



XCVII

AL-QADR

الْقَدْر

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah has been so designated after the word *al-qadr* in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani revelation is disputed. Abū Hayyān in *Al-Bahr al-Muhit* has made the claim that the majority of scholars regard it as a Madani Sūrah. 'Alī bin Ahmad al-Wāhidī in his

commentary says that this is the first Sūrah to be sent down in Madīnah. Contrary to this, Al-Māwardī says that according to the majority of scholars it is a Makki revelation, and the same view has Imām Suyūti expressed in *Al-Itqān*. Ibn Mardūyah has cited Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Az-Zubair and Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah as saying that this Sūrah was revealed at Makkah. A study of the contents also shows that it should have been revealed at Makkah as we shall explain below.

Theme and Subject-Matter

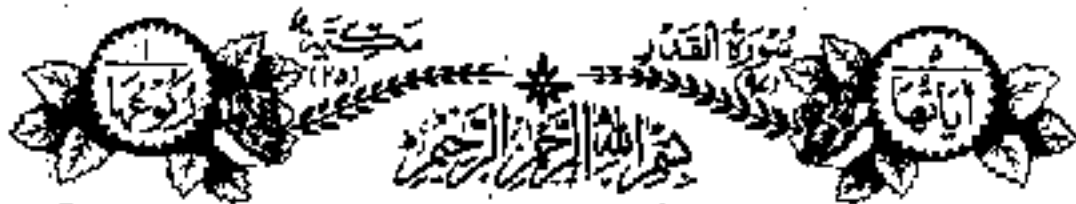
Its theme is to acquaint man with the value, worth and importance of the Qur'ān. Its being placed just after Sūrah Al-'Alaq in the arrangement of the Qur'ān by itself explains that the Holy Book, the revelation of which began with the first five verses of Sūrah Al-'Alaq, was sent down in a destiny-making night. It is a glorious Book and its revelation for mankind is full of blessings.

At the outset, Allah says: "We have sent it down." That is, it is not a composition of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) himself, but We Ourselves have revealed it.

Then, it is said that "We sent it down in the Night of Destiny." Night of Destiny has two meanings and both are implied here. First, that it is the night during which destinies are decided: or, in other words, it is not an ordinary night like the other nights, but a night in which destinies are made or marred. The revelation of this Book in this night is not merely the revelation of a book but an event which will change the destiny of not only the Quraish, or of Arabia, but of the entire world. The same thing has been said in Sūrah Ad-Dukhān for which please see Introduction to that Sūrah and E.N. 3 thereof. The other meaning is that this is a night of unique honour, dignity and glory: so much so that it is "better than a thousand months. Thus, the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned, as if to say: "You on account of your ignorance regard this Book, which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has presented, as a calamity for yourselves and complain that a disaster has befallen you, whereas the night in which it was decreed to be sent down was such a blessed night that a task was accomplished in it for the well-being of mankind, which had never been accomplished even during a thousand months of history. This also has

been said in verse 3 of Ad-Dukhān in another way, which we have explained in the Introduction to that Sūrah.

In conclusion, it has been stated that in this night the angels and Gabriel descend with every decree (which in verse 4 of Sūrah Ad-Dukhān has been described as *amr-ḥakīm*: wise decree) by the leave of their Lord, and it is all peace from evening till morning; that is, there is no interference of evil in it, for all decrees of Allah are intended to promote good and not evil. So much so that even if a decision to destroy a nation is taken, it is taken for the sake of ultimate good, not evil.



إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ^١ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ^٢ لَيْلَةُ
 الْقَدْرِ^٣ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ^٤ تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكِ^٥ وَالرُّوحِ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ
 رَبِّهِمْ^٦ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ^٧ سَلَامٌ تَهَيَّأْ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ^٨

XCVII AL-QADR

الْقَدْرُ

Verses: 65

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

We have sent down this (Qur'ān) in the Night of Glory.¹ And 1-5
 what do you know what the Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is
 better than a thousand months.² The angels and the Spirit³ descend in it
 with every decree, by the permission of their Lord.⁴ That Night is
 peace, until the rising of the dawn.⁵

1. The words in the original are *anzalnā-hu*; "We Ourselves have sent it down". But although there is no mention of the Qur'ān before it, the Qur'ān is implied, for "sending down" by itself points out that the Qur'ān is meant. And there are numerous instances of this in the Qur'ān that if from the context, or the

style, the antecedent of a pronoun is apparent, the pronoun is used even if the antecedent has not been mentioned anywhere before or after it. (For explanation, see E.N. 9 of An-Najm).

Here, it has been said: "We have sent down the Qur'an in the Night of Destiny", and in Al-Baqarah: 185, "Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down." This shows that the night in which the Angel of God had brought down revelation for the first time to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's Peace) in the Cave of Hirā, was a night of the month of Ramadan. This night has been described as *Lailat-ul-qadr* here and as *Lailat-in-mubarakah* in Sūrah Ad-Dukhān: 3 above.

There can be two meanings of sending down the Qur'an in this night: first, that in this night the entire Qur'an was entrusted to the bearers (angels) of Revelation, and then Gabriel (peace be on him) continued to reveal its verses and Sūrahs, from time to time, to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) during 23 years as the occasion and conditions demanded. This meaning has been given by Ibn 'Abbās. (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, Hākim, Ibn Mardūyah, Baihaqi). Second, that the revelation of the Qur'an began in this night. This is Imām Sha'bī's view, although from him too the other view also is related, which is the view of Ibn 'Abbas as cited above (Ibn Jarīr). Anyhow, in both cases, the meaning is the same that the revelation of the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began in this very night, and this was the night in which the five opening verses of Sūrah Al-'Alaq were revealed. The fact, however, is that Allah did not compose the verses and the Sūrahs of the Qur'an right at the time guidance was needed by the Holy Prophet for his message of Islam in respect of an occasion or affair, but even before the creation of the universe, in the very beginning, Allah had a full plan of the creation of mankind on the earth, of raising the Prophets in it, of sending down the Books to the Prophets, of raising the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) at the end of the line of the Prophets and of sending down the Qur'an to him. In the Night of Destiny only the execution of the final phase of the plan began. No wonder if at that very time the entire Qur'an was entrusted to the bearers of Revelation.

Some commentators have interpreted *qadr* to mean destiny (*taqdir*)... i.e. it is the night in which Allah entrusts the decrees of destiny to the angels to be enforced. This is supported by verse 3 of Sūrah Ad-Dukhān: "This is a night in which every matter is decided wisely by Our command." On the contrary, Imām Zuhri says that *qadr* means glory and honour, thereby implying that it is a Night of Destiny. This meaning is supported by the words "*Lailat-ul-qadr* is better than a thousand months" of this Sūrah itself.

As for the question as to which night it was, it is disputed and there are as many as 40 different views on this subject. However, a great majority of scholars hold the opinion that one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of the month of Ramaḍān is *Lailat-ul-qadr*, and among these also most scholars think that it is the 27th night. Below we give the authentic *Aḥādīth* which have been reported in this connection:

According to Ḥaḍrat Abu Hurairah, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said, in connection with *Lailat-ul-qadr*, that it is the 27th night. (Abū Da'ūd Tayālīsī). According to another tradition from Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah, it is the last night of Ramaḍān. (Musnad Aḥmad).

When Zirr bin Ḥubaish asked Ḥaḍrat Ubayy bin Ka'b about *Lailat-ul-qadr*, he stated on oath, and did not make any exception, that it is the 27th night. (Aḥmad, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Ḥibbān).

When Ḥaḍrat Abū Zarr was asked about it, he said: "Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, Ḥaḍrat Hudhaifah and many other Companions of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had no doubt that it is the 27th night." (Ibn Abī Shaibah).

Ḥaḍrat 'Ubādah bin aṣ-Ṣāmit says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "*Lailat-ul-qadr* is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramaḍān: 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, or the last night." (Musnad Aḥmad).

Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "Search for it among the last ten nights of Ramaḍān when there are still nine days in the month, or seven days, or five days." (Bukhārī). Most of the scholars have understood it to mean that by this the Holy Prophet meant the odd nights.

Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr said: "When nine days remain in the month, or seven days, or five days, or three days, or the last night." What he meant was that *Lailat-ul-qadr* should be sought among these dates. (Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī).

According to Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "Search for *Lailat-ul-qadr* among the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramaḍān. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī). Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah and Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Umar have also reported that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) observed *I'tikāf* (seclusion in the Mosque) during the last ten nights of Ramaḍān every year during his lifetime.

On the basis of the traditions related in this regard on the authority of a great Companion like Ḥaḍrat Mu'āwiyah, Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Umar, Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās and others, a large number of the earliest scholars regard the 27th of Ramaḍān as *Lailat-ul-qadr*. Probably Allah and His Messenger have not specified any one night

for the reason so that the people, in their zeal to benefit from the virtues of *Lailat-ul-qadr*, should spend more and more nights in worship and devotion and should not remain content with only one night. Here the question arises that when it is night at Makkah, it is daytime in a large part of the world; therefore, the people of those parts can never take advantage of *Lailat-ul-qadr*. The answer is that the word night in Arabic is mostly used for the combination of the day and night. Therefore, the night preceding the day on any one of these dates of Ramaḍān can be *Lailat ul-qadr* for that part of the world.

2. The commentators in general have understood this to mean that the good acts performed in this Night are superior in value to the good acts of a thousand months in which *Lailat-ul-qadr* is not included. There is no doubt that this is in itself correct and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has described great excellencies and virtues of the good acts and devotions of this Night. According to a tradition related in Bukhārī and Muslim, on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said: "The one who remained standing in worship in the state of belief and for the sake of rewards from Allah during *Lailat-ul-qadr*, would have all his previous sins forgiven." And in Musnad Aḥmad, there is a tradition from Ḥaḍrat 'Ubādah bin aṣ-Ṣāmit, saying that the Holy Prophet said: *Lailat-ul-qadr* is among the last ten nights of Ramaḍān. The one who stood up in worship in order to take advantage of their rewards, Allah will forgive all his former and latter sins." But, the verse does not say: "To act righteously in *Lailat-ul-qadr* is better than acting righteously in a thousand months," but it says: *Lailat-ul-qadr* is better than a thousand months." And "a thousand months" also does not imply 83 years and 4 months exactly, but a very long period of time as "a thousand" denoted among the Arabs. Therefore, the verse means that in this one night a task was accomplished for the welfare of mankind the like of which had not been accomplished even during an indefinitely long period of history.

3. "The Spirit": Gabriel (peace be on him), who has been mentioned separately from the angels in view of his unique eminence, honour and merit.

4. That is, they do not descend of their own accord but by leave of their Lord, and "every decree" implies *amr ḥakim* (a wise decree) as described in Ad-Dukhān: 5.

5. That is, the entire Night, from evening till morning, is peace, free from every evil and mischief.