore, is not only confined to the revelation of the Holy Quran and the era of the Holy Prophet but in every month of Ramadhan there is a night of Qadr in which the affairs for the coming year until the following night of Qadr are measured and destined.
- Keeping awake on the night of Qadr engaged in supplication, prayers and recitation of the Holy Quran have been the recommendations of the Holy Prophet and his progeny on the three nights but on the 23rd it has greater emphasis. One of the companions of the Holy Prophet asked him: My house is very far from Medina; tell me on which of the three nights should I come to the city? The Holy Prophet replied, “*Enter Medina on the 23rd night.*” When Imam Jaffer Sadiq (A.S) was sick, he would request to be taken to the mosque on the 23rd. Lady Fatema (A.S) used to sprinkle water on the faces of her children to keep them awake on the 23rd. It is also narrated that in the last 10 nights of the month of Ramadhan, the Holy Prophet (A.S) used to fold his mattress and keep awake.

- In a long narration from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) it is mentioned that Prophet Moses (A.S) asked Allah (S.W.T): -
 - O' Allah I desire your proximity. The reply came: " My proximity lies in someone who remains vigilant and keeping awake on the night of Qadr."
 - O'Allah I seek your mercy. The reply came: "My mercy is reserved in compassion on the poor on the night of Qadr."
 - O' Allah, I want a permit to cross over the Bridge on the Day of Judgement safely. The reply came: "The secret of passing over the Bridge safely is giving alms on the night of Qadr."
 - O'Allah, I seek for Heaven and its blessings. The reply came: "They belong to someone who glorifies and praises my Name on the Night of Qadr."
 - O' Allah, I seek safety from the fire of hell. The reply came:" The secret of safety from the fire of hell is asking for forgiveness on the night of Qadr."
 - O' Allah, I seek your pleasure. The reply came: "Anyone who recites two units of prayer on the Night of Qadr is covered is covered in my pleasure." 1
- It is interesting to note that Imam Ali (AS) was struck on the night of Qadr in his mihrab whilst praying. The noblest creation of Allah (S.W.T) in the noblest of place and time, in the noblest state was martyred.
- The Night is a special time in spirituality activity which we will mention below: -
 1. Allah (S.W.T) revealed the Tawrah to Prophet Moses (A.S) by summoning him for 40 nights for a private conversation. "*And when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights*"-(Baqarah-51)
 2. The Holy Quran mentions the best time for forgiveness is at the end of the night. "*And at the end of the nights they would plead for forgiveness*"-(Dhariyat-18)
 3. The Holy Prophet's ascension to the heavens was at night. "*Carried his servant on a journey by night from the Sacred mosque*"-(Al-Isra-1)
 4. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) was ordered to worship and to converse during the night. "*And keep vigil for a part of the night as a supererogatory [devotion] for you*"(Al-Isra-79): "*Stand vigil through the night, except a little*"(Muzzammil-2)
 5. Allah (S.W.T) praises those who worship during the night "*they recite Allah's signs in the watches of the night*" (Al-I 'Imran-113) and advises people to glorify Him in the night "*and glorify him the night long.*" (Al-Insan-26)
 6. Allah (S.W.T) has taken an oath in the Holy Quran once on the 'Afternoon' and once on the 'Sunrise' but has taken an oath thrice on the 'Night'. "*By the Night as it approaches*" (Takwir-17): "*By the Night when it recedes*"(Muddaththir-33): "*By the Night*" (Fajr-1)
- The length of the Night of Qadr is the complete night throughout the world, which are 24 hours and not only the 8 hours in specific locations such as Makah. The night of Qadr is not restricted to a special place and time. The day of Eid-ul-fitr is also a complete day encompassing all locations.

- The comparison of the night of ordainment and the night of revelation of the Holy Quran is perhaps due the fact that there might be a connection of the destiny of man to the Quran. If someone is a follower of the Quran then happiness and felicity ensue and if someone is away from the Quran, then adversity and misfortune is written for him.
- Abu Zarr states: I asked the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) that, "Is the Night of Qadr only during the time of the Prophets and the affairs are revealed to them and once they die the revelation of the affairs on that night come to a stop." He replied, "The Night of Qadr is until the Day of Judgement."¹
- The secret of the exact Night of Qadr being not known is perhaps that people can engage in worship during various nights and if anyone who worships on one of the nights, he does not become proud and anyone who misses out on one of the nights, he does not despair.
- It is stated in a tradition that, "Good deeds on the Night of Qadr are better than good deeds performed in a thousand months without the Night of Qadr." ²

Messages

- For sacred matters, choose a sacred time.
- Times are not alike; some times have superiority over others.

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

Points

- Imam Sadiq (A.S) was asked, "Does Spirit (Ruh) mean Jibraeel in this verse?" The Imam replied, "Angel Jibraeel is from the angels but the Spirit is greater than the Angels." He then recited this very verse, "*In it the Angels and Spirit descend*"
- With the descent of the angels to the heart of the Holy Prophet and the Imams on the night of Qadr, a connection is established between the earth and heavens, the earthly kingdom and the celestial kingdom and the natural and metaphysical world.
- There are different kinds of Spirit: -
 - A spirit that gives rise to lusts and desires.
 - A spirit that is a source of power and movement. These two spirits are found in humans and animals.
 - A spirit that is a source of free will and thought. This spirit is only in humans.
 - A spirit that is pure intellect and the essence of existence of angels is formed from this spirit.
 - A spirit that is better than angels and which accompanies them in the descent on the Night of Qadr.

- It is narrated in a tradition to use Surah Qadr as a proof with those who deny Imamate. The basis of this chapter is that angels descend each year on the Night of Qadr. At the time of the Holy Prophet, the angels used to enter the presence of this holy personality. However, after the death of the Holy Prophet, whom do the angels descend to? It is clear that none can be the host of the God's angels except that they must be like the Holy Prophet; infallible and have the guardianship of governing man's affairs entrusted to them. These are none other than the infallible Imams of which during our time it the 12th Holy Imam where the angels enter his presence on the Night of Qadr.

A look at Angels in the Quran

Angels are the agents of God and are appointed to act on the commands of God to carry out the affairs of man. In the Holy Quran, for every group of angels, a special role and duty has been assigned and these very angels have been assigned names: *The Wresters* (An-Naziat-1), *The Ranged Ones* (As-Saffat-1), *The ones who drive* (Saffat-2), *The spreaders* (Mursalat-3), *The separators* (Mursalat-3), *Those who direct* (An-Naziat-5)

Some angels are appointed as protectors. "*Indeed they are over you Watchers* (Infitaar-10)

Some angels communicated with the special servants of God. Angels spoke with Prophet Zakariyya (A.S) and gave him news of a son named Yahya (A.S), "*Then the angels called out to him.* (Ale-Imran-39). Similarly, angels spoke with Lady Maryam (A.S), "*And when the angels said O Mary*" (Ale-Imran-42)

The Holy Quran also refers to the angels who came to the aid of the Muslim's army in the middle of a battlefield. In the battle of Badr, Allah (S.W.T) sent 3,000 angels to help the Muslims, "*that your Lord should aid you with three thousand angels sent down.*" (Ale-Imran-124)

Some angels are appointed to take the soul of man at the time of death. "*You will be taken away by the angel of death.*" (Sajdah-11). Another duty of the angels is to carry the throne of Allah (S.W.T) "*The Throne of your Lord will be borne.*" (Al-Haqqah-17)

One of the distinctions of the Angels is their perpetual and tireless worship, "*They glorify Him night and day and they do not flag.*" (Anbiyya-20);

Another duty of the angels is to supplicate and ask for forgiveness for the believers "*and plead for forgiveness for those on the earth*" (Shura-5) and to send blessings on the Holy Prophet. "*Indeed Allah (S.W.T) and his angels bless the Prophet.*" (Ahzab-56)

Angels have different ranks and not all of them are on the same station. "*There is none among us but has a known place.*" (Saffat-164) Just as Allah (S.W.T) has given some Prophet's preferences over others, he has given some angels superiority over others, "*Allah chooses messengers from angels.*" (Hajj-75)

The power and strength of all the angels are not equal and their capacities are different as well, "*Possessing wings, two, three or four.*" (Fatir-1). Some angels execute orders and some give the commands but all are infallible and trustworthy, "*one who is heard and trustworthy as well.*" (Takwir-21)

To have faith in all angels is obligatory, "Each of them has faith in Allah (S.W.T), His Angels." (Baqarah-285) and anyone who denies the angels are next to denying God himself, "Whoever disbelieves in Allah (S.W.T) and His angels." (Nisa'-136)

The angels are the army of Allah (S.W.T) and none knows their number except God himself, "No one knows the hosts of your Lord except Him." (Muddathir-31) If occasionally a small specific quantity is mentioned such as, "They are nineteen keepers over it" (Muddathir-30) which relates to the nineteen angels appointed to oversee hell, it is perhaps due to another reason and not because of a lack of power.

The angels have complete obedience to Allah (S.W.T) and perform every duty commanded to them and never disobey the commands, "who do not disobey whatever Allah (S.W.T) has commanded them and carry out what they are commanded". (Tahrim-9) They also never precede the commands of Allah (S.W.T) and only act on them, "They do not venture to speak ahead of Him and they act by his command." (Anbiya-27)

The angels obedience is with full knowledge and God consciousness and in their obedience do not choose any special work except what they are commanded, "They fear their Lord above them and do whatever they are commanded." (Nahl-51)

- The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) narrates, "The creation of Angels is all from Light and there is no creation which exceeds the creation of angels."
- The Sixth Holy Imam narrates, "Angels do not eat, drink and have physical relations."

Messages

- Angels do not act without the permission of Allah (S.W.T) "In it the angels and the Spirit descend by the leave of their Lord, with every command."
- The destiny of affairs on the night of Qadr, with the descent and coming of angels are realised. *In it the angels and the Spirit descend by the leave of their Lord, with every command.*"
- The affairs, which are destined on the night of Qadr, are a part of Allah (S.W.T). *"In it the angels and the Spirit descend by the leave of their Lord, with every command."*

It is peaceful until the rising of the Dawn

Points

- Salaam (Peace) is one of the names of Allah (S.W.T) "He is Allah-there is no God except Him-The Sovereign, The All-Holy, The All-Benign....." (Hashr-23)
- The intention of Salaam (Peace) in this verse is the special favour and grace of Allah (S.W.T) in connection to His servants on the Night of Qadr, which involve safety and blessings and the closing of the doors of hell because the whisperings of Satan on that night are not really effective.
- On the night of Qadr, angels descend to the earth and greet every man and woman who is in the state of worship because on the Day of Judgement the angels will meet and greet the people of heaven with Salaams. "Peace be to you! You are Welcome! Enter it to remain." (Zumar-73)

Messages

- It is a night of mercy and it is possible with repentance to attract the grace of God towards oneself. “ It is peaceful until the rising of the Dawn.”
- The matters decreed by Allah (SWT) are for the betterment of mankind but he himself would want to receive it.

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