

How can one night be better than One Thousand months?

We read in the Holy Qur'an verse 97:3 that *Laylatul Qadr is better than one thousand months* - لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ. The Question may arise that how can a night exceed one thousand months in excellence or in other words how can a specific night be better than 30,000 other nights? Is this a reality or simply a metaphorical reference in the Holy Qur'an? Fortunately, Muslims of the past had this aspect clarified from the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a). The Holy Prophet (s) himself, according to Sunni sources, provided interesting explanations to this phenomenon.

In order to understand this verse and its significance we need to refer to exegeses of the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths from the Holy Prophet (s) and his Ahlul Bayt (a). Haj Javad Maliki Tabrizi in his *Spiritual Journey of the Mystics* says: "The most important thing of this month is the Night of Power (Laylatul Qadr) - the night which is superior, than a thousand months, one thousand months [of] jihad, one thousand months reign, and the worship in it is superior than one thousand months of worship, (as has been narrated in the traditions)."¹ The following Hadiths explain what Haj Tabrizi may be referring to.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) was asked, "how can Laylatul Qadr be better than one thousand months?" He replied: *a deed performed in it is better than deeds performed in one thousand months that do not have Laylatul Qadr.*² Imam al-Baqir (a) has a similar explanation saying: *a good deed in it of saying prayers, giving Zakaat and other types of good (actions), is better than the deed (performed) in thousand months which do not contain Night of Qadr in them; for had Allah not multiplied the deeds for believers, they would be unable to reach [salvation], but Allah (swt) multiplies for them the good deeds.*³

Mir Ahmed Ali in his commentary of v. 97:3 writes: "The Second Imam Hasan ibne-Ali says that he heard from his grandfather, the Holy Prophet once he dreamt of monkeys getting upon his pulpit, and the Messenger Angel Gabriel informed him of the significance of the dream saying that "Those whom thou dost see get upon thy pulpit are the Bani-Umayyah who would rule the Muslim Empire after thee for a thousand months." And revealed this verse"⁴ 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'ee also mentions a similar Hadith in *Tafseer al-Mizan* saying that the surah was revealed to

¹ <http://www.al-islam.org/suluk/>, chapter 9 on Laylatul Qadr.

² Muhammad al-Rayy Shahri, *Sharullah fil-kitab was-sunnah*, p.403, H. 614 taken from *Al-Kafi*, iv, 157 and *Man la yahdhuruhu al-faqih*, ii, 158.

³ Hadith 613, p. 604, Ibid taken from *Thawab al-a`maal* 92, 11; *Al-Kafi* iv, 157,6.

⁴ *The Holy Qur'an- Text, Translation and Commentary* by Agha Pooya and S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali, p. 1887.

comfort the Holy Prophet (s) who was troubled to see in his dream that Banu Umayyah would be ascending his Mimbar.⁵

Tafseer of Ibn Katheer narrates an interesting cause of revelation for the first three verses of Surat al-Qadr. Once the Holy Prophet (s) mentioned that four people amongst Banu Israel had worshipped Allah for 80 years, without disobeying Him for a moment. He said these were: Ayyub, Zakariyya, Hizqeel b. ‘Ajuz and Yusaha` b. Nun. The companions of the Prophet (s) were amazed at the devotion of these four people. So Jibraeel came and said, “O Muhammad, your ummah is amazed at the 80 years of worship without any disobedience of these people. Allah has revealed [for you something] better than this; and then he recited the first 3 verses of Surat al-Qadr. Jibraeel said, “this is better than what you and your ummah were surprised about.” The Prophet (s) and those around were happy to hear this.⁶

In *Al-Sunan al-Kubra* and tafseers of Ibn Katheer and al-Qurtubi yet another cause of revelation has been presented for the first three verses of Surat al-Qadr. Mujahid narrates that the Holy Prophet (s) mentioned a person amongst Banu Israel who had donned armaments for one thousand months in the path of Allah (*fee sabeelil-laah*). The Muslims were astonished by this (devotion). So the first three verses of al-Qadr were revealed indicating that *the Night of Qadr is better than one thousand months* in which that person put on armaments in the path of Allah.⁷

The website www.al-islam.org states: “Verse 2 suggests that the spiritual nature of this night and its value is known to Allah only. Quoting [Surat] Sajdah: 4, 5 and Ma‘arij: 4, Abdullah Yusuf Ali says that “a thousand months” refers to “timeless time”. One moment of enlightenment under Allah's light is better than thousands of months or years of animal life, and such a moment converts the night of darkness into a period of spiritual glory”.⁸

Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi in his *Tafheem ul-Qur’an* states: 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.⁹

⁵ <http://www.holyquran.net/cgi-bin/almizan.pl>

⁶ Hadith 618, p. 405, Ibid taken from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, viii, 464.

⁷ Hadith 617, p. 404, Ibid taken from *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, iv, 505, 8522; *Tafseer Ibn Katheer* 8:463; *Tafseer al-Qurtubi* 20, 131.

⁸ <http://www.al-islam.org/quran/>; commentary to verse 97:1

⁹ <http://www.tafheem.net/main800.html> commentary on 97:3

Syed Qutub in his commentary on the Surah writes, “This night is better than a thousand months. The figure here and elsewhere in the Qur'an does not signify its precise number. It simply denotes a very high number. Many thousand months and many thousand years have passed without leaving behind a fraction of the changes and results brought about in that blessed and happy night”.¹⁰

In light of the above we suggest following Dos and Don'ts for the Night of Qadr.

DO everything possible to make this night a special and worthy night for you are part of Holy Prophet's ummah and Allah has favored this nation with it.

DO NOT allow even a moment to go in waste from Dusk to Dawn for the Night is *peace till the break of the Dawn*.

DO spend the entire night in prayers, supplications, seeking Divine forgiveness and pardon, and reciting and understanding the Holy Qur'an.

DO NOT let Satan and his agents mislead you in believing that you have many more days and opportunities in your life to say your prayers and supplications. Nay! Nothing can surpass the excellence of Laylatul Qadr.

DO everything possible to have a purified and sincere mindset on the Night of Qadr; the way your *ghusl* (ablution) for the evening will clean your physical being, let your pure, sincere and honest thoughts clean your soul.

DO NOT have hatred, rancor, and suspicions towards Muslims, especially fellow Believers. Pledge to join relations with your kith and kin and promise to improve relations with fellow Muslims.

DO share your wealth and belongings with the poor and needy amongst Muslims.

DO NOT procrastinate paying your *zakat*, *khums* and other financial obligations.

DO yourself a favor by promising to improve your *akhlaaq* (morals & countenance)

DO NOT continue to be enslaved by bad and undesirable habits for Laylatul Qadr possesses all the required incentives and strength to change for the better.

Wa maa tawfeeqee illaa billaahil 'aliyyil 'azeem

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¹⁰ http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/tafsir/syed_gutb/surah_97.htm