

### Fast 27: *Lailat-ul-Qadr* (The Night of Majesty)

- This night is mentioned in an early revelation in the Quran consisting of a short chapter called *Al-Qadr*:

“<sup>1</sup>Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty — <sup>2</sup>And what will make you comprehend what the Night of Majesty is? <sup>3</sup>The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months. <sup>4</sup>The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair — <sup>5</sup>Peace! it is till the rising of the morning.” (ch. 97)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ  
مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾ لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ  
أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكِ وَالرُّوحِ  
فِيهَا يَأْذُنُ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٤﴾ سَلَامٌ  
هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٥﴾

- This refers to the night, falling in the last ten days of Ramadan, when the Quran (“it” in verse 1) was revealed. It is generally considered to be the 27th night of this month. It is said in 2:185: “The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed”. Since it is obvious that the whole of the Quran was not revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad on this night, but only a few verses which are now in chapter 96, many commentators take 2:185 and 97:1 to mean that the whole of the Quran descended on this night from a higher heaven to a lower heaven, so that it could then start to gradually come to the Holy Prophet in the next 23 years. But this is a contrived and fanciful explanation. The Quran being revealed does not mean the whole of the Quran. When someone says “I read the Quran today”, he means he read some part of it. So 97:1 means that in that night the Quran *began* to be revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, at the age of forty years, when he was in the cave of Hira.
- As its revelation commenced in the month of Ramadan, hence Islam instituted fasting in this month as a commemoration and anniversary of the revelation of the Quran. Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. In Islam, the birth of the Quran is commemorated in the month leading to the celebration of *Id-ul-Fitr*.
- The birth of some person or commencement of some event is often marked, even though at the time of the birth or commencement itself its importance was not noticed, and it only acquired importance later on. The start is still treated as a landmark.
- It was thus a “grand night” when the revelation of the Quran began, like the moment when heavens open up for rain after a drought, even though it takes time for the rain to come and fully soak the land. In 97:3 that night is said to be “better than a thousand months”. A thousand months, being about 83 years, may stand for man’s life span.

The meaning may therefore be that the night which brought about the Holy Prophet's spiritual awakening is better than a whole lifetime of mere physical existence.

- The angels and the Spirit (angel Gabriel) started bringing knowledge and enlightenment to the Holy Prophet **on all issues of life** (97:4). But this was revealed to his heart, not to his physical senses. Addressing him, the Quran says:

“And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The faithful Spirit has brought it, **on your heart** that you may be a warner.” (26:192–194)

وَأِنَّهُ لَنَزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ  
الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ  
الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

- This enlightenment brought **peace**, solace and comfort to the Holy Prophet. His search for the truth was answered. But then the dawn came and he had to proclaim the same truth to the world (97:5). The Quran, at the start of ch. 73, tells the Holy Prophet to “rise to pray by night except for a little (part of the night)” (73:2), “Surely We shall charge you with a weighty word” (73:5) and “Truly you have by day prolonged occupation” (73:7). So the night is for worship and strengthening of the heart, and the day is for the delivery of the message, the “weighty word”, to the people.
- The whole period of the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad may be considered as a *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, because the Quran was revealed to him throughout this period, and the angels and the Spirit were with him all this time. It was a time of the deepest darkness, in which the Quran was revealed. By its end there was a dawn in the world and spiritual peace in the hearts. Those who found even an hour of this *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, meaning the company of the Holy Prophet, it was better for them than living an entire life of a thousand months, or 83 years, devoid of this blessing.
- The *Lailat-ul-Qadr* of Ramadan is also an occasion for a spiritual experience. It is **certainly not** the case that praying during just this night will bring a reward equal to, or more than, prayers of a thousand months, or that prayers are accepted more in this night than at any other time. All times, nights and days are the same to God. A blessed time for prayer is when you are wholly and entirely turning to God. If the preceding fasts and spiritual exertions have brought a person closer to God, then the *Lailat-ul-Qadr* becomes a time of blessing and acceptance of prayer, **because of his condition at the time**, and not because of a mere date in the calendar.
- It is only if a person resolves to bring about some permanent change for the good within himself or herself by means of fasting in Ramadan that this night is blessed for him, more blessed than a whole life of 83 years in which no change is brought about.