



The Seventh Discourse

On the excellent qualities of the month of Ramaḍān.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

O you who truly believe!
Fasting is prescribed for you,
even as it was prescribed
for those before you, in order that
you may practice true devotion.
(2:183)

*yā ayyu-ha 'lladhīna āmanū
kutiba 'alai-kumu 'ṣ-ṣiyāmu
ka-mā kutiba
'ala 'lladhīna min qabli-kum
la'alla-kum tattaqūn.*

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī¹²³ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) once said: “Whenever you hear Allāh (Exalted is He) saying: ‘O you who truly believe! [*yā ayyu-ha 'lladhīna āmanū*],’ you must listen carefully and pay the closest attention, for those words are intended to alert you, either to a commandment you have to obey, or to a prohibition you must not infringe.”

It was Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq¹²⁴ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “The summons has the delightful effect of dispelling the drudgery of obedient service and weary toil.”

Let us now embark upon a detailed study of the Qur’ānic verse [*āya*] itself, beginning with the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

O you who truly believe!

yā ayyu-ha 'lladhīna āmanū.

1. *yā*:

The vocative particle *yā* [O...!] is an exclamatory interjection,

¹²³ See note 74 on p. 40 above.

¹²⁴ Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusain ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, known as “the Veracious” [*aṣ-Ṣādiq*], was the sixth of the twelve descendants of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who, according to the majority of the Shī‘a, are considered the rightful Imāms. He was celebrated for his expert knowledge of Tradition, and came to be regarded as a master of the esoteric sciences.



uttered by someone who is well acquainted [*‘ālim*] with the person, or persons, whose attention he is seeking to attract. In this case, it is being uttered by the One who is All-Knowing [*‘Ālim*].

2. *ayyu*:

The connective element *ayyu* [(O) you...] is a pronoun [*ism*],¹²⁵ referring to the recognized person, or persons, to whom the call or summons is being addressed [*al-ma‘lūm al-munādā*].

3. *-hā*:

As for the suffix *-hā*, this adds an intimate touch to the impact of the summoner’s call, since it conveys the hint of prior acquaintance and long-standing friendship.

4. *alladhīna*:

[The next word, *alladhīna*, which is pronounced *‘lladhīna* in this context, is simply the plural form of the relative pronoun *alladhī*, meaning “who.”]

5. *āmanū*:

The special significance of the verb *āmanū* [truly believe]¹²⁶ is that it points to the secret knowledge that is shared by the One who is summoning and the one who is being summoned [*as-sirr al-ma‘lūm bi-yad al-Munādī wa ‘l-munādā*]. It is as if He is saying: “O he who belongs to Me [*yā man huwa lī*],¹²⁷ on account of that secret of his, to which he is sincerely devoted with his conscience [*ḍamīr*], and with the very kernel of his being [*lubb*]...!”

This brings us to His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Fasting is prescribed for you... *kutiba ‘alai-kumu ‘ṣ-ṣiyāmu...*

6. *kutiba*:

To say that fasting is prescribed [*kutiba*], is the same as saying that it has been imposed and made incumbent as a strictly obligatory religious duty [*furiḍa wa ūjiba*].

¹²⁵ The Arab grammarians apply the term *ism* [name] to noun and pronoun alike.

¹²⁶ The verb *āmanū* [truly believe] is derived from the same trilateral root as the corresponding verbal noun *īmān* [true belief; true faith]. According to the classical lexicographers, the primary meaning of *īmān* is: “becoming true to the trust with respect to which Allāh has confided in one, by a firm believing with the heart; not by profession of belief with the tongue only, without the assent of the heart; for he who does not firmly believe with his heart is either a hypocrite or an ignorant person.” (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. ‘-M-N.)

¹²⁷ The expression *yā man huwa* contains a sequence of sounds—*ā man hū*—in which one can hear a virtual echo of the word *āmanū*.



7. *‘alai-kumu:*

[This means “upon (all of) you” or “for (all of) you.”¹²⁸ The Arabic suffix *-kum* is a plural pronoun, indicating that more than two people are being addressed.¹²⁹ It is pronounced *-kumu* when followed by the definite article (*al-*, *aṣ-*, etc.), the initial vowel of which then becomes silent, as in the phrase *‘alai-kumu ‘ṣ-ṣiyāmu.*]

8. *‘ṣ-ṣiyāmu:*

In terms of Arabic grammar, the word *ṣiyām* [fasting] is a verbal noun [*maṣḍar*], which may be used as the object of the corresponding verb. Thus [if you wish to say, in Arabic, that you have kept fast throughout the daylight hours, and then spent the night awake, observing a prayerful vigil,] you may use the expression: “*Ṣumtu ṣiyāman wa qumtu qiyāman* [lit., I have fasted a fasting, and I have stayed awake a staying awake].”¹³⁰

In the ordinary usage of the Arabic language, the basic meaning of *ṣiyām* [fasting] is summed up in the word *imsāk* [to cease and desist; to refrain; to abstain]. Consider the following idiomatic expressions:¹³¹

a) The expression *ṣāmat ar-rīḥ* [lit., the wind has fasted] may be used when the wind has calmed down and cease to blow.

b) The expression *ṣāmat al-khail* [lit., the horses have fasted] may be used when these animals have come to a halt, and have stopped to take a break from their journey.

c) The expression *ṣāma ‘n-nahār* [lit., the daytime has kept fast] may be used at the point of midday in summer, when the sun is at its height, and the shade has almost disappeared. This is a reference to the fact that the sun comes to a halt, when it reaches the center of the sky, and

¹²⁸ The appropriate translation of the preposition *‘alā* (which is pronounced *‘alai-* when a pronoun is attached to it) will depend on the idiomatic usage of the English language. For instance, we may say that something is “incumbent *upon* you, because it is prescribed *for* you.”

¹²⁹ In addition to the second person singular pronouns, masculine *-ka* and feminine *-ki*, both corresponding to the archaic English “thee,” Arabic also has the dual form *-kumā* [(both of) you].

¹³⁰ The structure of the Arabic language makes it convenient for traditional grammarians and lexicographers to use a verb in the third person masculine singular, followed by the corresponding verbal noun [*maṣḍar*] as its object, as their basic unit of reference. An interesting example occurs in Vol. 2, p. 87, where the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) discusses possible derivations of the Name “Allāh”:

According to an-Naḍir ibn Shumail, the Name “Allāh” may be derived...from the expression *alaha ilāhatan*, which has the same meaning as *‘abada ‘ibādatan* [to serve, worship, adore].

¹³¹ In each of the idiomatic expressions listed by the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the reader will notice the use of the Arabic verb *ṣāmat* or *ṣāma*, both forms of which are derived, like the verbal noun *ṣiyām*, from the root *ṣ-w-m*.



interrupts its progress for a brief moment. In the words of the anonymous poet:

Until, when the day keeps fast [*ṣāma 'n-nahār*], having reached the point of noon,
and gossamer threads [*lu'āb*] appear to fall, in the light of the summer sun....

d) When referring to a man who has remained silent and refrained from speaking, one may say that he has “fasted” [*ṣāma*].

Allāh (Exalted is He) has also used the word *ṣawm* [fast]¹³² in the sense of abstinence from speech [*ṣamt*],¹³³ for He has said:

Say, [O Mary]: “I have vowed a fast unto the All-Merciful, so I shall not speak this day to any human being.” (19:26)	<i>fa-qūli innī nadhartu li'r-Rahmāni ṣawman fa-lan ukallima 'l-yawma insiyā.</i>
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As for its observance during the month of Ramaḍān, the Fast [*aṣ-Ṣawm*] is kept by abstaining [*imsāk*] from certain regular activities, namely, the consumption of food and drink, and engaging in sexual intercourse—even in the forms that are at other times permissible according to the Sacred Law [*ash-Shar'*]¹³⁴—as well as by desisting and refraining from the commission of sins.

Fasting is prescribed, as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

even as it was prescribed for those before you... (2:183)	<i>ka-mā kutiba 'ala 'lladhīma min qabli-kum...</i>
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That is to say, for the Prophets [*Anbiyā'*] and their communities [*umam*], the very first of them being Adam (peace be upon him).

This interpretation is supported by the following traditional report, transmitted by 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hārūn ibn 'Antara on the authority

¹³² At least in the case of the term *ṣawm* [fast], the three root-letters <*ṣ-w-m*> are all clearly apparent. Since the Arabic letter *wāw* is a so-called ‘weak’ letter, it disappears from certain derived forms of any root of which it is one of the three elements. Thus in some of the words derived from the root *ṣ-w-m*, the central element may be ‘hidden’ in a long *-ā-* (represented by an *alif* in the Arabic script), a long *-ū-* (in which case the *wāw* is disguised in the transliteration, although it does appear in the original Arabic script), or it may have acquired the sound *-y-* or that of the long vowel *-ī-* (both represented by the Arabic letter *yāy*).

This should be borne in mind while reading this Discourse, so that the reader will understand the linguistic and semantic connections between linking various terms discussed by the author, such as *ṣiyām*, *ṣāma*, *ṣāmat*, *ṣumtu* and *ṣawm*—all of which are derivatives of the root *ṣ-w-m*. (For a detailed listing of these and other words, phrases and sayings derived from this root, see E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *Ṣ-W-M*.)

¹³³ In light of the explanations in note 132 above, the reader could easily assume that the word *ṣamt* [silence; abstinence from speech] must also be derived from the trilateral root *ṣ-w-m*. In fact, however, it is derived from the root *ṣ-m-t*, which conveys the basic idea of “silence; speechlessness.”





of his father, Hārūn, who told ‘Abd al-Malik that his grandfather, ‘Antara, had said:

“I once heard ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) say: ‘I came to Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) one day, around the time of noon, while he was indoors in his room. I saluted him with the greeting of peace, and he returned my salutation, then he said: “O ‘Alī, here is Gabriel, offering you the greeting of peace!” So I said: “Peace be unto you, and also unto him, O Messenger of Allāh!” He then said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Come over here beside me,” so I moved till I was close beside him, whereupon he said:

““O ‘Alī, Gabriel is talking to you. He is saying: “You must fast during three days out of every month. For the first day, the reward of ten thousand years will be recorded in your favor; for the second day, the reward of thirty thousand years; and for the third day, the reward of three hundred thousand years.”

““O Messenger of Allāh,” said I, “is this reward for me in particular, for is it for all mankind in general?”

““O ‘Alī,” he replied (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Allāh will bestow this reward not only upon you, but also upon those who come after you, provided they perform the same good works as you do.”

““O Messenger of Allāh,” said I, “which days of the month are the three in question?”

In answer to my question, he told me (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “They are the three known as the “white” days [*al-ayyām al-bīd*]; that is to say, the the thirteenth, the fourteenth and the fifteenth of the month.””

‘Antara then went on to say:

“So I said to ‘Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with him): ‘Why do you call these days the “white” days? ‘Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) then told me the following story:

“When Allāh (Exalted is He) evicted Adam (peace be upon him) from the Garden of Paradise, and sent him down to the earth, he was so scorched by the sun that his body turned as black as pitch. Gabriel (peace be upon him) then came to him and said: ‘O Adam, would you like to have your skin turn white?’ Adam said yes, he would like that very much, so Gabriel said to him: ‘In that case, you must fast on the





thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the month.’ Adam (peace be upon him) accepted the challenge, and began by fasting on the first of these days. As soon as he had done so, one third of his body turned white. Then he fasted on the second day, and found that two thirds of his body had now turned white. Then he fasted on the third day, after which the whole of his body had turned white. This explains why they are called the “white” days [*al-ayyām al-bīd*].”¹³⁴

On the basis of this traditional account, assuming that we can accept it as genuinely authentic, it is clearly established that Adam (peace be upon him) was one of those for whom fasting was prescribed [*kutiba ’ṣ-ṣiyām*] before the time of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace). As we must not fail to mention, however, a different interpretation has been maintained by al-Ḥasan, whose view of this subject is shared by a significant group of learned experts in the field of Qur’ānic exegesis [*tafsīr*]:

“When Allāh (Exalted is He) speaks of ‘those before you [*alladhīna min qabli-kum*],’ He is referring specifically to the Christians [*an-Naṣārā*]. He has likened our form of fasting to their form of fasting, on account of the close correspondence between the two, in terms of the time involved and the rigorous extent of the practice.”

The fact of the matter is that Allāh (Exalted is He) did impose fasting during the month of Ramaḍān upon the Christians, as an obligatory religious duty. This proved to be extremely rigorous for them, however, since it [i.e., the lunar month of Ramaḍān] would sometimes come around during the season of intense heat, or in that of intense cold. It would also inconvenience them severely by interfering with their travel plans, and by disrupting the regular patterns of their daily lives. An agreement was therefore reached, by the common consent of their religious scholars [*’ulāmā’*] and their political leaders [*ru’asā’*], on a proposal whereby they would fix their period of fasting in the season of the year between winter and summer. Having thus assigned it to the spring, they also extended it by ten extra days, as a penance [*kaffāra*] to atone for what they had done, and so it became a period of forty days.

Some time after this, a certain king of theirs complained of an painful ache in his mouth, so he made a proposal to Allāh, promising to add another week to their fast [*ṣawm*], if he could be relieved of that painful

¹³⁴ See pp. 357–60 below.



ache. This resulted in their making a further extension to the period of fasting. Then that king died, and another king succeeded him as their ruler, at which point they finally rounded it out at fifty days.

It was Mujāhid¹³⁵ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “They were afflicted by a deadly plague, so their king said to them: ‘You must add more days to your period of fasting!’ So they added ten days to begin with, and another ten later on.”

It was ash-Sha‘bī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “Even if I were to fast during each and every day throughout the entire year, I would break my fast on the day concerning which there is some element of doubt, inasmuch as some may say it is [the last day] of Sha‘bān, while others are calling it [the first] of Ramaḍān.¹³⁶ My reason for being so scrupulous is that fasting during the month of Ramaḍān was once prescribed as a religious duty for the Christians, just as it is prescribed for us, but they transferred it to the season of Lent.¹³⁷ As their pretext for making this change, they complained that they sometimes had to fast during the intense heat of midsummer. They began by counting it as thirty days, but then along came another generation to take their place, and these newcomers acquired a great deal of confidence in themselves, so they fasted for an extra day before the thirty, and for another extra day thereafter. Then each subsequent generation would invariably follow the example set by the generation before them, until they had extended the period of fasting to a total of fifty days.”

Well then, fasting is indeed prescribed, as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said, even as it was prescribed for those before you:

in order that you may practice true devotion. (2:183)	<i>la‘alla-kum tattaqūn.</i>
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That is to say, in order that you may practice detachment from eating, drinking, and engaging in sexual intercourse.

The experts in Qur’ānic exegesis [*ahl at-tafsīr*] have also provided us with the following historical background information:

¹³⁵ Abu ‘l-Ḥajjāj Mujāhid ibn Jabr al-Makkī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a *Tābi‘ī* [member of the generation following that of the Companions] and a disciple of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father). By the time of his death, in A.H. 104, he had come to be regarded as one of the most outstanding scholars in the fields of Islāmic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and Qur’ānic exegesis [*tafsīr*].

¹³⁶ See p. 55 above.

¹³⁷ The term Lent has come down from Middle English (12th to 15th centuries), in which “lente” was the word meaning “springtime.”





“Allāh (Exalted is He) made it incumbent upon His Messenger, Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and upon all the true believers [*mu’minīn*], to fast on the Day of ‘Āshūrā¹³⁸ and on three days out of every month. This injunction was delivered to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) when he arrived at Medina [at the time of the Hijra, the Migration from Mecca]. So they made it their regular practice to observe these fasts, until [the Qur’ānic injunction concerning] the duty to fast in the month of Ramaḍān was revealed, one month and several days before the battle of Badr took place.”¹³⁹

Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

[Fast] a certain number of days. *ayyāman ma’ dūdat.*
(2:184)

What this signifies is that the month of Ramaḍān may last for thirty days, or for only twenty-nine days.

According to traditional report, Sa’īd ibn ‘Amr ibn Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ once heard Ibn ‘Umar (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and with his father) relating that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had said:

I and my Community [*Ummatī*] are simple folk without much formal education [*ummiyya*]. We do not make elaborate calculations, nor do we make a written record of the month, like so, and like so, and like so, in order to arrive at the total of thirty.¹⁴⁰

In Arabic, the lunar month is called *shahr*, because of its conspicuous nature [*shuhra*]. The words *shahr* and *shuhra* are both derived from the root *sh-h-r*, which conveys the basic idea of “clear visibility.” Verbs from the same root are used in several idiomatic expressions, such as *shahartu ’s-saif* [I have unsheathed the sword], and *shahara ’l-hilāl* [the new moon has come into view].

¹³⁸ See pp. 278–94 below.

¹³⁹ The battle of Badr, in which the Muslims won an important victory over the unbelievers of Quraish, was fought during the month of Ramaḍān in the second year of the *Hijra*.

¹⁴⁰ There is no need for such calculations and written records, of course, when the beginning and end of the period of fasting is determined by the appearance of the new moon, rather than by human arithmetic.





On the diverse opinions held by various experts concerning the significance of the term “Ramaḍān,” as it is used by Allāh (Exalted is He) in the Qur’ān.

The experts have failed to agree on the significance of the term “Ramaḍān,”¹⁴¹ as it is used by Allāh (Exalted is He) in the Qur’ānic verse [*āya*]:¹⁴²

[The time of fasting is] the month of Ramaḍān, in which the Qur’ān was sent down. (2:185)	<i>shahru Ramaḍāna ‘lladhī unzila fī-hi ‘l-Qur’ānu.</i>
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Some of those experts have declared: “Ramaḍān’ is one of the Names of Allāh (Exalted is He). This is why it is called ‘the month of Ramaḍān,’ just as Rajab is referred to as ‘the quiet month of Allāh [*shahru’llāh al-aṣamm*],’¹⁴³ and ‘the worshipful servant of Allāh [*‘abdu’llāh*].”

From one traditional report, transmitted by Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq¹⁴⁴ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) on the authority of his father and his grandfathers (may Allāh be well pleased with them all), we learn that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The month of Ramaḍān is Allāh’s month.

It was Anas ibn Mālīk¹⁴⁵ (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who

¹⁴¹ In the Arabic script, there is no distinction corresponding to that which exists between ‘upper case’ and ‘lower case’ in scripts derived from the Roman alphabet. This fact deserves emphatic repetition here, as a reminder that the Arabic spelling alone provides no clue as to whether a given word is a ‘proper’ noun or name, or merely a ‘common’ noun.’ (In certain scholarly journals, for this very reason, no capitalized letters whatsoever are used in the transliteration of Arabic texts, not even for the names of people and places.)

¹⁴² The month of Ramaḍān is the only month of the year to be mentioned by name in the entire Qur’ān, and this is the only Qur’ānic verse [*āya*] in which Allāh (Exalted is He) uses the term *Ramaḍān*.

¹⁴³ See p. 11 above.

¹⁴⁴ See note 125 on p. 70 above.

¹⁴⁵ See note 35 on p. 24 above.



stated that Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

Do not say “Ramaḍān” [as an independent unit within a sentence]. You must always use it as part of a particular grammatically construct phrase, just as Allāh (Exalted is He) has used it in the Qur’ān, for He has said:

the month of Ramaḍān. (2:185) *shahru Ramaḍāna.*

According to another traditional report, this one transmitted by al-Aṣma‘ī, Abū ‘Amr once said: “It came to be called ‘Ramaḍān’ for the simple reason that young camels, newly weaned from their mothers, were so badly scorched [*rumiḍat al-fiṣāl*] ¹⁴⁶ by the heat in the course of this month.”¹⁴⁷

Other authorities have maintained: “[It came to be called ‘Ramaḍān’] because, in the course of this month, the rocks and stones of the desert terrain would be scorched [*turmaḍu*] by the blistering heat. The [closely related] term *ramḍā’* is used as a collective noun, meaning “rocks and stones that have been rendered intensely hot.”

Yet others have said: “It was given the name ‘Ramaḍān’ because it has a scorching effect upon sins [*yurmiḍu ’dh-dhunūb*].” That is to say, it burns sins away. This explanation has also been attributed to the Prophet himself (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁴⁶ Like the noun *Ramaḍān*, the passive verb *rumiḍat* is derived from the triconsonantal root *r-m-d*, which conveys the basic idea of “being scorched; intensely heated by the sun.” According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, the expression *rumiḍat al-fiṣāl* means that the young camels, newly weaned from their mothers, “were affected by the heat of the sun from the ground, or stones, intensely heated thereby,” or that they “were forced to lie down, in consequence of the intense heat of the sand, and the burning of their feet.” (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *R-M-D*.)

¹⁴⁷ This explanation assumes that the month of Ramaḍān acquired its name during the historical period in which the calendar used by the people of Arabia was based on the solar year, so that Ramaḍān always coincided with the height of the summer season, when the desert heat was extremely intense.

As noted by Thomas Patrick Hughes (*Dictionary of Islam*, art. YEAR): “The ancient Arabian year is supposed to have consisted of twelve lunar months...; but about the year 412 C.E., the Arabians introduced a system of intercalation, whereby one month was intercalated into every three years.” This system of intercalation was eventually abolished, and the lunar year reinstated, near the end of the Prophet’s life on earth (Allāh bless him and give him peace). According to a report transmitted by Thawr ibn Yazīd, it was in the course of the sermon [*khutba*] he delivered during the Farewell Pilgrimage [*Hajjat al-Wadā’*] that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) uttered the words:

Time has swung around full circle, so that it is now divided according to the same calendrical pattern as on the day when Allāh created the heavens and the earth. The year has twelve months....





It has also been said: “Our hearts absorb a spiritual lesson from the heat [experienced while fasting], along with a reason to reflect on the state of the Hereafter, just as the sand and the stones absorb the effects of their exposure to the heat of the sun.”

To quote the words of [the early philologist and lexicographer] al-Khalīl [ibn Aḥmad]:¹⁴⁸ “The etymological source from which ‘Ramaḍān’ is derived is *ar-ramaḍ*, the Arabic term for a rain that arrives in the autumn. This month is therefore called ‘Ramaḍān’ because it washes the sins away from our physical bodies, and also causes our hearts to experience a process of purification.”



¹⁴⁸ According to Sir Hamilton Gibb: “The first systematic expositions [of Arabic philology] were made by al-Khalīl (d. 791),* an Arab from Oman. On the basis of ancient poetry, he worked out a complex metrical theory which has never been superseded, and he made the first attempt to compile a dictionary, arranged not in any of the various alphabetic orders adopted in later Arabic lexicons, but according to a phonetic scheme in which Indian influences have been suspected.” (H.A.R. Gibb. *Arabic Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 53.) The title of al-Khalīl’s lexicon is *Kitāb al-‘Ain* (because the first words listed in it were those beginning with the letter ‘ain). *In Arabic sources, his death is variously reported as A.H. 160 or 170 or 175.





Concerning various interpretations of the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

The month of Ramaḍān, in which the Qurʾān was sent down. (2:185)
shahru Ramaḍāna ʾl-ladhī unzila fī-hi ʾl-Qurʾānu.

According to a traditional report, ʿAṭiyya ibn al-Aswad once had a question [concerning this revelation] to put to Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), so he said:

“It seems that some uncertainty has arisen concerning His words (Exalted is He):

We have sent it down
on a blessed night. (44:3)

*innā anzalnā-hu
fī lailatin mubārakin.*

“This uncertainty is due to the fact that [portions of] the Qurʾān are known to have been sent down during other months, [and not only on one blessed night in the month of Ramaḍān].¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Allāh Himself (Exalted is He) has said:

And [it is] a Qurʾān that We
have divided, so that you may
recite it to the people at intervals.
(17:106)”

*wa Qurʾānan faraqnā-hu
li-taqrʾa-hu
ʿala ʾn-nāsi ʿalā mukthin.*

Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) responded to this by telling him:

“The Qurʾān was sent down as a single whole, from the Well-Kept Tablet [*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*], on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] in the month of Ramaḍān. It was thereupon installed in the House of Glory [*Bait al-ʿIzza*] in the heaven of this lower world. Then Gabriel (peace be upon him) brought it down and revealed it to the Prophet

¹⁴⁹ On p. 60 above, we are informed that:

According to Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and his father)..., the “blessed night” (44:3) is the night of mid-Shaʿbān, which is the Night of Absolution.





(Allāh bless him and give him peace) in a series of installments [*nujūman nujūmā*],¹⁵⁰ over the course of twenty-three years. Such, in fact, is the meaning conveyed by the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in the first of the following verses [*āyāt*] of the Qurʾān:

Oh no! I swear	<i>fa-lā uqsimu</i>
by the setting-places of the stars— ¹⁵¹	<i>bi-mawāqīʿi ʿn-nujūm:</i>
and that is a tremendous oath,	<i>wa inna-hu la-qasamun</i>
if you did but know—	<i>law taʿlamūna ʿazīm:</i>
that it is indeed a noble Qurʾān,	<i>inna-hu la-Qurʾānun karīm:</i>
in a Book kept hidden,	<i>fi Kitābin maknūn:</i>
which none shall touch	<i>lā yamassu-hu</i>
except the purified,	<i>illa ʿl-muṭahharūn:</i>
a revelation from	<i>tanzīlun min</i>
the Lord of the Worlds. (56:75–80)”	<i>Rabbi ʿl-ʿĀlamīn.</i>

Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind told someone he knew: “I once asked ash-Shaʿbī: ‘Was it only in the month of Ramaḍān that the Qurʾān was sent down? Was it not also sent down to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) at various times during the rest of the year?’ He answered my question by saying: ‘Oh yes, but the way it happened was this: Gabriel (peace be upon him) used to convey to Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), in Ramaḍān, the revelation sent down by Allāh. Then Allāh would then emphasize whatever He wished, fix whatever He wished in his memory, and cause him to forget whatever He wished.’”

According to a traditional report, transmitted by Shihāb on the authority of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī¹⁵² (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

¹⁵⁰ While the primary signification of the Arabic word *najm* (of which *nujūm* is the plural form) is “star; celestial body; constellation,” it can also mean “installment.”

¹⁵¹ This may fairly be described as a cautiously conservative translation of *bi-mawāqīʿi ʿn-nujūm*, in that it adheres to the interpretation reflected in the renderings adopted by M.M. Pickthall (“the places of the stars”), A. Yusuf Ali (“the setting of the stars”), and A.J. Arberry (“the fallings of the stars”). Maulana Muhammad Ali represents a sharp contrast, since he embraces with positive enthusiasm the interpretation attributed above to Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), and sees no reason to hesitate in offering the translation:

But nay, I swear by revelation of portions (of the Qurʾān)!

In a footnote, Maulana Muhammad Ali justifies this rendering with the statement: “The meaning adopted is in consonance with the context.... *Mawāqīʿ* is the plural of *mawqīʿ*, i.e., the time or place of the coming down of a thing, which is the revelation of the Qurʾān in this case.”

¹⁵² See note 23 on p. 18 above.





The Scrolls of Abraham [*Ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm*] (peace be upon him) were sent down on the third day of the month of Ramaḍān. The Torah of Moses [*Tawrāt Mūsā*] (peace be upon him) was sent down on the sixth day of the month of Ramaḍān. The Psalms of David [*Zabūr Dāwūd*] (peace be upon him) were sent down on the eighteenth day of the month of Ramaḍān. The Gospel of Jesus [*Injīl ʿĪsā*] (peace be upon him) was sent down on the thirteenth day of the month of Ramaḍān. As for the Criterion [*al-Furqān*], [i.e., the Qurʾān,] it was sent down to Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) on the twenty-fourth of the month of Ramaḍān.

Next, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has provided a description of the Qurʾān, for He has told us that it is:

A guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion. (2:185)	<i>hudan li'n-nāsi wa bayyinātin mina 'l-hudā wa 'l-Furqān.</i>
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As a guidance for mankind, it shows the way out of error. The clear proofs of the guidance are indisputable evidence of that which is lawful [*ḥalāl*] and that which is unlawful, of the restrictive statutes [*ḥudūd*]¹⁵³ and the rules of law [*aḥkām*]. The Criterion [*Furqān*] draws the distinction between the true [*ḥaqq*] and the false [*bāṭil*].



¹⁵³ In the terminology of Islamic law, *ḥudūd* can also mean “the penalties prescribed for those who trespass beyond the legal limits.” The specific punishments prescribed by Islāmic law [*ḥudūd*, plural of *ḥadd*], and the offences for which they are prescribed, are as follows: (1) For *zinā* in the sense of adultery: stoning [*rajm*]. (2) For *zinā* in the sense of fornication: one hundred lashes. (3) For *qadhf* [falsely accusing a married person of adultery]: eighty lashes. (4) For apostasy [*irtidād*]: death. (5) For drinking intoxicating beverages [*shurb*]: eighty lashes. (6) For theft [*sariqa*]: amputation of the right hand. (7) For highway robbery [*qat' aṭ-ṭariq*]: (a) amputation of hands and feet (for robbery only) or (b) death by the sword or crucifixion (for robbery with murder).





Concerning the excellent qualities that are peculiar to the month of Ramaḍān.

Shaikh Abū Naṣr [Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā'] has informed us, on good traditional authority,¹⁵⁴ that Salmān [al-Fārisī]¹⁵⁵ (may Allāh be well pleased with him) once said:

“Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) delivered a sermon for our benefit on the last day of Sha‘bān,¹⁵⁶ and this is what he told us:

O people, a mighty month has cast its protective shade to screen you. A blessed month, a month in which there is a night that is better than a thousand months! Allāh has made keeping the fast therein [*ṣiyāma-hu*] an obligatory religious duty [*farīḍa*], and the observance of night vigil therein [*qiyām laīli-hi*] a voluntary practice [*taṭawwu'*]. If someone seeks to draw near [to the Lord] therein by setting just one example of good conduct, or performs just one religious obligation, that person will be exactly the same as someone who discharges seventy religious obligations during all the other months of the year.

It is the month of patient endurance [*ṣabr*], and the reward for patient endurance is the Garden of Paradise. It is the month of charitable sharing [*muṣāwā'*], and it is the month in which the sustenance of the true believer [*mu'min*] is increased. So, if someone provides a breakfast meal for a person who is keeping the fast, this will result in forgiveness for his sins, and in his emancipation from the Fire of Hell. The benefactor will also be granted a reward equivalent to that earned by the recipient of his generosity, but without anything at all being deducted from the reward due to the latter.

“Not all of us can find what it takes to provide a breakfast meal for someone who is keeping the fast,’ said those who were listening to his

¹⁵⁴ **Author’s note:** Shaikh Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā' cites the following chain of transmission [*isnād*] for this report: His own father [Shaikh Abū ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdīllāh ibn al-Bannā']—Ibn al-Fāris—Abū Ḥamid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jalūdi an-Nisābūri—Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzaima—‘Alī ibn Ḥajar as-Sa‘di—Yūsuf ibn Ziyād—Hammām ibn Yahyā—‘Alī ibn Zaid ibn Ja’dān—Sa‘id ibn al-Musayyib—Salmān [al-Fārisī] (may Allāh be well pleased with him)—the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁵⁵ See note 39 on p. 26 above.

¹⁵⁶ The last day of the month of Sha‘bān is immediately followed by the first day of the month of Ramaḍān.





sermon, but the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) went on to say:

Allāh will grant this reward to anyone who gives some kind of breakfast nourishment to a person who is keeping the fast, even if it is merely a dried date, a drink of water, or a cup of diluted milk.

It is a month the beginning of which is a mercy, the middle of which is a forgiveness, and the last part of which is a deliverance from the Fire of Hell. So, if a slaveholder lightens the burden borne by his slave in this month, Allāh will forgive him and grant him freedom from the Fire of Hell.

During the course of this month, you must therefore cultivate four practices, and repeat them frequently. Two of these are practices by which you will earn your Lord's good pleasure, while the other two are practices that you simply cannot afford to do without. As for the two practices by which you will earn your Lord's good pleasure, they are testifying that there is no god except Allāh [*shahāda an lā ilāha illa 'llāh*] and begging Him for forgiveness. As for the two that you simply cannot afford to do without, they are imploring Allāh to grant you the Garden of Paradise, and taking refuge with Him from the Fire of Hell.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, if someone provides a satisfying breakfast meal, in the course of this month, for a person who is keeping the fast, Allāh (Exalted is He) will give the benefactor a drink from my Basin [*Hawd*], after which he will never feel thirsty again.¹⁵⁸

According to a traditional report transmitted by al-Kalbī, on the authority of Abū Naḍra, it was Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī¹⁵⁹ (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who stated that Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The gates of the Garden of Paradise and the gates of heaven will surely be flung open on the first night of the month of Ramaḍān, and they will not be closed again until the very last night thereof. Each time, without fail, that a male or female servant [of the Lord] performs the ritual prayer [*yuṣalli*] during any night of this month, Allāh will credit him or her with seventeen hundred good deeds for every act of prostration [*sajda*]. For that servant, He will build in the Garden of Paradise a house, made from a single red ruby, that has seventy doors. Each of those doors will have two leaves of gold, beautifully adorned with knobs fashioned from red ruby.

If someone keeps the fast on the first day of the month of Ramaḍān, Allāh will forgive him every sin until the last day of Ramaḍān, and his fasting will be an

¹⁵⁷ For traditional invocations of Divine refuge and protection, see Vol. 1, pp. 15, 85, 88, 106 and 338, and Vol. 2, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵⁸ In Vol. 1, pp. 237–38, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has devoted a lengthy subsection to the subject of the Basin of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁵⁹ Abū Sa'īd Sa'īd ibn Mālik ibn Sinān al-Khudrī al-Anṣārī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was a Companion of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) and a famous narrator of Tradition. He died in A.H. 74 or, according to some reports, in A.H. 63–64.





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expiation until that same point in time. For every day on which he keeps the fast, he will be granted a palatial mansion in the Garden of Paradise, equipped with a thousand doors made of gold. From early in the morning, seventy thousand angels will beg forgiveness on his behalf, although they will stay out of sight behind the curtain. For every act of prostration he performs, by night or by day, he will be granted a tree in Garden of Paradise, a tree in the shade of which a rider can travel for one hundred years without ever passing beyond it.

Shaikh Abū Naṣr [Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā'] has informed me, on good traditional authority,¹⁶⁰ that it was Abū Huraira¹⁶¹ (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who first reported this next saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

When the first night of the month of Ramaḍān has arrived, Allāh surveys His entire creation. If He takes notice of a particular servant of His, it means that He will never cause him to suffer torment, and a million have reason, every day, to thank Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for their deliverance from the Fire of Hell.

Shaikh Abū Naṣr [Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā'] has also informed me, on good traditional authority,¹⁶² that it was Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him) who first reported that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

As soon as Ramaḍān comes around, the gates of the Garden of Paradise are flung open, the gates of the Fire of Hell are shut and locked, and the devils [*shayāṭīn*] are shackled and tied up tight.

According to another traditional report, this one transmitted on the authority of Nāfi' ibn Burda, Abū Mas'ūd al-Ghifārī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) once heard these words being uttered by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

No servant [of the Lord], who keeps the fast for at least one day of Ramaḍān, can possibly fail to be married to a wife from among the brides of Paradise, those maidens with such lovely eyes [*al-hūr al-'īn*].¹⁶³ The wedding will take place

¹⁶⁰ **Author's note:** Shaikh Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā' cites the following chain of transmission [*isnād*] for this report: **His own father [Shaikh Abū 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abdī'llāh ibn al-Bannā']—al-A'raj—Abu Huraira** (may Allāh be well pleased with him)—**the Prophet** (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁶¹ See note 36 on p. 24 above.

¹⁶² **Author's note:** Shaikh Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā' cites the following chain of transmission [*isnād*] for this report: **His own father [Shaikh Abū 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abdī'llāh ibn al-Bannā']—Sahl—the father of Sahl—Abu Huraira** (may Allāh be well pleased with him)—**the Prophet** (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁶³ See note 42 on p. 26 above.





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inside a pavilion made from a single hollowed pearl. This fits the description given by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Fair maids, close-guarded *hūrūn maqṣūrātun*
in pavilions. (55:72) *fi 'l-khiyām.*

Every woman amongst them will be dressed in seventy fine articles of clothing, no item being the same as any other. She will be given seventy kinds of perfume, none with the same fragrance as any other. She will also be given seventy thronelike raised couches, made from a red ruby studded with pearls. Upon each of these couches there will be seventy cushions, and over every cushion there will be a canopy. Every woman will have seventy thousand pageboys to attend to her own needs, as well as seventy thousand maidservants to attend to the needs of her husband. Each of these maidservants will carry a dish made of gold, containing some kind of cooked food, the last morsel of which will be found to have a delicious flavor that went unnoticed in the first bite. Her husband will be given special treats like this, as he reclines upon a couch made from red ruby. Such will be his reward for every day on which he has kept the fast of Ramaḍān, quite apart from what he may have earned by performing charitable deeds!





Several traditional reports, including descriptions of how the month of Ramaḍān will be experienced by the inhabitants of the Garden of Paradise.

Shaikh Abū Naṣr [Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā'] has also informed me, on good traditional authority,¹⁶⁴ that Ibn 'Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) once heard these words being uttered by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The Garden of Paradise will surely be refurnished and redecorated from year to year, with the advent of the month of Ramaḍān. As soon as the first night of the month of Ramaḍān has arrived, a wind called the Whirlwind [*al-Muthīra*] will blow from beneath the Heavenly Throne [*al-'Arsh*]. The leaves [*awraq*] of the trees of the Garden of Paradise will be set in a state of commotion, and the rings on the leaves [*maṣāri'*] of the doors will be shaken and rattled. This will give rise to a rustling and tinkling sound, far more beautiful than anything the listeners ever heard ringing in their ears before.

The brides of Paradise, those maidens with such lovely eyes [*al-ḥūr al-'īn*],¹⁶⁵ will be splendidly adorned, until they are ready to stand in the midst of the most nobly distinguished company in the Garden of Paradise. They will then call out the invitation: "Is any suitor ready to present his suit to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so that He may marry him [to one of us]?" Then they will turn to Riḍwān [the angelic custodian of the Garden of Paradise]¹⁶⁶ and ask him: "What night is this?" Displaying an eager willingness to be of service [*talbiyya*],¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ **Author's note:** Shaikh Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā' cites the following chain of transmission [*isnād*] for this report: His own father [Shaikh Abū 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abdi'llāh ibn al-Bannā']—Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad [al-Ḥāfiẓ]—'Abdu'llāh ibn Muḥammad—Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn 'Abdi'llāh ibn Muḥammad—al-Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yasār and Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥārith—Salama ibn Shubaib—al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad—Hishām ibn al-Walid—Ḥammād ibn Sulaimān ad-Dawsī—al-Ḥasan—aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn al-Muzāḥim—Ibn 'Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father)—the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁶⁵ See note 42 on p. 26 above.

¹⁶⁶ As an ordinary noun, the Arabic word *riḍwān* means "approval; consent; good pleasure." In the standard works of reference, the angel called Riḍwān is variously described as the porter, the gardener, the doorkeeper, the keeper, the guardian, the treasurer, or the custodian of Paradise.

¹⁶⁷ The term *talbiyya* [(the expression of) willing compliance] is the verbal noun corresponding to the declaration "*Labbāik!*" which signifies: "Here I am, doubly at your service!" or, "I wait intent upon your service, time and time again." The Arabic use of the dual form (indicated by the word "doubly" in English translation) may also imply the meaning "inwardly and outwardly."



he will respond to their question by saying: “O lovely good ladies, this is the first night of the month of Ramaḍān, the night when the gates of the Garden of Paradise are opened for the sake of those members of the Community [*Umma*] of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who are keeping the fast.”

In confirmation of these words, Allāh (Exalted is He) will promptly say: “O Ridwān, open the gates of all the Gardens of Paradise! O Mālik,¹⁶⁸ shut the doors of the blazing Fire of Hell [*Jahīm*], to keep out those members of the Community [*Umma*] of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who are keeping the fast. O Gabriel, go down to the earth below, shackle the defiant and rebellious devils [*maradat ash-shayāṭīn*], and tie them up securely with fetters and chains. Then cast them into the deepest depths of the oceans, so that they cannot meddle with the Community of My beloved friend [*ḥabībī*], Muḥammad, and spoil their experience of fasting.”

According to this same report, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) then went on to say:

On each and every night of the month of Ramaḍān, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say three times: “Does anyone have a request to make, so that I may grant his request? Is there anyone who wishes to repent, so that I may relent toward him and accept his repentance? Is there anyone wishing to seek forgiveness, so that I may forgive him? Who would make a loan to a rich man, as opposed to one who is impoverished, and to a person who is fully in control of his affairs, as opposed to one who is the victim of injustice?”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) continued further:

On each and every day of the month of Ramaḍān, by the time when the fast is duly broken [*iftār*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will have delivered a million of His servants from the Fire of Hell, even though all of them had incurred the penalty of damnation. Moreover, when the night of the Day of Congregation [*Jum‘a*] comes around, and on the Day of Congregation itself, it will be during every single hour that Allāh (Exalted is He) delivers a million of His servants from the Fire of Hell, even though all of them had incurred the penalty of damnation. As for what will happen on the last day of the month of Ramaḍān, on that day Allāh will deliver a number equal to the total of all those He has delivered between the first of the month and the last.

As soon as the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] has arrived, Allāh (Exalted is He) will give the order to Gabriel (peace be upon him), who will promptly descend to the earth below, traveling in a throng of angels and bearing a green banner, which he will set up on top of the Ka‘ba. Gabriel (peace be upon him) has no fewer than six hundred wings, which he only unfolds on the Night of Power

¹⁶⁸ As an ordinary adjectival noun, the Arabic word *mālik* means “one who exercises control.” The angel Mālik is charged with the custody of Hell and the supervision of its inmates, as they suffer the torments of damnation. Unlike Ridwān, his counterpart in Paradise, Mālik is mentioned by name in the Qur‘ān, where Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And they shall cry out: “O Mālik, let your Lord make an end of us!” But he will say: “Here you must surely remain.” (43:77)

*wa nādaw yā Māliku
li-yaqdi ‘alai-nā Rabbu-k.
qāla inna-kum mākithīn.*





[*Lailat al-Qadr*]. He will therefore spread them on that night, and, by so doing, he will span the entire distance between the East and the West. Gabriel (peace be upon him) will command the angels to infiltrate into this Community [*Umma*], so they will insert themselves unobtrusively among its members. They will then give the greeting of peace to every believer who is found to be observing the night vigil [*qā'im*], performing the ritual prayer [*muṣallī*], and practicing the remembrance of Allāh [*dhākir*]. They will exchange greetings with them, and say “*āmīn*” to their prayers of supplication [*yu'aminūna 'alā du'ā' i-him*], until the break of dawn.

At this point, Gabriel (peace be upon him) will cry out: “O company of angelic friends [*iyā ma'shar al-awliyā'*], now is the moment for us to be homeward bound!” But they will ask: “O Gabriel, what has Allāh done to meet the needs of the believers [*mu'minīn*] belonging to the Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace)?” So he will respond to this by saying: “Allāh (Exalted is He) has scrutinized them carefully, and He has pardoned and forgiven them all, with only four exceptions.”

Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was quick to explain:

These are the four exceptions: Anyone who is addicted to intoxicating liquor [*mudmin khamr*]; anyone who is disobedient and disrespectful toward his parents [*'āq wālidai-hi*]; anyone who is guilty of disrupting a bond of kinship [*qāṭi' riḥm*]; and anyone who is virulently rancorous [*mushāḥin*].

When people asked: “O Messenger of Allāh, what kind of a person is the *mushāḥin* [virulently rancorous individual]?” he replied: “Someone who is *muṣārim* [spitefully reluctant to abandon a grudge, and stubbornly unwilling to accept the restoration of good relations with anyone who has offended him].”¹⁶⁹ He then went on to say (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

When the month of Ramaḍān is over, and the night of the [Festival of] Fast Breaking [*al-Fitr*] has arrived, that night is called the Night of the Prize [*Lailat al-Jā'iza*]. Then, in the early morning of the [Festival of] Fast Breaking, Allāh (Exalted is He) will send His angels forth to visit all the towns and cities on the earth below. Once they have made their descent, they will position themselves at the entrances to all the streets and alleys. There, in a voice that is audible to every being created by Allāh (Exalted is He), apart from the jinn and humankind, they will issue a proclamation, saying: “O Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), come forth into the presence of a Noble and Generous Lord [*Rabb Karīm*], who will grant you gifts in abundance, and forgive your terrible sin!”

¹⁶⁹ In later centuries, when the proliferation of sectarian movements increasingly threatened to dismember the Community, defenders of the orthodox tradition of Islām would seize upon this saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), interpreting the word *mushāḥin* to mean “virulently and aggressively schismatic.”





Then, when the believers have emerged and presented themselves at their place of prayer [*muṣallā*], Allāh (Exalted is He) will say to His angels: “O My angels, what is the recompense of the hired laborer, once he has done his job?”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) continued:

The angels will reply: “Our God [*Ilāh*] and our Master [*Sayyid*], You will pay him his wages in full!” So He will say: “I now call upon you to bear witness, O My angels, that I have conferred My acceptance and My forgiveness, as the reward for their fasting [*ṣiyām*] and night vigil [*qiyām*] during the month of Ramaḍān.”

Then He will say: “O My human servants, put your requests to Me now, for this I swear, by My Might and My Majesty: You will not ask Me this day, in this gathering of yours, for anything connected with your life hereafter, without My granting it to you; nor for anything connected with your life in this lower world, without My attending to your need. By My Might and My Majesty, I will surely condone the false steps you make, as long as you are consciously alert in the effort to avoid incurring My displeasure. By My Might and My Majesty, I will not put you to shame, nor will I expose you to disgrace amongst those who are faithfully committed to observing the statutes [*ḥudūd*].¹⁷⁰ Now you may depart, knowing that you have been forgiven. You have won My approval, and I am well pleased with you.”

This traditional report¹⁷¹ concludes with the following words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The angels will then be very happy, as they welcome the good news of all that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will bestow upon this Community, when its members break the fast they have kept through the month of Ramaḍān.

Shaikh Abū Naṣr [Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā’] has also informed me, on good traditional authority,¹⁷² that Abū Mas‘ūd al-Ghifārī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) stated that he had heard the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) say, on the day when the appearance of the new moon marked the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān:¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ See note 153 on p. 83 above.

¹⁷¹ **Author’s note:** A similar traditional report, with a close correspondence in the actual wording, has come down to us through a different chain of transmission, although the earliest links are the same, namely: **ad-Dahhāk ibn al-Muzāḥim—Ibn ‘Abbās** (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father)—**the Prophet** (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁷² **Author’s note:** Shaikh Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Bannā’ cites the following chain of transmission [*isnād*] for this report: **His own father [Shaikh Abū ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdī’llāh ibn al-Bannā’]—Nāfi’—Abū Mas‘ūd al-Ghifārī** (may Allāh be well pleased with him)—**the Prophet** (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

¹⁷³ With certain differences in the wording, as well as some omissions and several additions, most elements of this traditional report are included in two such reports already cited in this Discourse (see pp. 86–88 above). The mention of the Khuzā’a tribesman is the one ingredient that does not occur in either of the other two reports.





If the servants [of the Lord] only knew what the month of Ramaḍān contains, those servants of His would dearly wish that the month of Ramaḍān could be a whole year!

On hearing this, a man from [the tribal group of] Khuzā'a exclaimed: "O Messenger of Allāh, do tell us all about it!" So Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) responded by saying:

The Garden of Paradise will surely be adorned for the sake of the month of Ramaḍān, from the beginning of the year and on through the whole of the intervening period. Then, as soon as the first night of the month of Ramaḍān has arrived, a wind will blow from beneath the Heavenly Throne [*al-'Arsh*], causing the leaves of the trees of the Garden of Paradise to be set in a state of commotion.

The brides of Paradise, those maidens with such lovely eyes [*al-hūr al-'im*], will regard this as a good omen, so they will say: "O Lord, pray grant us from among Your male servants, in this month, such husbands that our eyes will be soothed by them, and their eyes will be soothed by us!" No servant [of the Lord], who keeps the fast through the month of Ramaḍān, can possibly fail to be married to a wife from among the brides of Paradise, those maidens with such lovely eyes [*al-hūr al-'im*]. The wedding will take place inside a pavilion made from a single hollowed pearl. This fits the description given by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Fair maids, close-guarded *hūrūn maqṣūrātun*
in pavilions. (55:72) *fi 'l-khiyām.*

Every woman amongst them will be dressed in seventy fine articles of clothing, no item being the same as any other. She will be given seventy kinds of perfume, none with the same fragrance as any other. She will also be given seventy throne-like raised couches, made from red rubies and studded with pearls. Upon each of these couches there will be seventy cushions, the lining of which will consist of thick silk brocade interwoven with gold [*istabraq*],¹⁷⁴ and over every cushion there will be seventy canopies.

Every woman amongst them will have seventy thousand pageboys to attend to her own needs, as well as seventy thousand maidservants to attend to the needs of her husband. Each of these maidservants will carry a dish made of gold, containing some kind of cooked food, the last morsel of which will be found to have a delicious flavor that went unnoticed in the first bite. Her husband will be given special treats like this, as he reclines upon a couch made from a single red ruby, wearing two bracelets of gold inlaid with sapphires. Such will be the reward of one who has kept the fast through the month of Ramaḍān, quite apart from what he may have earned by performing charitable deeds!

According to another traditional report, transmitted by Qatāda¹⁷⁵ on

¹⁷⁴ According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, the term *istabraq* is properly applied to thick *dībāj* [silk brocade], or, more precisely, to "closely woven, thick, beautiful *dībāj* [silk brocade] interwoven with gold." (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. B-R-Q and art. D-B-J.)

¹⁷⁵ Abu 'l-Khattāb Qatāda ibn Di'āma ibn Qatāda as-Sadūsī (d. A.H. 118). Learned in Qur'ānic exegesis [*tafsīr*] and Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*], he was also an authority on Arabic poetry.





the authority of Anas ibn Mālik ¹⁷⁶ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

As soon as the first night of the month of Ramaḍān has arrived, the All-Majestic One [*al-Jalīl*] (Magnificent is His Glory) will summon Riḍwān, the keeper [*khāzin*]¹⁷⁷ of the Garden of Paradise. The ever-obedient Riḍwān will present himself at once, saying: “I wait intent upon Your service, time and time again, and upon aiding Your cause, time and time again [*labbaika wa sa’ daik!*]¹⁷⁸” The Lord will then tell him: “You must refurbish and redecorate My Garden of Paradise, for the sake of those members of the Community [*Umma*] of Aḥmad who are keeping the fast.

Next, He will summon Mālik,¹⁷⁹ the keeper [*khāzin*] of the Fire of Hell, with the call: “O Mālik!” The ever-obedient Mālik will present himself at once, saying: “I wait intent upon Your service, time and time again, and upon aiding Your cause, time and time again [*labbaika wa sa’ daik!*]” The Lord will then tell him: “Shut the doors of the blazing Fire of Hell [*Jahīm*], so as to lock out those members of the Community [*Umma*] of Aḥmad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who are keeping the fast. Then do not reopen those doors to them until they have completed their month of fasting.”

At this point, He will summon Gabriel (peace be upon him), who will present himself at once, saying: “I wait intent upon Your service, time and time again, and upon aiding Your cause, time and time again [*labbaika wa sa’ daik!*]” The Lord will then tell him: “You must go down to the earth below, in order to shackle the defiant and rebellious devils [*maradat ash-shayātīn*], so that they cannot meddle with the Community of Aḥmad, and spoil their experience of fasting and breaking fast.”

On each and every day of the month of Ramaḍān, at the rising of the sun and also at the time of breaking fast [*iftār*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will have countless servants, male and female, delivered from damnation to the Fire of Hell.

In each of the seven heavens, He has an angelic herald ever at the ready. One of these is an angel whose crest [*urf*] is just beneath the Throne of the Lord of All the Worlds [*‘Arsh Rabbi ‘L-‘Ālamīn*], while the padded soles of his feet [*farāsīn*] are planted on the farthest edges of the seventh and lowest earth. He has one wing in the East, and one wing in the West. Adorned with a diadem of corals, pearls and gems, he will proclaim [on behalf of his Lord]: “Is there anyone ready to repent, so that his repentance may be accepted? Is there anyone ready to make a plea, so that his request may be answered? Is there anyone suffering injustice, so that Allāh may come to his aid? Is there anyone seeking forgiveness, so that Allāh may forgive him? Is there anyone with a petition to make, so that his petition may be granted?”

¹⁷⁶ See note 35 on p. 24 above.

¹⁷⁷ See note 166 on p. 88 above.

¹⁷⁸ See note 167 on p. 88 above.

¹⁷⁹ See note 168 on p. 89 above.





According to the same traditional report, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) then went on to say:

Throughout the entire month [of Ramaḍān], the Lord (Exalted is the Mention of His Name) will go on issuing this call: “My servants, men and women alike! Be of good cheer, be patient, and steadily persevere! I am about to grant you relief from trouble and pain, and you will shortly attain to My mercy and My generous favor.”

As soon as the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] has arrived, Gabriel (peace be upon him) will descend in the midst of a throng of angels. As they alight, they will pronounce benedictions upon every servant [of the Lord], who, whether standing erect or sitting down, is diligently engaged in the remembrance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

According to another traditional report, also transmitted on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik (may Allāh be well pleased with him), Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

If Allāh were ever to allow the heavens and the earth to speak, they would surely greet those who keep the fast of Ramaḍān, hailing them with glad tidings of the Garden of Paradise.

According to yet another traditional report, this one transmitted from ‘Abdu’llāh ibn Abī Awfā (may Allāh be well pleased with him), Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The sleep of one who keeps the fast is an act of worshipful service [*‘ibāda*], his silence is a declaration of the glory of the Lord [*tasbīḥ*],¹⁸⁰ his prayer of supplication [*du‘ā*] is sure to be accepted, and the merit of every good deed he performs is sure to be multiplied.

According to al-A‘mash,¹⁸¹ Abū Khaithama (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said: “They used to say: ‘Ramaḍān in the case of Ramaḍān, the Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj*] in the case of the Pilgrimage, the Day of Congregation [*Jum‘a*] in the case of the Day of Congregation, and the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] in the case of the ritual prayer. These are sufficient in themselves as expiations [*kaffārāt*] for sins committed during their observance,¹⁸² so long as the major sins [*kaḅā’ir*] are avoided.’”

As we learn from traditional reports, the Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*], ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased

¹⁸⁰ In other words, his silence is actually proclaiming: “*subḥāna’llāh* [Glory be to Allāh]!” (The term *tasbīḥ* is a verbal noun, derived from the same root—*s-b-ḥ*—as the word *subḥān*.)

¹⁸¹ Abū Muḥammad al-A‘mash Sulaimān ibn Mihrān al-Kūfī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was a famous Qur’ān-reader and narrator of Prophetic tradition. He died. ca. A.H. 148.

¹⁸² In the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), cited on pp. 85–86 above: If someone keeps the fast on the first day of the month of Ramaḍān, Allāh will forgive him every sin until the last day of Ramaḍān, and his fasting will be an expiation until that same point in time.





with him) used to say, at the advent of the month of Ramaḍān: “Welcome to a month that is good in its entirety! Its days are devoted to keeping the fast [*ṣiyām*], and its nights to the practice of vigil [*qiyām*], while the outlay of funds [*nafaqa*] for its sake is like the disbursement of funds for the sake of the cause of Allāh [*fi sabīli ’llāh*].”

According to another traditional report, transmitted on the authority of Abū Huraira¹⁸³ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

If someone keeps the fast and observes the night vigil during Ramaḍān, as a matter of faith [*īmān*] and in anticipation of Allāh’s favor in the Hereafter, but with no expectation of worldly reward [*iḥtisāban*], he will be forgiven his earlier sins, as well as those committed recently.

From another traditional report, also transmitted on the authority of Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him), we learn that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

For every good deed or practice performed by a human being [*ibn Ādam*] belonging to my Community [*Ummatī*], the merit will be multiplied at least ten times, and up to to seven hundred times in some cases. The sole exception is the fast [*ṣawm*], for Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us:¹⁸⁴

The fast belongs to Me, and I provide its recompense. [When someone keeps the fast] he is abstaining from his carnal desire, his eating and his drinking, for My sake.

The fast is a suit of armor [*junna*]. Moreover, two occasions of joy are in store for the person who is keeping the fast: joy at the moment of breaking his fast [*iftār*], and joy at the moment of meeting his Lord.

We have been informed by Shaikh Imām Abu ’l-Barakāt [‘Father of Blessings’] Hibatu’llāh ibn al-Mubāarak as-Saqaṭī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), on the authority of Yazīd ibn Hārūn, that al-Mas’ūdī once said:

“It has come to my attention that if someone, while performing voluntary worship [*tatawwu’*] at night in the month of Ramaḍān, recites [the words addressed by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace)]:

We have surely given you
a signal victory. (48:1)

*innā fataḥnā la-ka
fataḥan mubīnā.*

—that person will receive a guarantee of safekeeping for the whole of that year.”

¹⁸³ See note 36 on p. 24 above.

¹⁸⁴ Variants of this Divine Saying [*Hadith Qudsī*] have been recorded by several notable authorities, including Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim. See: William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*; Mouton, The Hague and Paris, 1977; pp. 186–189.





On the significance of each of the five letters in the word “Ramaḍān” [as that word is spelled in the Arabic script].

The word “Ramaḍān” [as written in the Arabic script] is made up of five letters, namely, *rāʾ*, *mīm*, *ḍād*, *alif* and *nūn*.¹⁸⁵ The initial letter *rāʾ* stands for *riḍwānuʾllāh* [Allāh’s good pleasure]. The letter *mīm* stands for *muḥābātuʾllāh* [the considerate and favorable disposition of Allāh]. The letter *ḍād* stands for *ḍamānuʾllāh* [Allāh’s guarantee, meaning His assurance of spiritual reward]. The letter *alif* stands for *ulfaṭuʾllāh* [the intimate affection and nearness of Allāh].¹⁸⁶ The final letter *nūn* stands for *nūruʾllāh* [the radiant light of Allāh].¹⁸⁷

This means that the month of Ramaḍān is the month of considerate behavior, the giving of assurance, the sharing of intimate affection, the shedding of light, the bestowal of benefits, and generous respect for the saints [*awliyāʾ*] and the righteous [*abrār*].

As someone once said: “In comparison with the other months, the status of Ramaḍān is like that of the heart within the breast, like that of the Prophets [*Anbiyāʾ*] within the human race, and like that of the Sacred Territory of Mecca [*al-Ḥaram*] among the cities of the world.

“To clarify these points of comparison (in reverse order): The accursed False Messiah [*ad-Dajjāl*] will be denied access to the Sacred Territory of Mecca [*al-Ḥaram*], just as the defiant and rebellious agents of Satan [*maradat ash-Shaiṭān*] are kept shackled and chained in the

¹⁸⁵ See note 141 on p. 78 above.

¹⁸⁶ In the Arabic script, an initial letter *alif* merely serves to indicate that the word concerned begins with a vowel. An extra sign is sometimes added to indicate whether that vowel is *a*, *i*, or *u*. When *alif* occurs between two consonants, however, (e.g., between the letters *ḍād* and *nūn* in the word *Ramaḍān*) it indicates the long vowel *ā*.

¹⁸⁷ In the Thirtieth Discourse of *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalāʾ al-Khawāṭir*], the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has suggested the following explanations:

The initial *rāʾ* stands for *rahma* [mercy] and *raʾfa* [compassionate kindness]. The *mīm* stands for *mujāzāt* [recompense], *mahabba* [loving affection] and *minna* [gracious favor]. The *ḍād* stands for *ḍamān* [guarantee], meaning the assurance of spiritual reward. The *alif* is the first letter of the Arabic word *ulfa*, meaning intimate affection and nearness. The final *nūn* stands for *nūr* [light] and *nawāl* [receiving benefit].



month of Ramaḍān.¹⁸⁸ [On the Day of Resurrection] the Prophets [*Anbiyā'*] will be intercessors [*shufa'ā'*] on behalf of those who are guilty of sinful offenses, just as the month of Ramaḍān will be an intercessor [*shafi'*] on behalf of those who have kept the fast. The heart is beautified and adorned by spiritual experience [*ma'rifa*] and faith [*īmān*], just as the month of Ramaḍān is beautified and adorned by the light of the recitation of the Qur'ān.

“If a person does not receive forgiveness in the month of Ramaḍān, in which month can he hope to have his sins forgiven? The servant [of the Lord] must therefore turn in repentance to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), before the doors of repentance [*tawba*] are locked and bolted. He must turn to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) in repentance [*tawba*], before the time for returning to obedience [*ināba*] has slipped away beyond recall.¹⁸⁹ Let him also weep, before the time for weeping and compassion [*raḥma*] has expired.

“As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

“The members of my Community [*Ummatī*] will not be put to shame, so long as they observe the night vigil during the month of Ramaḍān.”

“On hearing this, a man asked: ‘O Prophet of Allāh, what does result in their being put to shame?’ So he replied:

“If someone is guilty, during month of Ramaḍān, of violating a sacred ordinance [*mahram*], of committing an evil deed, of drinking intoxicating liquor, or of committing adultery or fornication, [his fasting in] Ramaḍān will not be accepted of him. Allāh and His angels and all those who dwell in the heavens will curse him, and the curse will remain in effect until the same point of time in the year ahead. If he happens to die in the interval before the next Ramaḍān comes around, he will die without having even one good deed to his credit in the sight of Allāh.”

¹⁸⁸ See the traditional reports cited on p. 89 and p. 93 above. (In those reports, the expression *maradat ash-shayāṭīn* [defiant and rebellious devils] is used, rather than *maradat ash-Shaiṭān* [defiant and rebellious agents of Satan].)

¹⁸⁹ In certain contexts, the terms *tawba* and *ināba* are virtually synonymous, so “repentance” is often a satisfactory equivalent for either. Significant distinctions are sometimes drawn, however, as the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has explained in Vol. 2, p. 204, where he tells us that, according to Abū 'Alī ad-Daqqāq (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him):

“Repentance has three parts or stages: (1) *tawba*, which is an initial stage; (2) *ināba*, which is an intermediate stage; and (3) *awba*, which is an ultimate stage. The term *tawba* applies to the repentance of one who repents because of the fear of punishment. The term *ināba* applies to the repentance of one who is motivated by the desire for reward or the dreadful prospect of chastisement. The term *awba* applies to the repentance of one who repents in deference to the Divine commandment, not because of the desire for reward or the fear of chastisement.”





**An anonymous saying,
in which every sentence begins:
“The chieftain [*sayyid*] of...is....”**

As someone once said:

“The chieftain of the human race [*sayyid al-bashar*] is Adam (peace be upon him).

“The chieftain of the Arabs [*sayyid al-‘Arab*] is Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

“The chieftain of the Persians [*sayyid al-Furs*] is Salmān [al-Fārisī] (may Allāh be well pleased with him).¹⁹⁰

“The chieftain of the Greeks [*sayyid ar-Rūm*] is Ṣuḥaib [ar-Rūmī] (may Allāh be well pleased with him).¹⁹¹

“The chieftain of the Abyssinians [*sayyid al-Ḥabash*] is Bilāl (may Allāh be well pleased with him).¹⁹²

“The chieftain of the towns [*sayyid al-qurā*] is Mecca.

“The chieftain of the valleys [*sayyid al-awdiya*] is the valley of the Temple of Jerusalem [*wādī Bait al-Maqdis*].¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ See note 39 on p. 26 above .

¹⁹¹ Ṣuḥaib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was one of the very first to acknowledge the Mission of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and so to accept Islām. Although he was the son of Arab parents, he acquired the nickname “ar-Rūmī [the Greek]” because, while only a boy, he had been captured and enslaved by the Byzantine Greeks [*ar-Rūm*].

¹⁹² Bilāl (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was the first muezzin [*mu’ adhdhin*] appointed by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to summon the Muslim community to the five daily prayers. He was an Abyssinian slave who had been ransomed by Abū Bakr (may Allāh be well pleased with him).

¹⁹³ In Arabic, the Temple of Jerusalem is called either *Bait al-Maqdis* or *Bait al-Muqaddas*. In either case, the literal meaning is “the House of the Holy Land.” (Faced with an Arabic text in which the spelling is simply *m-q-d-s*, with no marks to indicate vowels or doubled consonants, the translator can only guess at the reading originally preferred!)





“The chieftain of the days of the week [*sayyid al-ayyām*] is Friday, the Day of Congregation [*Yawm al-Jum‘a*].

“The chieftain of the nights [*sayyid al-layālī*] is the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*].

“The chieftain of the Books of Scripture [*sayyid al-Kutub*] is the Qur’ān.

“The chieftain of the Qur’ān [*sayyid al-Qur’ān*] is the Chapter entitled ‘The Cow’ [*Sūrat al-Baqara*].¹⁹⁴

“The chieftain of the Chapter entitled ‘The Cow’ [*sayyid Sūrat al-Baqara*] is the Verse of the Throne [*Āyat al-Kursī*].¹⁹⁵

“The chieftain of the stones [*sayyid al-ahjār*] is the Black Stone [*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*].¹⁹⁶

“The chieftain of the wells [*sayyid al-ab‘ār*] is Zamzam.¹⁹⁷

“The chieftain of the staffs [*sayyid al-‘uṣṭī*] is the Staff of Moses [*‘Aṣā Mūsā*] (peace be upon him).

“The chieftain of the fishes [*sayyid al-ḥītān*] is the whale [*ḥūt*] that once carried Jonah [*Yūnus*] (peace be upon him) inside its belly.

“The chieftain of the she-camels [*sayyid an-nūq*] is the she-camel [*nāqa*] of Ṣāliḥ (peace be upon him).¹⁹⁸

“The chieftain of the horses [*sayyid al-afrās*] is al-Burāq.¹⁹⁹

“The chieftain of the signet rings [*sayyid al-khawātim*] is the seal of Solomon [*khātām Sulaimān*] (peace be upon him).

“The chieftain of the months [*sayyid ash-shuhūr*] is the month of Ramaḍān.”

¹⁹⁴ *Sūrat al-Baqara* is the second—and longest—Chapter in the Qur’ān.

¹⁹⁵ Q. 2:255.

¹⁹⁶ The Black Stone [*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*] is embedded in the sharp angle of the Ka‘ba in the Sanctuary of Mecca.

¹⁹⁷ The well called Zamzam is situated within the precincts of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca.

¹⁹⁸ Ṣāliḥ, of the tribe of Thamūd, was one of the Prophets of Arabia (peace be upon them) who are not mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures. The story of his she-camel is told in Qur’ān:

So they hamstrung the she-camel, and they flouted the commandment of their Lord, and they said: “O Ṣāliḥ! Bring your threats to bear upon us, if you are indeed one of those sent [by Allāh].” So the earthquake caught them unawares, and morning found them lying prostrate in their place of abode. (7:77,78)

¹⁹⁹ According to traditional reports, al-Burāq is the name of the fabulous animal which the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) mounted on the night of his Heavenly Ascension [*Mi‘rāj*].





Concerning the excellent properties of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*].

Let us now consider the significance of the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

Behold, We sent it down
on the Night of Power.

*innā anzalnā-hu
fi Lailati 'l-Qadr.*

And what has made you know
what is the Night of Power?

*wa mā adrā-ka
mā Lailatu 'l-Qadr.*

The Night of Power is better
than a thousand months.

*Lailatu 'l-Qadri khairun
min alfi shahr.*

In it the angels
and the Spirit come down
by their Lord's permission,
on every errand.

*tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu
wa 'r-Rūhu fi-hā
bi-idhni Rabbi-him
min kulli amr.*

Peace it is, until
the rising of the of dawn. (97:1–5)

*salāmun hiya
hattā maṭla'ī 'l-fajr.*

First of all, we should note that the object pronoun *-hu* [it] in *anzalnā-hu* [We sent it down] is an allusion to the Qur'ān. Allāh (Exalted is He) sent it down from the Well-Kept Tablet [*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*] to the heaven of this lower world—to the Scribes [*as-Safara*], they being the clerks or secretaries among the angels. It would thus come down on that particular night, from the Tablet, to the extent that Gabriel (peace be upon him) was to reveal it—with the permission of Allāh (Exalted is He)—to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in the course of the whole year. The same procedure would then be applied in each subsequent year, until the entire Qur'ān had come down, on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] in the month of Ramaḍān, to the heaven of this lower world.

Ibn 'Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) was offering an interpretation also proposed by other authorities, when



he gave the following commentary on:

Behold, We sent it down *innā anzalnā-hu*
on the Night of Power. (97:1) *fi Lailati 'l-Qadr.*

“This means: ‘We sent Gabriel down with this Sūra, and with the whole of the Qur’ān—on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*—to the recording angels. Then it came down after that, by installments [*najman najmā*], to Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace)—during a period of twenty-three years, and in all the months, days, nights, and moments of time.’”

As for His statement (Exalted is He):

on the Night of Power. *fi Lailati 'l-Qadr.*

—this means: “on a tremendous or stupendous night [*laila ‘aẓīma*],” or, as some have maintained: “on the Night of the Divine Decree [*Lailat al-Hukm*].” It is called the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] in order to proclaim the immensity of the night itself, and to emphasize its potency [*qadr*], because it is then that Allāh (Exalted is He) predetermines [*yuqaddiru*] how things are to be throughout the year, until the same night of the year that lies ahead.

Then He has said (Exalted is He):

And what has made you know *wa mā adrā-ka*
what is the Night of Power? (97:2) *mā Lailatu 'l-Qadr.*

In other words: “O Muḥammad, if it were not for the fact that Allāh has made you realize its tremendous importance, [how could you have known]?” For the fact is that, in every instance where the question posed in the Qur’ān is in the past tense—“and what has made you know [*wa mā adrā-ka*]?”—Allāh had already imparted the relevant knowledge to him. On the other hand, whenever the question posed therein is in the future tense—“and what will make you know [*wa mā yudrī-ka*]?”—the implication is that He had not let him know, and had not imparted the relevant knowledge to him. For example, consider His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And what will make you know? *wa mā yudrī-ka*
It may be that the Hour is near. *la’alla ‘s-Sā’ata takūnu qarībā.*
(33:63)

The timing of the Hour [of the Resurrection] had not become clear





to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), so he was asked: “and what will make you know [*wa mā yudrī-ka*] ?” rather than: “and what has made you know [*wa mā adrā-ka*]?”

The following point should also be noted, concerning the night which He has described (Exalted is He) as “the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*],” that is to say, the Night of Sublime Majesty and Wisdom [*Lailat al-‘Aẓama wa ‘l-Ḥikma*]: According to some authorities, this is the blessed night referred to in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

We sent it down on a blessed night... in which every firm decree is made distinct. (44:3,4)	<i>innā anzalnā-hu fī lailatin mubārakatin... fī-hā yufraqu kullu amrin ḥakīm.</i>
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Next, He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)	<i>Lailatu ‘l-Qadri khairun min alfi shahr.</i>
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In other words, good deeds therein are better than [those performed in] a thousand months that are without a Night of Power.

It is said of the Companions [*Ṣaḥāba*] (may Allāh be well pleased with them) that they never felt so happy about anything, as they felt about His words (Exalted is He): “better than a thousand months [*khairun min alfi shahr*].” The story behind this goes as follows:

One day, Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was telling his Companions about four of the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrā’īl*], and how they worshipfully served Allāh for eighty years, without disobeying Him for one single twinkling of an eye in all of that time. The four he spoke about were Job [*Ayyūb*],²⁰⁰ Zacharias [*Zakariyyā*],²⁰¹ Ezekiel [*Ḥizqīl*],²⁰² and Joshua the son of Nūn²⁰³ [*Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn*] (peace be upon them all).

²⁰⁰ Job [*Ayyūb*] (peace be upon him) is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān, as a Prophet and an example of patience.

²⁰¹ Zacharias [*Zakariyyā*] is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān, where he is hailed as the father of John the Baptist [*Yaḥyā*] (peace be upon them both).

²⁰² Ezekiel [*Ḥizqīl*] (peace be upon him) is not mentioned by name in the Qur’ān, but the Qur’ānic commentators have identified an allusion to him therein, and he is frequently referred to in traditional reports. (See: Thomas Patrick Hughes, *op. cit.*, art. EZEKIEL, and *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, art. ḤIZQĪL.)

²⁰³ Although not mentioned by name in the Qur’ān, Joshua the son of Nūn [*Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn*] (peace be upon him) is identified by some Islamic authorities as the servant of Moses (peace be upon him), who is mentioned in Q. 18:60.



The Companions of Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) were greatly amazed at all of this, so Gabriel (peace be upon him) came to him and said: “O Muḥammad, it seems to have come as a great surprise to you and your Companions, to learn that these individuals were devoted to worshipful service for eighty years, without disobeying Allāh (Exalted is He) for one single twinkling of an eye in all of that time. So now Allāh has sent down to you something even better than that!” Then he recited to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Behold, We sent it down on the Night of Power.	<i>innā anzalnā-hu fī Lailati 'l-Qadr.</i>
And what has made you know what is the Night of Power?	<i>wa mā adrā-ka mā Lailatu 'l-Qadr.</i>
The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.	<i>Lailatu 'l-Qadri khairun min alfi shahr.</i>
In it the angels and the Spirit come down by their Lord’s permission, on every errand.	<i>tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu wa 'r-Rūḥu fī-hā bi-idhni Rabbi-him min kulli amr.</i>
Peace it is, until the rising of the of dawn. (97:1–5)	<i>salāmun hiya ḥattā maṭla'ī 'l-fajr.</i>

Gabriel (peace be upon him) then said to him: “This is even more excellent than that which you and your Companions found so amazing.” Needless to say, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was highly delighted.

It was Yaḥyā ibn Najīḥ who said: “Once upon a time, among the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrā'īl*], there was a man who carried a weapon for a thousand months in the service of Allāh’s cause [*fī sabīli 'llāh*], and not once in all of that time did he set his weapon aside. Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) mentioned this to his Companions, and they found the story quite amazing. So it was then that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) sent down the revelation:

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)	<i>Lailatu 'l-Qadri khairun min alfi shahr.</i>
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—meaning: ‘better than those thousand months, during which that man bore a weapon in the service of Allāh’s cause [*fī sabīli 'llāh*], and never once set his weapon aside.’





“As for the name by which the man was known among the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrāʿīl*], some say it was Simon the Worshipful Servant [*Shamʿūn al-ʿĀbid*], while others say it was Samson [*Shamsūn*].”

Let us now consider the significance of each element in His saying (Exalted is He):

In it the angels and the Spirit come down by their Lord's permission, on every errand.	<i>tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu wa 'r-Rūhu fī-hā bi-idhni Rabbi-him min kulli amr.</i>
Peace it is, until the rising of the of dawn. (97:4,5)	<i>salāmun hiya hattā maṭla'ī 'l-fajr.</i>

1. What is meant by “the angels come down [*tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu*]” is that they come down in succession, from the setting of the sun until the the rising of the of dawn.

2. “The Spirit [*ar-Rūḥ*]” means Gabriel (peace be upon him).

According to aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, it was Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) who said: “The Spirit [*ar-Rūḥ*] is in the shape of a human being with a gigantic physical build, and he is the one to whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) was referring when He said:

And they will ask you about the Spirit. (17:85)	<i>wa yasʿalūna-ka ʿani 'r-Rūḥ.</i>
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“He is the angel who will stand in the company of the angels, when they line up in rows on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], but in a rank by himself.”

According to al-Muqātil: “He is the most noble of all the angels in the sight of Allāh (Exalted is He).”

Someone else has said: “He is an angel whose face is shaped like that of a human being, while his body is the body of the angels. He is the most enormous creature in the presence of the Heavenly Throne [*ʿArsh*], so he will stand in a row all by himself, when the angels stand arrayed.” The last part of this statement is, of course, a reference to the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

On the day when the Spirit and the angels stand arrayed. (78:38)	<i>yawma yaqūmu 'r-Rūhu wa 'l-malā'ikatu ṣaffā.</i>
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3. “In it [*fī-hā*]” simply means: “in the Night of Power [*fī Lailat al-Qadr*].”
4. “By their Lord’s permission [*bi-idhni Rabbi-him*]” means, in effect: “by their Lord’s command [*bi-amri Rabbi-him*].”
5. “On every errand [*min kulli amr*]” is a way of saying: “for every good purpose.”
6. “Peace it is [*salāmun hiya*]” has exactly the same meaning as: “It is peace [*hiya salāmun*],” which signifies that it is perfectly safe and salubrious [*salīma*]. No sickness or disease can break out in the course of it, nor can it be disturbed by any kind of hocus-pocus [*kahāna*].

It has also been maintained that “*salāmun* [peace]” means the greeting of peace, with which the angels salute the true believers [*salāmu ’l-mala’ikati ’ala ’l-mu’minīn*] among the people of the earth, for they say to them: “Peace, peace, until the rising of the dawn [*salāmun salāmun ḥattā maṭla’i ’l-fajr*]!”

7. As for the phrase “until the rising of the dawn [*ḥattā maṭla’i ’l-fajr*],” we should note the existence of an alternative reading for the Arabic word *maṭla’*. By substituting the vowel *-i-* for the vowel *-a-* after the consonant *-l-*,²⁰⁴ we arrive at the form *maṭli’*.²⁰⁵ The *maṭli’* of the dawn means the rising [*al-ṭulū’*] thereof, while *maṭla’* denotes the place or point at which it rises [*yaṭlu’u*].²⁰⁶



²⁰⁴ In the original text, the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is able to express this much more neatly, by using the technical term of Arabic grammar: *bi-kasri ’l-lām*.

²⁰⁵ The reading *ḥattā maṭli’i ’l-fajr* is a traditionally accepted alternative to *ḥattā maṭla’i ’l-fajr*. See, for instance, the celebrated Qur’ānic commentary called *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, the first half of which was compiled by Shaikh Jalālu’-d-dīn al-Maḥallī (d. A.H. 864), and the rest by Jalālu’-d-dīn as-Suyūṭī (d. A.H. 911).

²⁰⁶ In either case, according to the Qur’ānic commentary mentioned in note 205 above, the meaning is understood to be: “till the time of its rising [*ilā waqti ṭulū’i-hi*].” (Jalālu’-d-dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalālu’-d-dīn as-Suyūṭī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*. Istanbul: Salāh Bilici Kitabevi Yayınları, n.d.; pt. 2, p. 267.)





On the fact that the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] should be looked for during the last ten days of the month of Ramaḍān.

The Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] should be looked for during the last ten days of the month of Ramaḍān, and it is most likely to be the night of the twenty-seventh.

According to the doctrine of Imām Mālik²⁰⁷ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), however, all the nights of the last ten days are equal candidates, and none of them is more probable than any other.

According to the doctrine of Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī²⁰⁸ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), on the other hand, the most likely candidate is the twenty-first.

Some have maintained that it is the night of the nineteenth, this being the doctrine of ‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her).

Abū Burda al-Aslamī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), is known to have said: “It is the night of the twenty-third.”

Abū Dharr²⁰⁹ and al-Ḥasan (may Allāh be well pleased with them) are both known to have said: “It is the night of the twenty-fifth.”

According to a traditional report attributed to Bilāl (may Allāh be well pleased with him),²¹⁰ the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said: “It is the night of the twenty-fourth.”

Ibn ‘Abbās and Ubayy ibn Ka‘b²¹¹ (may Allāh be well pleased with

²⁰⁷ Imām Mālik ibn Anas (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the founder of one of the four schools [*madhāhib*] of Islamic jurisprudence. He died in the year A.H. 179/795 C.E.

²⁰⁸ Imām Abū ‘Abdi’llāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfi‘ī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the founder of one of the four schools [*madhāhib*] of Islamic jurisprudence. He died in the year A.H. 204/820 C.E. Imām al-Ghazālī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was one of the most notable professors of the Shāfi‘ī school.

²⁰⁹ See note 23 on p. 18 above.

²¹⁰ See note 192 on p. 98 above.

²¹¹ Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was one of the Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to whom particular editions of the text of the Qur’ān, prior to the authorization of ‘Uthmān’s version, have been ascribed. (See: *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, art. AL-KUR’ĀN.)



them) are both known to have said: “It is the night of the twenty-seventh.”

The strongest evidence in favor of the conclusion that the most likely candidate is the night of the twenty-seventh—although Allāh knows best [*wa’llāhu A’lam*]²¹²—has been presented by Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal²¹² (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him). Citing an authoritative chain of transmission [*isnād*], the Imām reports that Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) once said:

“It seemed that people would never stop telling the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) about how, in their dreams, they had seen which of the last ten nights was the Night. So the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) eventually declared: “As I cannot help but notice, your dreams repeatedly suggest that it is one of the odd-numbered nights among the final ten. If anyone is really keen to investigate, let him focus his research on the seventh night of the final ten.”

Ibn ‘Abbās is reported as having said to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with them):

“I made a careful study of all the uneven numbers [*afrād*], and I had to conclude that none was more worthy of note than the number seven [*as-sab‘a*].”

To demonstrate the special significance of the number seven, we shall now repeat what a certain learned scholar had to say on the subject:

“There are seven heavens, and there are seven earths.

“There are seven nights [in a week].

“There are seven celestial spheres [*aflāk*], and there are seven constellations [*nujūm*].

“There are seven laps to be covered at a brisk pace [*sa’y*] between [the small hills] of aṣ-Ṣafā and al-Marwa.²¹³

“There are seven circuits to be performed in the circumambulation [*ṭawāf*] of the House [of Allāh].²¹⁴

²¹² Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the founder of one of the four schools [*madhāhib*] of Islamic jurisprudence. He died in the year A.H. 241/855 C.E. The legal doctrines of the Ḥanbalī school were those studied most intensively by the author, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) as a young man.

²¹³ This sentence refers to one of the rites of the Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj*]. (For a detailed account, see: Vol. 1, pp. 26–52.)

²¹⁴ The circumambulation [*ṭawāf*] of the House of Allāh [*Baitu’llāh*], i.e., the Ka’ba, is another rite of the Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj*].





“There are seven ingredients in the physical constitution of a human being, seven ingredients in his basic diet, and seven slits or cavities in the surface of his face.

“There are seven seals [*khawātīm*].²¹⁵

“There are seven verses [*āyāt*] in the Sūra of Praise [*Sūrat al-Ḥamd*].²¹⁶

“There are seven modes [*aḥruf*] of reciting the Qur’ān.²¹⁷

“There are seven oft-repeated verses [*as-sab‘u ’l-mathānī*].²¹⁸

“In the act of prostration [*sujūd*] during the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], seven parts of the body are brought into contact with the ground.

“There are seven gates of Hell [*Jahannam*], and Hell has seven names, corresponding to its seven descending steps or levels [*darakāt*].²¹⁹

“There were seven Companions of the Cave [*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*].²²⁰

“In the course of seven nights, the tribe of ‘Ād was annihilated by the wind.²²¹

“For seven years, Joseph [*Yūsuf*] (peace be upon him) remained in prison.

“There were [two sets of] seven cows [*baqarāt*] in the dream of the king

²¹⁵ The seven seals [*khawātīm*] mark the division of the Qur’ān into seven sections or stages [*manāzil*], an arrangement designed to facilitate the recitation of the entire Book in the course of a week.

²¹⁶ This is one of the many alternative titles sometimes given to what is most commonly known as the Opening Sūra [*Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*] of the Noble Qur’ān. It alludes to the first verse [*āya*] thereof, which reads: “Praise be to Allāh, Lord of All the Worlds [*al-ḥamdu li’llāhi Rabbi ’l-‘ālamīn*].”

²¹⁷ The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

The Qur’ān has been revealed according to seven dialects [*nazala ’l-Qur’ānu ‘alā sab‘ati aḥruf*].

This has been interpreted to mean: “according to seven modes of reading or recitation.” (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. Ḥ–R–F; also: *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, art. AL-KUR’ĀN; and: Thomas Patrick Hughes, *op. cit.*, art. SEVEN DIALECTS.)

²¹⁸ Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in the Qur’ān (15:87):

We have given you seven	<i>wa la-qad ātainā-ka sab‘an</i>
of the oft-repeated [verses]	<i>mina’ l-mathānī</i>
and the mighty Qur’ān.	<i>wa ’l-Qur’āna ’l-‘aẓīm.</i>

According to some authorities, the seven *mathānī* are the oft-repeated verses [*āyāt*] of the Opening Sūra [*Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*] of the Qur’ān. Others maintain that the seven *mathānī* are the seven long Sūras from *Sūrat al-Baqara* to *Sūrat al-A‘rāf*. (For yet other interpretations, see: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. TH–N–Y and art. S–B–‘.)

²¹⁹ The names of the descending levels of Hell are as follows: (1) *Jahannam*, (2) *Laẓā* (3) *al-Ḥuṭama* (4) *Sa‘īr* (5) *Saqar* (6) *al-Jaḥīm* (7) *Hāwiya*. All of these are mentioned in the Qur’ān, but the traditional commentators differ as to their order of descent.

²²⁰ Their story is told in the Sūra of the Cave [*Sūrat al-Kahf*], the 18th Sūra of the Qur’ān. In the Christian tradition, they are known as the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

²²¹ The Prophet Hūd (peace be upon him) and a few righteous men were the only survivors.





of Egypt, as mentioned by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the Sūra of Joseph [*Sūrat Yūsuf*]:

And the king said: "I saw in a dream	<i>wa qāla 'l-maliku innī arā</i>
seven fat cows, and seven	<i>sab' a baqarātin simānin</i>
lean ones devouring them." (12:43)	<i>ya'kulu-hunna sab'un 'ijāfun.</i>

"There would be seven years of drought, and then seven years of plenty, according to the prediction made by Joseph [*Yūsuf*] (peace be upon him).

"There are seventeen cycles [*rak'a*], all told, in the five daily prayers [*ṣalawāt*].²²²

"The number seven is mentioned in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Then a fast of three days	<i>fa-ṣiyāmu thalāthati ayyāmin</i>
while on the Pilgrimage,	<i>fi 'l-Ḥajji</i>
and of seven when	<i>wa sab'atin</i>
you have returned. (2:196)	<i>idhā raja'tum.</i>

"There are seven degrees of relationship by blood [*nasab*] within which it is unlawful to marry.²²³

"There are seven degrees of relationship by fosterage [*riḍā'*] and marriage [*ṣihr*], within which it is likewise unlawful to marry.²²⁴

"Before they can be considered pure and fit for human use, food containers in which dogs have lapped must be washed and scrubbed seven times, including one scrubbing with dry earth. Such is the rule laid down by Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

"There are twenty-seven Arabic 'words' [*ḥurūf*]²²⁵ in the Sūra of Power

²²² The total of seventeen is arrived at by adding together: (a) the two cycles of the dawn prayer [*ṣalāt al-fajr*], (b) the four cycles of the midday prayer [*ṣalāt az-ẓuhr*], (c) the four cycles of the afternoon prayer [*ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*], (d) the three cycles of the sunset prayer [*ṣalāt al-maghrib*], and (e) the four cycles of the late evening prayer [*ṣalāt al-ʿishā'*].

²²³ As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us in the Qur'ān (4:23):

Forbidden to you are	<i>ḥurimat 'alai-kum</i>
your mothers,	<i>ummahātu-kum</i>
and your daughters,	<i>wa banātu-kum</i>
and your sisters,	<i>wa akhawātu-kum</i>
and your paternal aunts,	<i>wa 'ammātu-kum</i>
and your maternal aunts,	<i>wa khālātu-kum</i>
and your brother's daughters,	<i>wa banātu 'l-akhi</i>
and your sister's daughters.	<i>wa banātu 'l-ukhti.</i>

²²⁴ In this category, it is forbidden for a man to marry: (1) his foster-mother, (2) his foster-sister, (3) his mother-in-law, (4) his daughter-in-law, (5) his stepdaughter, (6) the sister of a wife to whom he is still married, and (7) the widow or divorced wife of his father.

²²⁵ The basic meaning of the term *ḥarf* (of which *ḥurūf* and *ahruf* are plural forms) is "a letter of the Arabic alphabet." As in this context, however, it may also signify "a connected group of Arabic letters, representing either a separate word, or, in some cases, a grammatical combination of two or more elements, only one of which can normally be written separately."





[*Sūrat al-Qadr*], up to but not including the verse [*āya*]: ‘Peace it is [*salāmun hiya*]...’²²⁶

‘Job [*Ayyūb*] (peace be upon him) endured trial and tribulation for seven years.

‘‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her) once said: ‘Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) married me when I was seven years of age.’

‘There are seven ‘days of the old hag’ [*ayyām al-‘ajūz*], i.e., of the destructive wind [*husūm*]: three in February [*Shubāt*] and four in March [*Ādhār*].²²⁷

‘Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The martyrs [*shuhadā’*] of my Community [*Ummatī*] are seven, namely: (1) one who is killed in battle, while fighting for the cause of Allāh [*al-qatīl fī sabīli’ llāh*]; (2) the victim of the plague [*al-maṭ’ūn*]; (3) the victim of pulmonary tuberculosis [*al-maslūl*]; (4) one whose death is caused by drowning [*al-gharīq*]; (5) one who is trapped in a fire and burned to death [*al-harīq*]; (6) one whose death results from a gastric or intestinal ailment [*al-mabṭūn*]; (7) the woman who dies in the process of childbirth [*an-nafsā’*].

‘Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) swore [*aqsama*] by seven things, when He said, in the first seven verses of the Sūra of the Sun [*Sūrat ash-Shams*] (91:1–7):

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. By the sun and its brightness, | <i>wa ’sh-shamsi wa ḍuhā-hā</i> |
| 2. and the moon when she follows him, | <i>wa ’l-qamari idhā talā-hā</i> |
| 3. and the day when it reveals him, | <i>wa ’n-nahāri idhā jallā-hā</i> |
| 4. and the night when it enshrouds him, | <i>wa ’l-laili idhā yaghshā-hā</i> |
| 5. and the heaven and Him who built it, | <i>wa ’s-samā’i wa mā banā-hā</i> |
| 6. and the earth and Him who spread it, | <i>wa ’l-arḍi wa mā ṭahā-hā</i> |
| 7. and a soul and Him who perfected it. | <i>wa nafsīn wa mā sawwā-hā.</i> |

‘Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him) stood seven cubits tall, and the length of the staff of Moses was also seven cubits.

²²⁶ The twenty-seven elements counted as *hurūf* [‘words’] are therefore the following:

(1) *innā* (2) *anzalnā-hu* (3) *fī* (4) *Lailati* (5) *’l-Qadr* (6) *wa* (7) *mā* (8) *adrā-ka* (9) *mā* (10) *Lailatu* (11) *’l-Qadr* (12) *Lailatu* (13) *’l-Qadr* (14) *khairun* (15) *min* (16) *alfi* (17) *shahr* (18) *tanazzalu* (19) *’l-malā’ikatu* (20) *wa* (21) *’r-Rūḥu* (22) *fī-hā* (23) *bi-idhni* (24) *Rabbi-him* (25) *min* (26) *kulli* (27) *amr*.

²²⁷ Their names are said to be: (1) *ṣinn*, (2) *ṣinnabr*, (3) *wabr*, (4) *al-āmīr*, (5) *al-mu’ tamīr*, (6) *al-mu’ allīl*, and (7) *al-jamr al-muṭfi’* or *muṭfi’ aḡ-ḡa’ n*. (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. ‘-J-Z and art. H-S-M.) These are the seven days during which the tribe of ‘Ād was destroyed by the wind. (See p. 108 above.)





“It is thus established that most things [of great religious importance] are associated with the number seven. This means that Allāh (Exalted is He) has implicitly indicated to His servants that the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is the twenty-seventh, by virtue of His statement:

Peace it is, until
the rising of the of dawn. (97:5) *salāmun hiya*
hattā maṭla'ī 'l-fajr.

“He has thereby given us to understand that the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is the night of the twenty-seventh [of the month of Ramaḍān].”²²⁸



²²⁸ Since this conclusion hinges on the expression: “Peace it is... [*salāmun hiya ...*],” we are no doubt expected to be aware that the word *salām* [peace] occurs seven times in the Qurʾān. These are the relevant verses [*āyāt*]:

1. “Peace!”—[that is] a word [of greeting] from a Lord All-Compassionate. (36:58)
2. Peace be upon Noah among all beings! (37:79)
3. Peace be upon Abraham! (37:109)
4. Peace be upon Moses and Aaron! (37:120)
5. Peace be upon Elias! (37:130)
6. And peace be upon those sent as Messengers! (37:181)
7. Peace it is, until the rising of the of dawn. (97:5)

salām: *qawlan min Rabbīn Raḥīm. salāmun 'alā Nūḥin fi 'l-'ālamīn. salāmun 'alā Ibrāhīm. salāmun 'alā Mūsā wa Hārūn. salāmun 'alā Ilyāsīn. wa salāmun 'alā 'l-Mursalīn. salāmun hiya hattā maṭla'ī 'l-fajr.*





On the conflicting opinions of various experts concerning the correct answer to the question: “Which is more excellent, the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*], or the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*]?”

Which is more excellent, the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*],²²⁹ or the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*]? This is a question over which our fellow scholars²³⁰ have been in some disagreement.

On the one hand, Shaikh Abū ‘Abdi’llāh ibn Baṭṭa, Shaikh Abu ‘l-Ḥasan al-Jazarī and Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Barmakī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them) have all opted for the answer that the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*] is the more excellent of the two.

On the other hand, the answer preferred by Abu ‘l-Ḥasan at-Tamīmī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is that, of all the Nights of Power [*Layāli ‘l-Qadr*], only one is more excellent than the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*], namely, the actual Night during which the Qur’ān was sent down. As for all the otherwise similar Nights of Power [*Layāli ‘l-Qadr*], the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*] ranks higher than any of them on the scale of excellence.

[Aside from these representatives of the Ḥanbalī school] most of the learned scholars [*‘ulamā’*] have maintained that the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is more excellent, not only than the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*], but than all other nights in the calendar.

²²⁹ The Day of Congregational Prayer [*al-Jum‘a*] is Friday—but please remember that Friday night in the Islāmic calendar is the night that begins at sunset on Thursday!

²³⁰ The author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is referring to his fellow scholars in the Ḥanbalī school of Islāmic theology and jurisprudence. (See note 212 on p. 107 above.)





There is plenty of traditional evidence, however, to justify the point of view adopted by our Ḥanbalī colleagues, as we shall demonstrate:

According to one traditional account, related by al-Qāḍī [the Judge] al-Imām Abū Ya‘la (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), it was Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) who reported that Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:²³¹

Allāh grants forgiveness, on the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*], to all the people of Islām.

No comparable excellence is known to have been attributed by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to any of the other nights.

Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is also reported as having said:

Invoke Allāh’s blessing upon me,²³² many times over, in the course of the illustrious night [*al-lailat al-gharrā’*], and during the brightly shining day [*al-yawm al-azhar*][—]on the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*], and then on the Day itself.

The adjective *gharrā’* [illustrious] is related to the noun *ghurra*, which means the highlight, the prime, the finest feature of something.²³³

Another point in favor of the superior excellence of the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*] is the very fact that it immediately precedes the Day itself. This is indeed a telling point, because we have been taught so much about the excellence of that Day, and so little about the excellence of the day of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*].

The following traditional reports are highly significant in this connection:

According to Anas [ibn Mālik]²³⁴ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The sun never rises to usher in a day that is more splendid, in the sight of Allāh, than the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Yawm al-Jum‘a*], and none is dearer to Him.

²³¹ **Author’s note:** Imām Abū Ya‘la (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) has provided a complete chain of transmitting authorities [*isnād*] to verify the authenticity of this report.

²³² That is to say, by repeating the invocation: “Allāh bless him and give him peace [*salla’llāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*].”

²³³ The *ghurra* of a horse, for instance, is the blaze on its forehead.

²³⁴ See note 35 on p. 24 above.





According to Abū Huraira²³⁵ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

The sun never rises, nor does it ever set, upon a day that is more excellent than the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Yawm al-Jum‘a*]. There is no creature that walks or crawls upon the earth, that is not terrified of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Yawm al-Jum‘a*], apart from these two species [*thaqalain*]: the jinn and human beings.

According to another report from Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also said:

On the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will resurrect the days in a manner that displays their condition. When He brings forth the Day of Congregational Prayer [*al-Jum‘a*], it will be shining with a radiant beauty, and its own people will greet it with affectionate respect, as if it were a bride being led in procession to her noble bridegroom, beaming upon them as they walk in her radiance. Their complexions will be like snow, and their fragrant aroma will be like musk. They will plunge into mountains of camphor, and the people assembled at the Place of Standing [*al-Mawqif*], humans and jinn alike, will stare at them in wonder, too fascinated to blink an eye, until they enter the Garden of Paradise.

Suppose someone were to say: “That all sounds very convincing, no doubt, but what is your response to His saying (Almighty and Glorious is He):

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)?”	<i>Lailatu ‘l-Qadri khairun min alfi shahr.</i>
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To this our reply would be as follows: “What is meant to be understood by it is: “better than a thousand months—in the reckoning of which the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*] is not included.” This interpretation should be perfectly comprehensible even to those who prefer the other point of view, since their understanding of the phrase is: “better than a thousand months—in the reckoning of which the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is not included.”²³⁶

In defense of our point of view, we should also point out that the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*] is everlasting in the Garden of Paradise—because visiting with Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) takes place during the Day thereof.²³⁷ Furthermore, its

²³⁵ See note 36 on p. 24 above.

²³⁶ Logically, if this were not so, the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] would be better than itself.

²³⁷ In Vol. 2, pp. 269–86, the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has quoted lengthily traditional reports concerning the Garden of Paradise.





position in the calendar is known for certain here in this lower world,²³⁸ whereas the exact date of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] can only be surmised.

It must be admitted, notwithstanding, that a case can be made in favor of the view preferred by at-Tamīmī and some other learned scholars.²³⁹ When they maintain that the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is more excellent than any other night, they begin by citing the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)	<i>Lailatu 'l-Qadri khairum min alfi shahr.</i>
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Then, having noted the fact that a thousand months are the equivalent of eighty-three years and four months,²⁴⁰ they cite the following traditional reports:²⁴¹

It said that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was shown the life spans of the members of his Community [*Umma*], and he considered them too short, so he was granted the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*].

Imām Mālik ibn Anas²⁴² (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is reported as having said: “I have heard, from someone whose word I trust, that Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once saw the life spans of all the people before his own time, or as much of that as Allāh (Exalted is He) wished him to see. In this vision, it seemed to him that the life spans of those belonging to his own Community [*Umma*] had become shorter by comparison, with the result that they could not accomplish as much good work, in the course of a lifetime, as others who had preceded them. It was then that Allāh granted him the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], which is better than a thousand months.”

²³⁸ “In this world,” to put it in simple English, “Friday comes but once a week, and always between Thursday and Saturday.”

²³⁹ Near the beginning of this subsection (p. 112 above), the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has ascribed to Abu 'l-Ḥasan at-Tamīmī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) a viewpoint that sets him somewhat apart from the other learned scholars.

²⁴⁰ Even at the end of the 20th century, and even among the most technologically developed societies, eighty-three years and four months would represent an above-average span of life expectancy.

²⁴¹ As the reader can hardly fail to notice, few transmitting authorities—if any—are named in connection with these particular reports.

²⁴² See note 207 on p. 106 above.





Imām Mālik ibn Anas (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) also said: “It has come to my attention that Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib²⁴³ once said: ‘If someone is present at the late evening prayer [*ṣalāt al-‘ishā’*] on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], he will derive good fortune therefrom.’

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If someone performs both the late evening [*‘ishā’*] and sunset [*maghrib*] prayers in congregation, he will obtain his share of good fortune from the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*]. Moreover, if he recites it—meaning the Sūra of Power [*Sūrat al-Qadr*—it will be as if he had recited one fourth of the entire Qur’ān.²⁴⁴



²⁴³ Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib [or, al-Musayyab] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was an early scholar of Prophetic tradition. He died in A.H. 93. (There is some uncertainty as to the correct spelling of his last name. The forms *ibn al-Musayyib* and *ibn al-Musayyab* both occur, often in the same text.)

²⁴⁴ **Author’s note:** It is a recommended practice for the worshipper to recite the Sūra of Power [*Sūrat al-Qadr*] in the final late evening prayer [*‘ishā’*] of the month of Ramaḍān.





On the answer to the question: “Why has Allāh not informed His servants of an exact date, on which the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is certain to occur?”

Suppose someone raises the question: “Why has Allāh not informed His servants of an exact date, on which the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] is certain to occur, just as He has provided them with precise and unambiguous information concerning the night of the Day of Congregational Prayer [*Lailat al-Jum‘a*]?”

The appropriate response will be to tell the questioner: “His purpose (Exalted is He) is to make sure that His servants do not take it for granted that they have performed good deeds on that particular night. Were it not for this element of uncertainty, they could make the claim: ‘We have performed good deeds on a night that is better than a thousand months, so Allāh has granted us forgiveness, and in His sight we are now entitled to spiritual degrees and Gardens of Paradise.’ They might therefore abandon all further effort to do good works, and simply rest on their laurels. Having thus fallen prey to unduly optimistic expectation, they would then be doomed to perdition.”

It should also be noted that, as a similar measure of precaution, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has refrained from informing His servants as to when their individual lifetimes are due to expire. Were it not so, a person with a long life still ahead of him could say: “I intend to give free rein to my carnal desires, indulging in all the pleasures this world has to offer, and enjoying its comforts to the full. Eventually, of course, when the expiration of my term draws near, I shall repent and devote myself to the worshipful service of my Lord. I shall then die as a penitent and reformed character.”

In actual fact, Allāh (Exalted is He) has kept their appointed terms concealed from them, so they must always be cautious and wary of



death. Under these circumstances, they have a permanent incentive to practice good conduct, to pursue repentance with diligent perseverance, and to make constant efforts to improve their behavior. Death, whenever it comes to claim them, will therefore find them in a very good spiritual state. As well as receiving their allotted shares [*aqṣām*] of pleasure and sensual enjoyment in this world, they will be safely delivered from Allāh’s torment in the hereafter, by the mercy [*raḥma*] of Allāh (Exalted is He).

The following anonymous saying is also worth quoting:

“Allāh (Exalted is He) has concealed five things inside five: (1) He has concealed Allāh’s good pleasure inside worshipful acts of obedience [*ṭā’āt*]; (2) He has concealed His wrath inside sinful acts of disobedience [*ma’āṣī*]; (3) He has concealed the middle prayer [*aṣ-ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā*]²⁴⁵ among the other ritual prayers [*ṣalawāt*]; (4) He has concealed His saintly friend [*walī*] among the rest of His creatures; (5) He has concealed the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] within the month of Ramaḍān.”



²⁴⁵ Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us in the Qur’ān:

Be careful to observe your prayers,
and [especially] the middle prayer,
and stand obedient to Allāh. (2:238)

*ḥāfiẓū ‘ala ‘ṣ-ṣalawāti
wa ‘ṣ-ṣalāti ‘l-wuṣṭā:
wa qūmū li’llāhi qānīnīm.*





**Concerning the five
nights granted by Allāh
(Almighty and Glorious is He)
to the Chosen One [al-Muṣṭafā]
(Allāh bless him and give him peace).**

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has conferred five special nights upon the Chosen One [al-Muṣṭafā] (Allāh bless him and give him peace), namely:

1. The Night of the Miracle and the Supernatural Skill [*Lailat al-Mu'jiza wa 'l-Qudra*].²⁴⁶

This is the night referred to in the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

The Hour has drawn near and *iqtarabati 's-sā'atu*
the moon has been split in two. (54:1) *wa 'nshaqqa 'l-qamar.*

In the case of Moses [*Mūsā*] (peace be upon him), the miraculous splitting of the sea was brought about by the stroke of his staff. In the case of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), on the other hand, the miraculous splitting of the moon was brought about by the mere pointing of the finger of the Chosen One [al-Muṣṭafā] (Allāh bless him and give him peace).²⁴⁷ It is therefore preeminent in the whole domain of the Prophetic miracles [*mu'jizāt*], the working of wonders [*i'jāz*], and the exercise of supernatural skill [*qudra*].²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ The term *mu'jiza* (plural: *mu'jizāt*) is applied to a miracle performed by a Prophet [*nabī*], and is distinguished from the *karāma* performed by a saint [*walī*] or righteous person [*ṣāliḥ*]. As defined by the Islāmic theologians, a *mu'jiza* is “an event at variance with the usual course of nature, produced by one who lays claim to the office of a Prophet, in contending with those who refuse to acknowledge his claim, in such a manner as renders them unable to produce the like thereof.” (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. ‘-J-Z.)

²⁴⁷ In his famous commentary [*tafsīr*] on the Qur`ān, al-Baidāwī says: “Some say that the unbelievers demanded this sign of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and so the moon was split in two; but others say it refers to a sign of the coming Resurrection.”

²⁴⁸ In Vol. 1, pp. 250–53, the author (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has told us:

It is also universally believed by the people of Islām that the Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was granted as many miracles [*mu'jizāt*] as those bestowed upon the rest of the Prophets, and more besides. Some of the experts in religious knowledge [*ahl al-'ilm*] have counted no fewer than a thousand such miracles. Included among them is the Qur`ān....



2. The Night of the Response and the Summons [*Lailat al-Ijāba wa 'd-Da'wa*].

This is the night on which a company of the jinn urged their people to respond to the summons of Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). In the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And when We turned toward you a company of the jinn, who wished to hear the Qur'ān,... they said:...	<i>wa idh ṣarafnā ilai-ka nafaran mina 'l-jinni yastami'ūna 'l-Qur'ān... qālū...</i>
“O people of ours! Respond to Allāh's summoner and believe in him.” (46:29–31)	<i>yā qawma-nā aḡībū dā'iyā 'llāhi wa āminū bi-hi.</i>

3. The Night of the Decree and the Adjudication [*Lailat al-Ḥukm wa 'l-Qaḍiyya*].

This is the night referred to in the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

We have sent it down on a blessed night— surely We are ever warning— in which every firm decree is made distinct. (44:3,4)	<i>innā anzalnā-hu fī lailatin mubārakatin: innā kunnā mundhirīn: fī-hā yufraqu kullu amrin ḡakīm.</i>
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4. The Night of Nearness and Closeness [*Lailat ad-Dunuwu wa 'l-Qurba*].

This is the Night of the Heavenly Ascension [*Lailat al-Mi' rāj*]²⁴⁹ of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), the Night of which Allāh (Exalted is He) was speaking when He said:

Glory be to the One who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship, the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs! Surely He, only He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (17:1)	<i>subḡāna 'lladhī asrā bi-'abdi-hi lailan mina 'l-Masjidi 'l-Ḥarāmi ila 'l-Masjidi 'l-Aqṣa 'lladhī bāraknā ḡawla-hu li-nuriya-hu min āyāti-nā: inna-hu Ḥuwa 's-Samī' u 'l-Baṣīr.</i>
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5. The Night of Peace and Salutation [*Lailat as-Salām wa 't-Taḡiyya*].

This is none other than the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], of which Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Behold, We sent it down on the Night of Power.	<i>innā anzalnā-hu fī Lailati 'l-Qadr.</i>
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²⁴⁹ The Night of the Heavenly Ascension [*Lailat al-Mi' rāj*] is also known as the Night of the Heavenly Journey [*Lailat al-Isrā'*].





And what has made you know
what is the Night of Power?

The Night of Power is better
than a thousand months.

In it the angels
and the Spirit come down
by their Lord's permission,
on every errand.

Peace it is, until
the rising of the of dawn. (97:1–5)

*wa mā adrā-ka
mā Lailatu 'l-Qadr.*

*Lailatu 'l-Qadri khairun
min alfi shahr.*

*tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu
wa 'r-Rūḥu fi-hā
bi-idhni Rabbi-him
min kulli amr.*

*salāmun hiya
ḥattā maṭla' i 'l-fajr.*

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father) is reported as having said:

“As soon as the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] has arrived, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) will command Gabriel (peace be upon him) to go down to the earth, accompanied by a host of angels, seventy thousand strong, from among the inhabitants of the Lote-Tree of the Farthest Boundary [*Sidrat al-Muntahā*].²⁵⁰ They will carry with them banners of light, and once they have alighted upon the surface of the earth, Gabriel (peace be upon him) will set up his banner [*liwā'*] and the angels will set up their banners in four localities, namely: (1) next to the Ka'ba in Mecca, (2) next to the tomb of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in Medina, (3) next to the Mosque of Jerusalem [*Bait al-Maqdis*],²⁵¹ and (4) next to the Mosque of Mount Sinai [*Tūr Sīnā'*].

“Then Gabriel (peace be upon him) will tell the angels to fan out and go their separate ways, so they will disperse and go off separately in all directions. Not a single house, or chamber, or tent, and not a single boat or ship, in which there is a believing man [*mu'min*] or a believing woman [*mu'min*] to be found, will fail to receive a visit from the angels—apart from any such place that contains a dog, or a pig, or intoxicating liquor, or a person who is ritually unclean from some unlawful contact or behavior [*junub mina 'l-ḥarām*], or an icon [*ṣūra*].

²⁵⁰ With reference to the experience of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) during his Heavenly Ascension [*Mi'rāj*], Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us in the Qur'ān (53:13,14):

And indeed, he saw Him yet another time—
by the Lote-Tree of the Farthest Boundary.

*wa la-qad ra' ā-hu nazlatan ukhrā
'inda Sidrati 'l-Muntahā.*

²⁵¹ See note 193 on p. 98 above.





“As they make their rounds, the angels will be glorifying the Lord [*yusabbihūna*],²⁵² extolling His Sanctity [*yuqaddisūna*],²⁵³ and declaring that worship is due to Him Alone [*yuhallilūna*],²⁵⁴ as well as begging forgiveness on behalf of the Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace). They will continue in this fashion until, when the moment of dawn arrives, they rise up aloft into the sky. The inhabitants of the lowest heaven will then receive them as their guests, and they will ask them: ‘Where are you coming from?’ So the traveling angels will say: ‘We spent the night in the world below, because it was the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] for the Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace).’

“The inhabitants of the lowest heaven will then go on to ask: ‘How has Allāh treated them, and what has He done to meet their needs?’ Gabriel (peace be upon him) will respond to this by saying: ‘Allāh has forgiven the righteous ones among them [*ṣāliḥi-him*], and He has accepted their intercession on behalf of the unrighteous ones in their midst [*ṭāliḥi-him*].’ On hearing this, the angels of the lowest heaven will raise their voices in glorification [*tasbiḥ*], sanctification [*taqdis*], and praise of the Lord of All the Worlds [*Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*], as an expression of gratitude for the forgiveness and acceptance that Allāh has bestowed upon this Community. Then the angels of the lowest heaven will escort their guests up to the second heaven.

“This procedure will then be repeated from each heaven to the next, all the way up to the seventh heaven, at which point Gabriel (peace be upon him) will say: ‘O inhabitants of the various heavens, you must now return home!’ Obedient to this command, the angels from the various heavens will promptly return to their respective places, and those who are inhabitants of the Lote-Tree of the Farthest Boundary [*Sidrat al-Muntahā*] will return to the Lote-Tree.

²⁵² That is to say, they will be proclaiming: “*subhāna’llāh* [Glory be to Allāh]!” Like the verbal noun *tasbiḥ* (see note 180 on p. 94 above), the verb *yusabbihūna* is derived from the same three-consonant root—*s-b-h*—as the word *subhān*.

²⁵³ That is to say, they will be proclaiming: “*taqaddasa’llāh* [Sanctified is Allāh]!” (See note 256 on p. 123 below.)

²⁵⁴ That is to say, they will be proclaiming: “*lā ilāha illa’llāh* [There is no god but Allāh]!” The form *yuhallilūna* is a grammatical derivative of the basic verb *hallala*, of which the corresponding verbal noun is *tahīl*.



“As soon as their fellow angels have come home from their mission, the inhabitants of the Lote-Tree will ask them: ‘Where have you been?’ So the travelers will give them the same answer as the one they gave to the inhabitants of the lowest heaven. On hearing this, the inhabitants of the Lote-Tree will raise their voices in glorification [*tasbīḥ*]²⁵⁵ and sanctification [*taqdīs*].²⁵⁶ The sound of their voices will be heard by the Garden of Refuge [*Jannat al-Ma’wā*], then by the Garden of Blissful Happiness [*Jannat an-Na’īm*], then by the Garden of Eden [*Jannat ‘Adn*], and then by [the highest Garden of] Paradise [*(Jannat) al-Firdaws*],²⁵⁷ and so it will come to be heard by the Throne of the All-Merciful One [*‘Arsh ar-Raḥmān*].

The Heavenly Throne [*‘Arsh*] will thereupon raise its voice in glorification [*tasbīḥ*], sanctification [*taqdīs*], and praise of the Lord of All the Worlds [*Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*], as an expression of gratitude for all that He has bestowed upon this Community. Although He is All-Knowing [*A‘lam*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will ask: “O My Throne, why have you raised your voice?” So it will say: “My God [*Ilāhī*], I have just received the good news that You granted forgiveness, last night, to the righteous members of the Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and that You offered to accept the intercession of the righteous ones among them [*ṣāliḥī-him*] on behalf of the unrighteous ones in their midst [*ṭāliḥī-him*].”

“On receiving this answer, Allāh (Exalted is He) will say: “You have spoken the truth, O My Throne, but there is even more to it than that. The Community of Muḥammad is entitled, in My sight, to generous favor the likes of which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever conceived.”

It has also been said that, when Gabriel (peace be upon him) comes down from heaven on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], he will not leave any human being without giving him the greeting of peace and shaking him by the hand. For the recipient, the sign of this will be the sudden appearance of goose bumps all over his skin [*iqshī-rār jildi-hi*], coinciding with a surge of tender feelings in his heart, and a tearful moistening of his eyes.

²⁵⁵ See note 252 on p. 122 above.

²⁵⁶ Like the verbs *yūqaddisūna* and *taqaddasa* (see note 253 on p. 122 above), the verbal noun *taqdīs* is derived from the three-consonant root *q-d-s*, which conveys the basic idea of “holiness, sanctity.” This same root occurs in the words *Maqdis* and *Muqaddas*, which are applied to the Temple of Jerusalem (see note 193 on p. 98 above).

²⁵⁷ These four Gardens are all mentioned by name in the Qur’ān.





This explains why, as we have learned from a traditional report:

“The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was seriously concerned about the prospects for his Community, so Allāh (Exalted is He) said to him: ‘O Muḥammad, do not worry, for I shall not remove members of your Community from the lower world, unless I have conferred upon them the spiritual degrees of the Prophets [*darajāt al-Anbiyāʾ*]. In the case of the Prophets (blessings and peace be upon them all), the angels came down to each of them in turn, bringing them the Spirit [*Rūḥ*], the message [*risāla*], the inspiration [*wahy*], and the charismatic gift of grace [*karāma*]. I shall likewise send the angels down to your Community, on the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], with the salutation of peace [*taslīm*] and mercy [*raḥma*] from Me.”





On the characteristic features that indicate the arrival of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*].

As for the characteristic features that indicate the arrival of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], they are present in a night when the atmosphere is comfortable, the sky is jet-black, and the temperature is neither hot nor cold. We may also quote this anonymous saying on the subject:

“It is a night in which no barking of dogs can be heard. When the sun rises on the following morning, it appears as a disk without rays, rather like a copper bowl [*tast*].”

As for the marvels and wonders of the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], they are revealed to those who possess the qualities of spiritual development and sainthood [*arbāb al-qulūb wa 'l-wilāya*], to those who are committed to worshipful obedience [*ahl at-tā'a*], and to whomever Allāh wishes among those of His servants who are true believers [*mu'minīn*]¹—in accordance with their spiritual states [*aḥwāl*], their allotted portions [*aqsām*], and their degrees of nearness to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).





**Concerning the ritual prayer called *ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ*:
how it was practiced in the time of the Prophet
(Allāh bless him and give him peace),
and how it came to be more strictly
observed during the Caliphate
of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb
(may Allāh be well pleased with him).**

The ritual prayer called *ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ*²⁵⁸ was originally instituted as an occasional and voluntary practice, to be observed in accordance with the exemplary custom [*sunna*] of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). After he had performed it in congregation on one night [in the month of Ramaḍān]—(some say two nights, while others say three)—the believers expected him to join them again, but he did not emerge from his apartment when the next night came around. In order to explain his behavior, he told them later: “If I had come out to join you, it would surely have been imposed upon you as an obligatory religious duty [*la-furīḍat ‘alai-kum*].”

It was eventually established as a regular congregational practice [throughout the month of Ramaḍān], but not until the days of the Caliphate of ‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] (may Allāh be well pleased with him). This accounts for the fact that it is often attributed to the Caliph ‘Umar, on the grounds that he was the first to organize its performance along these lines.

The following tradition [*ḥadīth*] is particularly relevant to this topic, since it has been transmitted from ‘Ā’isha, the Mother of the Believers

²⁵⁸ The Arabic word *tarwīḥa* (of which *tarāwīḥ* is the plural form) means “a pause for rest.” The *ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ* is a special form of the Islāmic ritual prayer, performed at some period of the night in the month of Ramaḍān, after the obligatory late-night prayer [*ṣalāt al-‘ishā’*]. It consists of twenty cycles [*raka‘āt*] (or thirty-six, according to the Mālikī school of Islāmic law), and takes its name from the pauses for rest that occur after every fourth cycle. (The salutation [*taslīma*] is pronounced at the end of each set of two cycles.)



[*Umm al-Mu`minīn*] (may Allāh be well pleased with her), who is reported as having said:

“The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once left the house in the middle of the night, in the month of Ramaḍān. He went out to pray in the mosque [*masjid*], where he led the people in the performance of a ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*]. When the next night came around, however, there were so many people present that the mosque could hardly accommodate the entire congregation, so he did not leave home to join them, although he did go out later, in time for the dawn prayer [*ṣalāt al-fajr*]. Then, once he had performed the dawn prayer, he turned toward the people and said to them:

“I was well aware of your situation this past night, but I was afraid that the nighttime ritual prayer [*ṣalāt al-lail*] might be made incumbent upon you as an obligatory religious duty, and that you would prove to be incapable of fulfilling such an obligation.”

‘Ā’isha, the Mother of the Believers [*Umm al-Mu`minīn*] (may Allāh be well pleased with her), then went on to say:

“The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) would always encourage the believers to observe the practices of wakefulness and worship that enliven the nights of Ramaḍān [*fī ihyā’ Ramaḍān*], but without commanding them to regard such observance as a matter of strict injunction [*‘azīma*]. The moment came when Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was destined to conclude his earthly life [*tuwuffiya*], and the same approach was then adopted throughout the Caliphate of Abū Bakr, the Champion of Truth [*aṣ-Ṣiddīq*] (may Allāh be well pleased with him), and on into the early period of the Caliphate of ‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] (may Allāh be well pleased with him).”

‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said:

“Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) would never have taken such a serious interest in these *tarāwīḥ* prayers, if it had not been for a certain saying [*ḥadīth*] of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), which he happened to hear from me.”

By making this statement, ‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) prompted his listeners to ask: “What is that saying



[*ḥadīth*], O Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Muʾminīn*]?” So he responded by telling them: “Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said, in my hearing:

“Around the Heavenly Throne [*ʿArsh*], Allāh (Exalted is He) maintains an area called the Enclosure of Sanctity [*Ḥaḏirat al-Quds*],²⁵⁹ which consists of radiant light. So many are the angels within its confines, that none but Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) could ever add up their total number. These angels are utterly devoted to the worshipful service [*ʿibāda*] of Allāh (Exalted is He), and they never take a single moment to relax. When the nights of the month of Ramaḏān come around, they ask their Lord for permission to descend by turns to the earth below, where they perform the ritual prayers [*yusāllūna*] together with the children of Adam. Whenever any member of the Community of Muḥammad is touched by them, or touches them, that person will experience such blissful happiness and good fortune that he will never again feel miserable or suffer distress.’

“As soon as ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him) heard me repeat these words, he exclaimed: ‘Since we are specially entitled to receive this blessing, we must be better prepared!’ He then proceeded to organize the congregational observance of the *tarāwīḥ* prayers,²⁶⁰ and it was he who established the practice of performing them [throughout the month of Ramaḏān] as a regular traditional custom.”

As we know from another traditional report, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) went out in the first part of a certain night in the month of Ramaḏān. Then, when he heard the Qurʾān being recited in the mosques [*masājid*], he exclaimed: “May Allāh fill the tomb of ʿUmar with light, as Allāh’s mosques are illuminated by the recitation of the Qurʾān!”²⁶¹

According to a somewhat differently worded version of this traditional report, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) passed by the mosques, and he noticed that they were bright with lamps, while people were performing the *tarāwīḥ* prayers, so he exclaimed:

²⁵⁹ In most English-Arabic dictionaries, the meaning given for *Ḥaḏirat al-Quds* is simply “Paradise.” For other terms derived, like *quds* [sanctity, holiness], from the three-consonant root *q-d-s*, see note 256 on p. 123 above.

²⁶⁰ According to A.J. Wensinck, who cites the authority of al-Bukhārī:

“ʿUmar is said to have been the first to assemble behind one *qāriʾ* [reciter of the Qurʾān] those who performed their prayers in the mosque of al-Madīna singly or in groups; he is also said to have preferred the first part of the night for these pious exercises.” (See: *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islām*, art. TARĀWĪḤ.)

²⁶¹ **Author’s note:** The Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is also reported as having uttered the same invocation, under similar circumstances.





“May Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) shine light upon the tomb of ‘Umar, as He has filled our mosques with light!”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If someone hangs a lamp in one of the houses of Allāh, the angels—no fewer than seventy thousand of them—will not stop seeking forgiveness on his behalf, and invoking blessing upon him, until that lamp is extinguished.

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī²⁶² (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said:

“We performed some of our ritual prayers together with Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). When the twenty-third night [of Ramaḍān] came around, he kept vigil with us, and led us in the prayers, until the first third of the night had passed. Then, when the twenty-fourth night came around, he did not leave home to join us. On the twenty-fifth night, he came out and led us in prayer until the first half of the night had elapsed, at which point we said to him: ‘If only you would grant us your presence for the rest of this night of ours, that would be really good!’ To this he replied (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

“If someone keeps vigil and prays in the company of the Imām, until the Imām takes his leave, that person will be credited with having kept vigil for one whole night [*kutiba la-hu qiyām laila*].”

“He did not lead us in prayer on the night of the twenty-sixth. Then, when the night of the twenty-seventh came around, he kept vigil with us once again, only this time he brought his family along to join the congregation, and he led us in prayer until we were afraid that we might miss the moment of salvation [*falāh*].”

When someone asked what he meant by “the moment of salvation [*falāh*],” Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) said: “The last opportunity to partake of the *saḥūr* [the final meal before the commencement of daytime fasting during the month of Ramaḍān]!”

²⁶² See note 23 on p. 18 above.



On why it is considered preferable to perform the *tarāwīḥ* prayers in congregation, and to recite the Qurʾān in a clearly audible voice in the course of their performance. On when and why the recitation of the Sūra of the Clot of Blood [*Sūrat al-ʿAlaq*] is recommended.

It is considered preferable to perform the *tarāwīḥ* prayers in congregation [*jamāʿa*], and to recite the Qurʾān in a clearly audible voice [*jahr*] in the course of their performance, because this is how the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) performed them during those nights of the month of Ramaḍān.

As for the initial performance of the *tarāwīḥ* prayer, this should take place on the night preceding the glow of the first morning to dawn in Ramaḍān, because that night is actually one of the nights of the month of Ramaḍān, and because the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) acted accordingly.

The nightly performance of the *tarāwīḥ* should begin after the obligatory prayer [*ṣalāt al-farḍ*]²⁶³ has been followed by [a customary prayer of] two cycles [*rakʿatain*] with a ritual salutation [*taslīma*]²⁶⁴ at the end of the second cycle, because this is how the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) went about it.

The *tarāwīḥ* prayer consists of twenty cycles [*rakʿa*]. At the conclusion of each set of two cycles, the worshipper sits and performs the ritual salutation [*taslīma*]. There are five pauses for rest [*tarwīḥāt*] in the whole performance, since there is one pause [*tarwīḥa*] after each set of four cycles.

Whether he is praying alone, or as leader [*imām*] of the congregation,

²⁶³ The obligatory prayer referred to here is the late evening prayer [*ṣalāt al-ʿishāʾ*], the last of the five daily prayers, which is customarily followed by a voluntary prayer of two cycles [*rakʿatain*].

²⁶⁴ See note 65 on p. 35 above.





to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)—according to our own Imām, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal²⁶⁷ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), and likewise in the opinion of all the other Imāms (may Allāh’s good pleasure [*riḍwān*] be upon them all).

On reaching the end of this Sūra, the Qur’ān-reciter must perform an act of prostration [*sajda*]. Then he must resume an upright posture, and start reciting the Sūra of the Cow [*Sūrat al-Baqara*].

The recitation of the complete text [*khatma*] of the Book is recommended, in order that—in the course of the month of Ramaḍān—the people may hear the whole of the Qur’ān, and so become acquainted with all the commandments, prohibitions, exhortations and warnings contained therein. The recitation of more than one *khatma* is not recommended, however, since that might place too great a strain upon the believers [*mu’minīn*]. Their feelings of irritation and discomfort would lead to boredom, and they might even shun the congregation altogether, having found their attendance to be a thoroughly unpleasant and burdensome experience. If this were to happen, they would miss the opportunity to gain a mighty recompense and obtain an abundant reward. The imām would be to blame for this, so his sin [*ithm*] would be tremendous, and he would be counted among the sinners [*āthimīn*].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was addressing this very problem, when he said to Mu’ādh [ibn Jabal]²⁶⁸ (may Allāh be well pleased with him): “Are you a fiendish tempter [*fattān*], O Mu’ādh?” The incident arose because Mu’ādh had so prolonged the Qur’ānic recitation, while leading a group of people in prayer, that one of them stopped praying and walked away, then lodged a complaint about the situation with the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

It is considered appropriate to postpone the nighttime prayer called *witr*²⁶⁹ until after the *tarāwīḥ* prayer has been completed. In the first

²⁶⁷ See note 212 on p. 107 above.

²⁶⁸ Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Mu’ādh ibn Jabal ibn ‘Amr ibn Aws al-Khazrajī (d. A.H. 17 or 18). One of the earliest believers, he became a learned and active Companion.

²⁶⁹ The term *witr* [lit., odd number] is used to denote the ritual prayer, consisting of an odd number of cycles, that is performed after the late evening prayer [*ṣalāt al-‘ishā’*] and before the dawn of day [*ṣubḥ*]. The number of cycles is usually three, five, or seven, but may be as many as thirteen. Performance of the *witr* prayer is considered customary [*sunna*] by most traditional authorities, with the exception of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), who took a stricter view. According to the Ḥanafī school [*madhhab*] of Islāmic jurisprudence [*fiqh*], the observance of the *witr* prayer is classed as necessary [*wājib*]. (See: A.J. Wensinck, art. WITR in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*; and: Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, art. WITR.)





cycle [*rak'a*] of the *witr* prayer, the recommended Qur'ānic recitation is the Sūra of the Most High [*Sūrat al-A'lā*], which reads:

Glorify the Name of your Lord
the Most High who created,
and then shaped, and who
determined, then guided;
and who brought forth
the pasturage, then turned it
into rust-colored stubble.

We shall make you recite
[O Muḥammad]
so that you shall not forget
save that which Allāh wills.
He surely knows what is spoken aloud
and that which is kept hidden;
and We shall ease your way
unto the state of ease.

Therefore remind,
in case the reminder brings
some benefit.
He who fears will remember,
but the most wretched will flout it,
he who will roast in the Great Fire,
in which he then will neither die
nor live.

Successful is he who purifies himself,
and remembers the Name of his Lord,
and then performs the prayer.
But you prefer the life of this
lower world,
although the Hereafter is better
and more lasting.

Surely this is in the ancient scrolls:
the scrolls of Abraham and Moses.
(87:1–19)

sabbihi 'sma Rabbi-ka 'l-A'lā:
alladhī khalaqa fa-sawwā:
wa 'lladhī
qaddara fa-hadā:
wa 'lladhī akhrajā 'l-mar'ā:
fa-jā'ala-hu
ghuthā'an aḥwā.
sa-nuqri' u-ka

fa-lā tansā
illā mā shā'a 'llāh:
inna-hu ya'lamu 'l-jahra
wa mā yakhfā.
wa nu'yassiru-ka
li'l-yusrā.

fa-dhakkir
in nafa'ati
'dh-dhikrā
sa-yadhdhakkaru man yakhsā
wa yatajannabu-ha 'l-ashqā
alladhī yaṣla 'n-nāra 'l-kubrā
thumma lā yamūtu
fi-hā wa lā yahyā.

qad aflaha man tazakkā
wa dhakara 'sma Rabbi-hi
fa-ṣallā.
bal tu'thirūna 'l-ḥayāta
'd-dumyā
wa 'l-ākhiratu khairun
wa abqā.

inna hādḥā la-fi 'ṣ-Ṣuḥufi 'l-ūlā
Ṣuḥufi Ibrāhima wa Mūsā.

In the second cycle [*rak'a*] of the *witr* prayer, the recommended Qur'ānic recitation is the Sūra called “the Unbelievers” [*Sūrat al-Kāfirūn*], which reads:

Say: “O unbelievers,
I do not worship what you worship,
and you are not worshipping
that which I worship;

qul yā ayyuha 'l-kāfirūn:
lā a'budu mā ta'budūn:
wa lā antum 'ābidūna
mā a'bud:



nor shall I worship
what you have worshipped,
neither will you worship
that which I worship.
To you your religion,
and to me my religion!" (109:1–6)

wa lā ana ‘ābidun
mā ‘abadtum:
wa lā antum ‘ābidūna
mā a‘bud.
la-kum dīnu-kum
wa liya dīn.

In the third cycle [*rak‘a*] of the *witr* prayer, the recommended Qur’ānic recitation is the Sūra of Sincere Devotion [*Sūrat al-Ikhlās*], which reads:

Say: “He is Allāh, One!
Allāh, the Everlasting Refuge!
He does not beget,
nor was He begotten;
and there is none
comparable unto Him.”
(112:1–4)

qul Huwa ‘llāhu Aḥad:
Allāhu ‘ṣ-Ṣamad:
lam yalid:
wa lam yūlad:
wa lam yakun la-hu
kufuwan aḥad.

The postponement of the *witr* is recommended on the grounds that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) established this sequence for the performance of the prayers [during the nights of the month of Ramaḍān].

Subject to disapproval is the practice of inserting supererogatory devotions [*tanafful*] between each set of four cycles in the *tarāwīḥ* prayer. It is also considered reprehensible to perform the *tarāwīḥ* prayer in two different mosques.²⁷⁰

According to one of the two accounts [of the Ḥanbalī doctrine on the subject], the same stricture applies to the performance of supererogatory prayers [*nawāfil*] in congregation, immediately after the *tarāwīḥ* prayer has been concluded, because this amounts to relentless tagging [*ta‘aqqub*],²⁷¹ which is a reprehensible practice [*makrūh*] in the view of Imām Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal]²⁷² (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him). This practice was certainly frowned upon by Anas ibn Mālīk²⁷³ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), for, as we know from traditional reports, he would take a slight nap, then wake up and

²⁷⁰ What this means, presumably, is that it is considered reprehensible to perform the *tarāwīḥ* prayer in one mosque, then go to another mosque on the same night, and there repeat the performance.

²⁷¹ In the age of the automobile, the term “tailgating” springs to mind as a possible rendering of *ta‘aqqub*.

²⁷² See note 212 on p. 107 above.

²⁷³ See note 35 on p. 24 above.



perform as many voluntary devotions [*nawāfil wa tahajjud*] as he saw fit, and then resume his dozing for a while. Besides, it is vigil in the first part of the night [*nāshi' at al-lail*]²⁷⁴ that Allāh has commended most highly, and that He has mentioned specifically, for He has told us:²⁷⁵

[Keeping vigil in] the first part of the night is more potent in impact and more certain where speech is concerned. (73:6)	<i>inna nāshi' ata 'l- laili hiya ashaddu waṭ'an wa aqwamu qilā.</i>
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According to the second of the two accounts [of the Ḥanbali doctrine], the practice described above is classed as permissible [*jā'iz*], rather than reprehensible [*makrūh*]. It is nevertheless preferable to allow an interval to elapse, in view of the fact that 'Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported as having said: "You claim that the best of the night is the last part of it. Well, let me tell you, the time when you get some sleep is more agreeable, as far as I am concerned, than the time when you are all up and awake!"



²⁷⁴ The Qur'ānic expression *nāshi' at al-lail* has been variously interpreted by the traditional authorities. According to some, it has the same meaning as *qiyām al-lail* [keeping vigil by night], while others say that it signifies "the first part, or the first hours, of the night": or, "every hour of the night in which one rises": or, "rising after sleeping, in the first part of the night." (See: E.W. Lane, *English-Arabic Lexicon*, art. N-SH-')

These different interpretations are reflected in the renderings adopted in several English translations of the Qur'ān. Thus we find: "The vigil of the night" (M.M. Pickthall, *op. cit.*, p. 772); "The rising by night" (A. Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 1633, and Maulana Muhammad Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 1112); "The first part of the night" (A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 614).

²⁷⁵ In one of his recorded talks, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has provided the following commentary on the vigil referred to in this verse [*āya*] of the Qur'ān:

This refers not only to giving up sleep in the ordinary sense, but also to giving up the sleep of involvement with creatures, the lower self [*nafs*], natural inclination [*tab'*], passion [*hawā*] and willfulness [*irāda*]. For its food and drink the heart is left with speaking confidentially [*munājāt*] to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), standing [*qiyām*] and bowing [*rukū'*] and making prostration [*sujūd*] in His presence.

(See: Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Utterances [Malfūzāt]*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992; p. 31.)





Some concluding remarks concerning the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], and concerning the month of Ramaḍān as a whole.

On the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*], as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

The angels and the Spirit
come down. (97:4)

*tanazzalu 'l-malā'ikatu
wa 'r-Rūḥ.*

In other words, Gabriel (peace be upon him), who is the Spirit [*Rūḥ*], comes down with an escort of seventy thousand angels, whom he leads as their commanding officer [*amīr*].

Once they have descended from heaven to the earth below, Gabriel (peace be upon him) will give the greeting of peace to anyone who happens to be in a sitting posture, while the angels will give the greeting of peace to anyone who happens to be sleeping. At the same time, the Maker [*al-Bārī'*] (Glorified and Exalted is He) will bestow the salutation of peace upon those of His servants who are standing upright.

It is certainly possible to conceive that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will bestow the salutation of peace upon those believing servants of His [*'ibādi-hi 'l-mu'minīn*] who are worthy to inhabit the Garden of Paradise, for He has indicated that He will say to them, within the confines of the Garden:

“Peace!”—such is the greeting
from a Lord All-Compassionate.
(36:58)

*salām: qawlan min
Rabbīn Raḥīm.*

By the same token, it is also conceivable that He will bestow the salutation of peace, here in this lower world, upon those righteous servants of His [*'ibādi-hi 'l-abrār*]:

unto whom the reward most fair
has already gone forth from Us.
(21:101)

*alladhīna sabaqat la-hum
min-na 'l-ḥusnā.*



In other words, it is conceivable because the blessings of providence [*ināya*] and felicity [*sa'āda*] have already been conferred by Him, in the eternity without beginning [*fi'l-azal*], upon those who are extinct to the creation [*fānīn 'ani'l-khalq*], existing in perpetuity with the Lord [*bāqīn bi'r-Rabb*], and steadfastly reliant on the Truth [*muṭma'inīn ila'l-Ḥaqq*].

When the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*] comes around, there will not be a single spot on earth that does not have an angel upon it, either bowing down in prostration, or standing erect, as he offers prayers of supplication on behalf of the believing men [*mu'minīn*] and the believing women [*mu'mināt*]. There will be no exceptions, apart from any church [*kanīsa*], or any synagogue [*bī'a*],²⁷⁶ or any temple dedicated to the worship of fire, or any temple dedicated to the worship of idols, or certain places where people dispose of their filthy trash.

Those angels will dedicate every moment of their night on earth to offering prayers of supplication on behalf of the believing men [*mu'minīn*] and the believing women [*mu'mināt*]. As for Gabriel (peace be upon him), he will not leave any believer, male or female, without giving him [or her] the greeting of peace and shaking him [or her] by the hand. To each and every one of them, he will say: “If you are in a state of worshipful obedience, peace be upon you, in the form of the approval and favor you deserve! If you are in a state of sinful disobedience, peace be upon you, in the form of forgiveness! If you are in a state of sleep, peace be upon you, in the form of contentment! If you are in the grave or tomb, peace be upon you, in the form of refreshment [*rauh*] and sweet perfume [*raiḥān*]!”

This, according to one interpretation, is the import of the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

On every errand: Peace.... *min kulli amr—salāmun....*
(97:4,5)

Another interpretation has been expressed as follows:

“The angels will surely convey the greeting of peace to all worthy practitioners of worshipful obedience, but they will not offer that same

²⁷⁶ In an earlier chapter of the present work, there is some evidence to suggest that Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) used *kanīsa* to denote a church, and *bī'a* to denote a synagogue. (See Vol. 1, p. 108.) According to some Arabic lexicographers, however, the term *bī'a* applies to a Christian church, and *kanīsa* to a Jewish synagogue. Yet others say that *kanīsa* may be applied to either of these, or that it means a place of worship used by the followers of any religion other than Islām.





salutation to all who are guilty of sinful disobedience, for some of them are perpetrators of heinous wrongdoing and injustice [*ẓalama*], who deserve no share in the peace conveyed by the angels. Grievous indeed is the offense committed by the consumer of unlawful sustenance [*ākil al-ḥarām*], the breaker of family ties [*qāṭi' ar-riḥm*], the spreader of malicious gossip and slander [*nammām*], and the consumer of goods that rightfully belong to orphans [*ākil amwāl al-yatāmā*]. The likes of these are therefore not entitled to any share in the peace conveyed by the angels, and none shall they receive.”

What calamity could be worse than this terrible disaster? What a dreadful affliction it must be, to live through a month—“the beginning of which is a mercy, the middle of which is a forgiveness, and the last part of which is a deliverance from the Fire of Hell”²⁷⁷—and yet find yourself excluded from sharing in the peace conveyed therein by the angels of the Lord of the sinners and the righteous [*Rabb al-‘uṣāt wa’l-abrār*]!

What could have brought this affliction upon you? Was it due to your remoteness from the All-Merciful One [*ar-Raḥmān*], to your being an agent of tyranny [*aṭ-ṭughyān*] and a willing accomplice of the Devil [*ash-Shaitān*], and to your having adopted the flamboyant style of those who tread the path that leads to the Fires of Hell [*an-nīrān*]? Was it due to your remoteness and aloofness from those who tread the path that leads to the Gardens of Paradise [*al-jinān*], and your extreme reluctance to obey the One who controls both the infliction of harm and the bestowal of benefit [*al-iḥsān*]?

The month of Ramaḍān is the month of serenity and purity [*shahr aṣ-ṣafā’*], the month of fulfillment and fidelity [*shahr al-wafā’*]. It is the month of those who practice the remembrance of their Lord [*shahr adh-dhākirīn*], the month of those who endure with patience [*shahr aṣ-ṣābirīn*], and the month of those who are honest and truthful [*shahr aṣ-ṣādiqīn*]. So, if it does not have the effect of improving your heart—if it does not induce you to desist from rebellious acts against your Lord, and does not make you avoid the company of troublemakers and criminals—what else can exert a positive influence on your heart? What goodness can be hoped for in a case like yours? What redeeming quality can survive in someone like you? What successful outcome can be expected from an individual like you?

²⁷⁷ See p. 85 above, where the month of Ramaḍān is so described in a saying attributed to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).



You had better pay attention, O miserable wretch, and try to learn from what has happened to you. Come to your senses, wake up from your slumber, shake off your heedless indifference, and take a good hard look at what has befallen you. However little of the month you still have left, you must seize every opportunity for repentance [*tawba*] and contrition [*ināba*].²⁷⁸ Take full advantage of the time that is still available for seeking forgiveness [*istighfār*] and practicing worshipful obedience [*tāʿa*]. If you follow this advice, you may yet be one of those who receive the blessings of mercy [*rahma*] and compassionate grace [*raʿfa*].

Then, when the month of Ramaḍān comes to its close, you should bid it farewell with the shedding of copious tears. You should weep over your unfortunate self, while moaning and wailing and uttering plaintive cries of lamentation. For, as you must be well aware, many a keeper of the fast [*ṣāʿim*] will never keep another fast, and many a keeper of the vigil [*qāʿim*] will never keep vigil again.

The worker will be paid his wages, once he has finished his work, and we have now finished the work [required of us in the month of Ramaḍān]. But if only I knew for certain whether our fasting [*ṣiyām*] and our vigil [*qiyām*] have been accepted, or whether they will be used to slap us in our faces! If only I knew for certain which of us has been accepted, so that we may congratulate him, and which of us has been rejected, so that we may offer him our condolences!

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

There is many a one who keeps the fast by day, yet who gets nothing out of his fasting but hunger and thirst. And there is many a one who spends the night in vigil and prayer, yet who gets nothing from his vigil other than insomnia.



²⁷⁸ See note 189 on p. 97 above.





Peace be upon you, O month of daytime fasting!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘ṣ-ṣiyām

Peace be upon you, O month of nighttime vigil!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-qiyām

Peace be upon you, O month of true faith!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-īmān

Peace be upon you, O month of the Qur’ān!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-Qur’ān

Peace be upon you, O month of the radiant lights!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-anwār

Peace be upon you, O month of forgiveness and pardon!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-maghfirati wa ‘l-ghufrān

**Peace be upon you, O month of the ascending steps
of Paradise and of salvation from the descending steps of Hell!**

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘d-darajāt wa ‘n-najāti mina ‘d-darakāt

Peace be upon you, O month of the worshipful penitents!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘t-tā’ibīna ‘l-‘ābidīn

**Peace be upon you, O month of those who know
from spiritual experience!**

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-‘arīfīn

**Peace be upon you, O month of those who exercise
discriminating judgment!**

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-mujtahidīn

Peace be upon you, O month of safety and security!

as-salāmu ‘alaik—yā shahra ‘l-amān.

**You are a prison for disobedient sinners, and for the truly
devout you are a place of comfort.**

Peace be upon the lamps and lanterns that shine so bright! Peace be upon the sleepless eyes, and upon the streaming tears! Peace be upon the illuminated niches [*maḥārīb*] in the mosques, and upon the tears that are spilled and shed! Peace be upon the sighs that arise from hearts that are aflame!





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○ Allāh, include us among those whose fasting and prayers have been accepted, among those whose evil deeds You have transformed into good deeds, among those whom You have allowed by Your mercy to enter Your Gardens of Paradise, and among those whose degrees You have exalted, ○ Most Merciful of the merciful [*yā Arḥam ar-rāḥimīn*]!





**Concerning *zakāt al-fiṭr*²⁷⁹
[the special alms-due that becomes payable
immediately after the end of the month
of Ramaḍān].²⁸⁰**

Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us [in a passage of the Qurʾān that is generally believed to concern the immediate aftermath of the month of Ramaḍān]:

Successful is he who purifies himself, *qad aflaha man tazakkā*
and remembers the Name of his Lord, *wa dhakara 'sma Rabbi-hi*
and then performs the prayer. *fa-ṣallā.*
(87:14,15)

Let us therefore consider how these words of His may be interpreted:

1. “Successful is he” [*qad aflaha*]:

In this context, success [*falāḥ*] can be understood to mean either the attainment [*fawz*] of the Garden of Paradise, along with salvation [*najāt*] from the Fires of Hell in the Hereafter, and from disasters and afflictions in this world; or prosperity [*yumm*] and good fortune [*sa'āda*] in this world—as the happy outcome of worshipful obedience—and permanent survival [*khulūd*] in the Gardens of Paradise in the Other World.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has also said:

Successful are the true believers. *qad aflaha 'l-mu' minūn.*
(23:1)

In other words, they are fortunate [*su'idū*].

2. “Successful is he who purifies himself” [*qad aflaha man tazakkā*]:

²⁷⁹ For a satisfactory understanding of the points discussed in this subsection, it is important to be aware that the Arabic noun *zakāt*, the verb *tazakkā*, and the participle *zākī*, are all derived from the same three-consonant root—*z-k-w*—which conveys the basic notion of “healthy growth” or “purification and development.”

²⁸⁰ In an earlier chapter of the present work, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has provided a detailed account of the rules governing the payment of *zakāt al-fiṭr*. (See Vol. 1, p. 20.)





That is to say, successful is he who is enabled to achieve the state of purity [*wuffiqa li'z-zakāt*], and to cleanse his faith [*īmān*] and his devotion [*taqwā*] of all sinful stains. There can be no success [*falāḥ*] for anyone who fails to become purified. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

Surely the guilty are never successful. *inna-hu lā yufliḥu 'l-mujrimūn.*
(10:17)

As for the proper interpretation of His words “*man tazakkā*,” this has been the subject of some disagreement among the traditional authorities:

According to Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), the expression signifies: “he who cleanses himself [*man taṭaḥhara*] of polytheistic association [*shirk*], by means of true faith [*īmān*].”

It was al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]²⁸¹ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said: “The expression ‘*man tazakkā*’ means: ‘he who is righteous [*ṣāliḥ*], and whose good work is thriving [*zākī*] and growing.”

Abu ‘l-Aḥwaṣ said: “I take it to mean: ‘[he who pays] the general alms-due [*zakāt*] on all goods and property.’”²⁸²

Qatāda²⁸³ and ‘Aṭā’²⁸⁴ (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them) both said: “Allāh intended it to convey the very specific meaning: ‘[he who pays] the *zakāt al-fiṭr* [the special alms-due that becomes payable immediately after the end of Ramaḍān, i.e., at the time of fast-breaking], as distinct from any other.”

3. “and remembers the Name of his Lord, and then performs the prayer.” [*wa dhakara 'sma Rabbi-hi fa-ṣallā*].

Here again, the proper interpretation has been the subject of some disagreement among the traditional authorities:

According to Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father), the meaning is: “[and] affirms the Oneness [*wahḥada*] of Allāh (Exalted is He), and performs the five daily prayers [*ṣalla 'ṣ-ṣalawāti 'l-khams*].”

²⁸¹ See note 74 on p. 40 above.

²⁸² According to this interpretation, the verb *tazakkā* relates to the Alms-due [*Zakāt*] that constitutes one of the Five Pillars of Islām. (See Vol. 1, pp. 17–19.)

²⁸³ See note 175 on p. 92 above.

²⁸⁴ This is presumably Qatāda’s contemporary, ‘Aṭā’ as-Sulamī/as-Sulaimī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them both), a man renowned for his extreme piety. According to some accounts, his sense of shame before Allāh (Exalted is He) was so intense that he felt unable to raise his head toward heaven. He died in A.H. 121.





According to Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī²⁸⁵ (may Allāh be well pleased with him): “The expression: ‘and remembers the Name of his Lord [*wa dhakara ‘sma Rabbi-hi*]’ refers to the affirmation of Allāh’s Supreme Greatness [*takbīr*].²⁸⁶ As for: ‘and then performs the prayer [*fa-ṣallā*]’, this means: ‘and then goes out to celebrate the Festival [*al-‘Īd*], and performs the ritual prayer [with the congregation in the mosque].”

Wakī‘ ibn al-Jarrāh (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) offered this instructive comparison:

“The alms-due called *zakāt al-fiṭr*, as it relates to Ramaḍān, is like the prostration to compensate for forgetfulness [*sajdat as-sahw*], as the latter relates to the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*].”

The point he was making may be explained as follows:

When Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) prescribed payment of the alms-due called *zakāt al-fiṭr* as an obligatory religious duty, he intended it to provide the keeper of the fast [*ṣā‘im*] with a cleansing instrument, by which to rid himself of moral defects. In other words, it gives the keeper of the fast an opportunity to redress the imbalance in his account, by compensating for the deficiency that has entered into him through indulgence in various forms of misbehavior, such as idle gossip [*laghw*], lewdness and sexual harassment [*rafath*],²⁸⁷ telling lies [*kidhb*], backbiting [*ghība*], slanderous defamation [*namīma*], consuming substances of dubious legality [*shubuhāt*], and eyeing attractive temptations [*mustahsanāt*].

The post-Ramaḍān alms-due [*fiṭra*]²⁸⁸ has thus been established as a means of making atonement for bad habits such as these, and of completing and repairing one’s observance of the fast. It may fittingly be compared, therefore, to repenting one’s sins and seeking forgiveness for them, and also to bowing down in prostration [*sujūd*] as an atonement for lapsing into forgetfulness [*sahw*] during the ritual prayer. It seems highly likely that this act of prostration has been prescribed in order to spite the Devil [*Shaitān*], since he is the cause of the lapse into forgetfulness. We may safely assume that repentance of sinful offenses,

²⁸⁵ See note 159 on p. 85 above.

²⁸⁶ The affirmation of Allāh’s Supreme Greatness [*takbīr*] is expressed by declaring: “*Allāhu Akbar* [Allāh is Supremely Great!]” These words are pronounced at the beginning of every ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*].

²⁸⁷ See note 83 on p. 43 above.

²⁸⁸ In this context, the term *fiṭra* is simply a shorter synonym of *zakāt al-fiṭr*.





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and payment of the post-Ramaḍān alms-due [*fiṭra*], have likewise been prescribed with a view to spiting him, because the Devil [*Shaiṭān*] is the cause of those acts of sinful disobedience, and of all those moral defects that tarnish the observance of the fast.

May Allāh grant refuge, to us and to all the true believers [*mu'minīn*], from Satan's tricks and snares and pitfalls! May He keep us safe from the perils and afflictions of this world, and deliver us therefrom, by His mercy and His gracious favor! *Āmīn*.





Concerning *ʿId al-Fiṭr* [the Festival of Breaking Fast after the month of Ramaḍān] and why the Arabic term *ʿId* is so appropriately applied to it.²⁸⁹

The Festival [of Breaking Fast after Ramaḍān] came to be called *ʿId* for the simple reason that Allāh restores [*yuʿidu: yu-ʿid-u*] joy and happiness to His servants on their day of festive celebration [*fi yawmi ʿidi-him*].

Many other explanations have been suggested, including those expressed in the following anonymous sayings:

“It came to be called *ʿId* for the simple reason that it contains the benefits [*ʿawāʿid*]²⁹⁰ of goodness bestowed by Allāh, and the favors of generous grace conferred by Him upon His servant.”

“The explanation is that the servant returns [*yaʿūdu*] at that time to humble entreaty and weeping, and the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) returns [*yaʿūdu*] at that time to the giving of presents and the granting of gifts.”

“[When people celebrate the *ʿId*, it means that] they have returned [*ʿādū*] to their previous condition from the state of purity [experienced while keeping the fast].”

“It signifies that they have returned [*ʿādū*] from obeying Allāh directly [*tāʿat Allāh*] to obeying the Messenger [*tāʿat ar-Rasūl*] (Allāh bless him and give him peace), from the religious practice that is strictly obligatory [*farīḍa*] to that which is customary but not compulsory

²⁸⁹ For a satisfactory understanding of the points discussed in this subsection, it is important to be aware that the Arabic nouns *ʿid* and *ʿawāʿid*, and the verbs *yaʿūdu*, *ʿādū* and *ʿūdū*, are all derived from the same three-consonant root—*ʿ-w-d*—which conveys the basic notion of “returning.” This common derivation is somewhat disguised—to some extent in the Arabic script, and even more so in transliteration—due to the fact that the middle consonant *-w-* is a “weak letter” (see note 132 on p. 73 above).

²⁹⁰ In the case of the term *ʿawāʿid* [benefits, favors, advantages; profits, returns on investment], the three root consonants—*ʿ-w-d*—are all apparent, even in transliteration.





[*sunna*], and from the Fast of Ramaḍān to the fast of six days in the month of Shawwāl.”

“It came to be called ‘*Īd* for the simple reason that the believers are told at that time: ‘Return [*‘ūdū*] to your dwelling places, knowing that you have been granted forgiveness!’”

“It came to be called ‘*Īd* because it is an occasion for remembering the promise and the threat²⁹¹ [*al-wa‘d wa ‘l-wa‘id*],²⁹² the Day of requital and superabundance [*al-jazā‘ wa ‘l-mazīd*], the Day of emancipation for the bondmaids and the male slaves [*al-imā‘ wa ‘l-‘abīd*],²⁹³ the approach of the Lord of Truth to His creatures near and far [*al-qarīb wa ‘l-ba‘id*], and the reality of contrition and repentance [*al-ināba wa ‘l-awba*]²⁹⁴ from the feeble servant to the One who is All-Forgiving and Ever-Loving [*al-Ghafūr al-Wadūd*].”

It was Wahb ibn Munabbih (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) who said:

“Allāh created the Garden of Paradise on the Day of Breaking the Fast [*Yawm al-Fiṭr*]; He planted the Tree of Bliss [*Ṭūbā*]²⁹⁵ on the Day of Breaking the Fast; He chose Gabriel (peace be upon him) as the conveyer of inspiration [*wahy*] on the Day of Breaking the Fast; and the sorcerers [*saḥara*] found forgiveness on the Day of Breaking the Fast.”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

When the Day of Breaking the Fast [*Yawm al-Fiṭr*] comes around, and the people emerge from their homes to pray in the open space near the burial ground [*jabbāna*], Allāh (Exalted is He) will take notice of them, and He will say: “My servants, for My sake you have kept the fast, and for My sake you have performed the prayers. Now take your leave, knowing that you have been granted forgiveness!”

According to a traditional report, transmitted on the authority of

²⁹¹ That is to say, the promise of blissful reward in the Garden of Paradise, and the threat of terrible torment in the Fire of Hell.

²⁹² Although the second syllable of *wa‘id* does happen to be ‘*id*, the word as a whole is derived from the root *w-‘-d*, which conveys the basic idea of “promising.”

²⁹³ That is to say, the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*].

²⁹⁴ See note 189 on p. 97 above.

²⁹⁵ The *Ṭūbā* tree is traditionally depicted as having its roots in Paradise, while its leaves and branches extend downwards toward the earth. According to some accounts, one of its branches will enter the mansion of each inhabitant of the Garden of Paradise, bearing flowers and ripe fruit of every imaginable kind.





Anas ibn Mālik²⁹⁶ (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

On the Night of Breaking the Fast [*Lailat al-Fiṭr*], Allāh (Exalted is He) will grant the recompense due to anyone who has kept the fast throughout the month of Ramaḍān, and He will grant that recompense in full measure. Then, in the early morning of the Day of Breaking the Fast, Allāh (Exalted is He) will give His angels their instructions. In obedience to His command, they will promptly fly down to the earth, where they will position themselves at the street corners and at the crossroads, proclaiming in a voice that is audible to all created beings, apart from the jinn and humankind: “O Community of Muḥammad, come forth into the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), who accepts the smallest offering, bestows the greatest abundance, and forgives the most terrible sin!”

Then, once the believers have emerged and presented themselves at their place of prayer [*muṣallā*], performed their prayers, and offered their supplications, the Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He) will make sure that they are left with no need that He has not satisfied, no request that He has not answered, and no sin that He has not forgiven. They will then return to their homes, knowing that they have been granted forgiveness.

The following saying [*ḥadīth*] of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is one of those reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and with his father):

When the month of Ramaḍān is over, and the Night of Breaking the Fast [*Lailat al-Fiṭr*] has arrived, that night is called the Night of the Prize [*Lailat al-Jā’iza*]. Then, in the early morning of the Day of Breaking the Fast, Allāh (Exalted is He) will send His angels forth to visit all the towns and cities on the earth below. Once they have made their descent, they will position themselves at the entrances to all the streets and alleys. There, in a voice that is audible to every being created by Allāh (Exalted is He), apart from the jinn and humankind, they will issue a proclamation, saying: “O Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), come forth into the presence of a Noble and Generous Lord [*Rabb Karīm*], who will grant you gifts in abundance, and forgive your terrible sin!”

Then, when the believers have emerged and presented themselves at their place of prayer [*muṣallā*], Allāh (Exalted is He) will say to His angels: “O My angels!” They will respond to His call by saying: “We wait intent upon Your service, time and time again, and upon aiding Your cause, time and time again [*labbaika wa sa’daik!*]²⁹⁷ Then He will say to them: “What is the recompense of the hired laborer, once he has done his job?”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) continued:

The angels will reply: “Our God [*Ilāh*] and our Master [*Sayyid*] and our Lord [*Mawlā*], You will pay him his wages in full!” So the All-Majestic One [*al-Jalīl*]

²⁹⁶ See note 35 on p. 24 above.

²⁹⁷ See note 167 on p. 88 above.





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(Magnificent is His Majesty) will say: “I now call upon you to bear witness, O My angels, that I have conferred My acceptance and My forgiveness, as the reward for their fasting [*ṣiyām*] and night vigil [*qiyām*] during the month of Ramaḍān.”

Then He will say: “O My human servants, put your requests to Me now, for this I swear, by My Might and My Majesty: You will not ask Me this day, in this gathering of yours, for anything connected with your life hereafter, without My granting it to you; nor for anything connected with your life in this lower world, without My attending to your need. By My Might and My Majesty, I will surely condone the false steps you make, as long as you are consciously alert in the effort to avoid incurring My displeasure. By My Might and My Majesty, I will not put you to shame, nor will I expose you to disgrace amongst those who are faithfully committed to observing the statutes [*ḥudūd*].²⁹⁸ Now you may depart, knowing that you have been forgiven. You have won My approval, and I am well pleased with you.”

This traditional report concludes with the following words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The angels will then be very happy, as they welcome the good news of all that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will bestow upon this Community, when its members break the fast they have kept through the month of Ramaḍān.



²⁹⁸ See note 153 on p. 83 above.



Concerning four Festivals [*A'yād*] celebrated by four peoples [*aqwām*] in the course of history.

There have been four Festivals [*A'yād*],²⁹⁹ celebrated by four peoples [*aqwām*], namely:

1. The Festival [*'Īd*] celebrated by the people of Abraham [*Ibrāhīm*] (peace be upon him).

A crucial moment in the life of Abraham (peace be upon him) is thus described in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

So he glanced a glance at the stars. Then he said: "Oh, I feel sick!" (37:88,89)	<i>fa-naẓara naẓratan fi 'n-nujūm</i> <i>fa-qāla innī saqīm.</i>
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At the point when this occurred, his fellow tribesmen were going out of town for the purpose of celebrating a certain religious festival [*'īd*] of theirs, but Abraham (peace be upon him) preferred to stay behind. Since he did not identify with their religion [*dīn*], he pleaded sickness as a pretext for not joining them on their excursion. As soon as they had all departed, he armed himself with an ax and used it to smash their idols [*aṣṇām*]. Then, when he had finished wielding the ax, he attached it to the neck of the biggest idol and left it hanging there. As for what was to happen next, from the moment when his fellow tribesmen returned, the story is told in these verses [*āyāt*] of the Qur'ān:

They said: "Who has done this to our gods? Surely it must be one of the evildoers."	<i>qālū man fa'ala hādha bi-ālihati-nā</i> <i>inna-hu</i> <i>la-mīna 'ẓ-ẓālimīn.</i>
They said: "We heard a young man making mention of them, and he is called Abraham."	<i>qālū sami'nā fatan</i> <i>yadhkuru-hum</i> <i>yuqālu la-hu Ibrāhīm.</i>
They said: "Then bring him here before the people's eyes, so that they may bear witness."	<i>qālū fa-tū bi-hi</i> <i>'alā a'yuni 'n-nāsi</i> <i>la'alla-hum yashhadūn.</i>

²⁹⁹ Strange as it may seem, the Arabic word *A'yād* [Festivals] is simply the plural form of *'Īd* [Festival]. (For the derivation of these and other words from the root 'w-d, see note 289 on p. 146 above.)



They said: “Are you the one who did this to our gods, O Abraham?”

*qālū a-anta fa’alta hādhā
bi-ālihāti-nā yā Ibrāhīm.*

He said: “No; it was this big one of them that did it. So question them, if they are able to speak.”

*qāla bal fa’ala-hu kabīru-hum
hādhā fa-’s’alū-hum
in kānū yanṭiqūn.*

So they turned on one another, and said: “Surely you are the ones in the wrong!”

*fa-raja’ū ilā anfusi-him
fa-qālū inna-kum
antumū ’z-zālimūn.*

Then they were utterly confounded, [and they said]: “You know full well that these [idols] do not speak.”

*thumma nukisū ‘alā ru’ūsi-him:
la-qad ‘alimta
mā hā’ulā’i yanṭiqūn.*

He said: “Do you then worship, instead of Allāh, that which can neither profit you at all, nor do you any harm?”

*qāla a-fa-ta’budūna min
dūni ’llāhi mā lā yanfa’u-kum
shai’an
wa lā yaḍurru-kum.*

“Fie on you, and on all that you worship instead of Allāh! Have you no sense at all?”

*uffin la-kum wa li-mā ta’budūna
min dūni ’llāh:
a-fa-lā ta’qilūn.*

They cried: “Burn him, and help your gods, if you are going to take some action.”

*qālū harriqū-hu wa ’nṣurū
ālihata-kum in
kuntum fā’ilīn.*

We said: “O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham!”
(21:59–69)

*qulnā yā nāru kūnī bardan
wa salāman ‘alā Ibrāhīm.*

The Bosom Friend of the All-Merciful [*Khalīl ar-Raḥmān*] (peace be upon him) was filled with zeal for the sake of his Lord, so he paralyzed his hand in the process of shattering the idols [*aṣnām*], and risked his life for the friendship of the Lord of all mankind [*wilāya Rabb al-anām*]. His Lord therefore bestowed upon him the honor of bosom friendship [*khulla*],³⁰⁰ caused his hand to become an instrument for restoring dead birds to life,³⁰¹ brought forth from his loins the bearers of Messengership and Prophethood [*ahl ar-Risāla wa ’n-Nubuwwa*], and made him the direct ancestor of [Muḥammad] the Chosen One [*al-Muṣṭafā*], the Best

³⁰⁰ The abstract noun *khulla* [bosom friendship] s formed from the same Arabic root—*kh-l-l*—as *Khalīl* [Bosom Friend]. Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was once asked to explain the meaning of the word *khulla*, so he responded by saying:

What is ‘bosom friendship’ [*khulla*]? It is companionship [*ṣuḥba*], loving affection [*maḥabba*] and togetherness [*wuṣla*].

(See: Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Utterances [Malfūẓāt]*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992; p. 51.)

³⁰¹ The story of this miracle is told in Q. 2:260.



of Humankind [*Khair al-Bariyya*] (Allāh bless him and give him peace).³⁰²

2. The Festival [*ʿĪd*] celebrated by the people of Moses [*Mūsā*], the Interlocutor of the All-Merciful [*Kalīm ar-Rahmān*] (peace be upon him).

This is referred to as the Day of Grace [*Yawmu ʿz-Zīna*], in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

[Moses] said: “Your tryst shall be the Day of Grace.” (20:59) *qāla mawʿidu-kum Yawmu ʿz-Zīnati.*

The following explanation has been offered:

“It came to be called the Day of Grace [*Yawmu ʿz-Zīna*] because Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) graced [*zayyana*] Moses and his people, by causing the destruction of their enemy Pharaoh [*Firʿawn*] and his people.

“Seventy-two magicians (some say seventy-three) came out into the desert, together with Pharaoh and his people, [to challenge Moses (peace be upon him) and his people]. They brought with them seven hundred staffs and ropes, and they put quicksilver [*ziʿbaq*] in the middle of the staffs, which were intertwined with the ropes. The creatures were standing out there on the sun-baked ground [*ramḍāʿ*],³⁰³ and the heat of the sun was extremely intense, so the quicksilver melted and the staffs caused the ropes to slither about. To the people looking on, they appeared to be slithering serpents, although they were not really moving of their own accord.

So Moses conceived a fear within him. (20:67) *fa-awjasa fi nafsi-hi khifatan Mūsā.*

“The fear he had conceived was for his people, and he expressed his deep concern by saying: ‘Perhaps they will deluded into believing that what those magicians have done is really what it seems to be. If so, their faith [*īmān*] will be diminished, or they may even apostasize [*yartaddūna*].’

³⁰² We find some important details concerning this subject in Vol. 2, pp. 118, where Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) informs us that:

[In] the case of Abraham, the Special Friend of Allāh [*Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl*] (peace be upon him)... , the fact [is] that Allāh... caused him to become the father and direct ancestor of so many of the Prophets [*Anbiyāʿ*] and Messengers [*Mursalīn*]. As we know from traditional reports, his own children and the offspring of his children account for no fewer than four thousand Prophets (peace be upon them all). Allāh (Exalted is He) has told us:

And We made his offspring the survivors. (37:77) *wa jaʿalnā dhurriyyata-hu humu ʿl-bāqīn.*

Even our own Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is one of his direct descendants, as are Moses and Jesus and David and Solomon (peace be upon them all), to mention only a few by name.

³⁰³ The term is *ramḍāʿ* is derived from the same three-consonant root—*r-m-d*—as *Ramaḍān*. (See note 146 on p. 79 above.)





“It was then that Allāh (Exalted is He) said to Moses (peace be upon him):

And throw down your staff! (27:10) *wa alqi ‘aşā-k.*

“So he threw it down, and lo and behold, it turned into an enormous serpent, as huge as the biggest camel that ever was! It had two eyes that were ablaze with fire, and the snarling sound it made was truly terrifying. It bore down upon the products of their sorcery, their ropes and their staffs, and gobbled them up—that is to say, it devoured them all completely—yet without being altered in the process. There was no swelling of the belly, no lessening of mobility, and no increase in either its length or its breadth.

Then the wizards were flung down
prostrate. (7:120) *wa ulqiya ‘s-saḥaratu
sājidīn.*

They all bowed down low in prostration before Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), including the most important of them, whose name was Simon [*Sham‘ūn*], and they cried:

“We believe in the Lord
of Aaron and Moses.” (20:70)³⁰⁴ *āmānā
bi-Rabbi Hārūna wa Mūsā.*

“In other words: ‘We give credence [*ṣaddaḡnā*] to Him.’

“Then the serpent bore down upon the armed forces of Pharaoh and his people, and they were routed and took to flight. By some accounts, as many as fifty thousand of them died.”

The story goes on for some considerable length, but we shall leave it at this point.

3. The Festival [*‘Īd*] of Jesus [*‘Īsā*] (peace be upon him) and his people.
Let us begin by quoting these words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

When the Disciples said: “O Jesus, son of Mary! Is your Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven?” he said: “Observe your duty to Allāh, if you are true believers.” (5:112)	<i>idh qāla ‘l-Hawāriyyuna yā ‘Īsa ‘bna Maryama hal yastaṭī‘u Rabbu-ka an yunazzila ‘alai-nā mā‘idatan mīna ‘s-sāmā‘: qāla ‘taqu ‘llāha in kuntum mu‘minīn.</i>
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³⁰⁴ If this were a continuation of the immediately preceding Qur’ānic quotation (7:120), it would read in full:

“We believe in the Lord of All the Worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.” (7:121,122)	<i>āmānā bi-Rabbi ‘L-‘Ālamīn: Rabbi Mūsā wa Hārūn.</i>
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They said: “We wish to eat from it, so that our hearts may be at rest, and that we may know that you have told us the truth, and that we may be among those who are witnesses to it.” (5:113)

Jesus, son of Mary, said: “O Allāh, our Lord, send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, so that it may be a festival for us—for the first of us and for the last of us—and a sign from You. And provide us with sustenance, for You are the Best of providers.” (5:114)

Allāh said: “I shall indeed send it down for you. But if anyone amongst you disbelieves thereafter, I will surely punish him with a penalty such as I have never inflicted on any of the peoples of the world.” (5:115)

But when Jesus became conscious of their disbelief, he cried: “Who will be my helpers in the cause of Allāh?” So the Disciples said: “We shall be Allāh’s helpers. We believe in Allāh, and you must bear witness that we have surrendered [unto Him].” (3:52)

*qālū nurīdu an na’kula min-hā
wa taṭma’inna qulūbu-nā
wa na’lama an qad
ṣadaqta-nā
wa nakūna ‘alai-hā
mina ’sh-shāhidīn.*

*qāla ‘Īsa ’bnu Maryama ’llāhumma
Rabba-nā anzil ‘alai-nā
mā’ idatan mina ’s-samā’i
takūnu la-nā ‘idan
li-awwali-nā wa ākhiri-nā
wa āyatan min-ka
wa ’rzuq-nā
wa Anta Khairu ’r-rāziqīn.*

*qāla ’llāhu innī munazzīlu-hā
‘alai-kum:
fa-man yakfur ba’dū
min-kum fa-innī
u’adhhibu-hu
‘adhāban lā
u’adhhibu-hu
ahadan mina ’l-‘ālamīn.*

*fa-lammā aḥassa ‘Īsā
min-humu ’l-kufra qāla
man anṣārī
ila ’llāh:
qāla ’l-Ḥawāriyyūna
naḥnu anṣāru ’llāh:
āmannā bi-’llāhi
wa ’shhad
bi-annā muslimūn.*

We shall now provide an explanatory version of the story, drawing upon traditional commentaries and reports:³⁰⁵

The Disciples [Ḥawāriyyūn]³⁰⁶ said: “O Jesus [yā ‘Īsā], is your Lord able to grant your request, if you ask Him to send down for us a

³⁰⁵ In the passages that follow, the Qur’ānic phrases and sentences are printed in a bold font, to distinguish them from the explanatory material in which they are embedded.

³⁰⁶ The Arabic lexicographers offer several ingenious interpretations of *al-Ḥawāriyyūn/-īn*, the collective name for the Disciples of Jesus (peace be upon him), which they derive—like the Qur’ānic term for the brides of Paradise (*ḥūr ‘īn*; see note — on p. — above)—from the Arabic root *ḥ-w-r*. (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *Ḥ-W-R*.)





table spread with food [*mā'ida*]³⁰⁷ from heaven?” He said: “Observe your duty to Allāh, and do not ask Him for trouble, if you are true believers [*mu'minīn*]! If such a table is in fact sent down, but then, at some later stage, you deny the truth concerning it, you will be severely punished.”

They said: “We wish to eat from it, for we are hungry, so that our hearts may be at rest—that is to say, so that our hearts may feel comfortable with the faith [*īmān*] and belief [*taṣḍīq*] to which you are summoning us—and so that we may know that you have told us the truth with regard to your being a Prophet [*Nabī*] and a Messenger [*Rasūl*]—and that we may be witnesses to it, i.e., to the table, in the presence of the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrā'īl*] when we return to them.”

The Disciples [*Ḥawāriyyūn*] were those who responded to Jesus (peace be upon him) when he passed by them in Jerusalem [*Bait al-Maqdis*],³⁰⁸ where they were practicing their trade of bleaching clothes.³⁰⁹ They were twelve men. When Jesus (peace be upon him) said to them: “Who will be my helpers in the cause of Allāh?”—in other words, “Who will assist me, together with Allāh, against those who are guilty of unbelief and tyranny [*ahl al-kufr wa' ṭ-ṭughyān*], so that I may summon them to the worshipful obedience of Allāh, and to the affirmation of His Oneness [*tawḥīd*] ?”—the Disciples said: “We shall be Allāh’s helpers.”

Having made this commitment, they left their familiar way of life and followed Jesus (peace be upon him), traveling far and wide with him to whichever part of the earth he directed his steps. Thus they witnessed all the marvels and miracles [*mu'jizāt*]³¹⁰ that he was instrumental in performing (peace be upon him). Whenever they felt hungry and in need of food to eat, Jesus would simply stretch out his hand, and extract from the earth a couple of loaves of bread for each one of them, and likewise for himself. Gabriel (peace be upon him) would walk along beside him, showing him all manner of wonders and marvels, supporting him and helping him to deal with things as they arose.

³⁰⁷ According to most of the classical Arabic lexicographers, the term *mā'ida* is only applied to a table that has food on it. A table without food is called a *khiwān* or *khuwān*, not a *mā'ida*. (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. M–Y–D.)

³⁰⁸ See note 193 on p. 98 above.

³⁰⁹ **Author’s note:** In the Nabataean language, the term *ḥawāriyyūn* is applied to those who earn their living by whitening articles of clothing.

³¹⁰ See note 246 on p. 119 above.





Jesus (peace be upon him) was constantly demonstrating wonders and marvels to the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrāʿīl*], but this merely increased their remoteness from believing him and following him, until one day five thousand of the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrāʿīl*] came out to meet him on a road, and joined the Disciples in asking him for the table spread with food. It was then that **Jesus, the son of Mary, (peace be upon him) said:**

“O Allāh, our Lord, send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, so that it may be a festival [*ʿīd*] for us—for the first of us and for the last of us.” He was saying, in effect: “...so that it may be a feast for those in our own day and age, who have been present to witness the coming down of the table spread with food, and so that it may also be a recurring festival [*ʿīd*] for those who come after us. The table will be a sign from You. And provide us with sustenance—that is to say, grant us the table spread with food—for You are the Best of providers, the Best of all those who provide sustenance.”

Allāh said: “I shall indeed send it (i.e., the table) down for you. But if anyone amongst you disbelieves thereafter—that is to say, after it has come down for your benefit—I will surely punish him with a penalty such as I have never inflicted on any of the peoples of the world.”

Then, on a Sunday, Allāh sent down for them from heaven fresh fish, flat bread, and dried dates.

According to some traditional accounts, the table was a portable leather food-wallet [*sufra*]³¹¹ containing a broiled fish, which had salt at its head and vinegar by its tail. It also contained five loaves of bread, with an olive on each loaf, as well as five pomegranates and some dried dates. Various vegetables, not including leeks, were arranged around the edges.

According to one account, Jesus (peace be upon him) said to his companions, while they were sitting in a garden: “Does anyone amongst you happen to have something with him [for us to eat]?” Simon [*Shamʿūn*]³¹² came up with two small fishes and five loaves of bread, and someone else came forward with some kind of barley broth

³¹¹ According to the Arabic lexicographers, the term *sufra* denotes a sheet of leather, which is used as a receptacle for the food that is taken along on a journey. As E.W. Lane explains: “This is commonly of a round form, with a running string; so that it is converted into a bag to contain the food, at one time, and at another time is spread flat upon the ground, when persons want to eat upon it.” (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic English-Lexicon*, art. S–F–R.)

³¹² In Christian writings, this Disciple is often called Simon Peter.



[*sawīq*].³¹³ Jesus (peace be upon him) then proceeded to cut the two fishes into little pieces. He broke the bread into halves, and set the barley broth [*sawīq*] down on the dining mat. Then he made an ablution [*tawaddaʿa*], performed two cycles of ritual prayer [*ṣallā rakʿatain*], and offered a supplication to his Lord [*daʿā Rabba-hu*].

It was at this point that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) cast something resembling fits of drowsiness upon his companions. When the people reopened their eyes, lo and behold, the food on the dining mat had increased in quantity, so much so that it now reached up to the height of their knees. Then Jesus (peace be upon him) told the people present: “Eat, and invoke the Name of Allāh, but do not take any leftover food away with you.” He instructed them to sit in circles, so they sat and ate, and invoked the Name of Allāh, until they had fully satisfied their hunger. Some say there were five thousand of them, all men—others say one thousand, all men, and yet others say eight hundred, including both men and women—ranging from those who were desperately poor and starving, to those whose need was merely for a single loaf of bread, or perhaps a few loaves. Be that as it may, they all came away completely satisfied, gratefully praising their Lord.

Then, all of a sudden, everything upon it was restored to its original shape, and the dining mat [*sufra*] was raised up to heaven, before their very eyes.

In the words of the narrator: “Every poor beggar who ate from it was enriched on that day, and did not cease to be a wealthy man until he died. Every chronic invalid was permanently cured, and every sick person was made healthy again.”

It was Muqātil who said: “Jesus (peace be upon him) asked the people: ‘Have you eaten?’ ‘Yes,’ they said, so he told them: ‘Well then, do not take any leftover food away with you!’ Although they replied: ‘We shall not take any leftovers away with us,’ they did in fact take quite a lot away. In all, the extra food they took away with them—over and above what they had eaten on the spot—was enough to fill twenty-four two-bushel baskets [*miktal*].

³¹³ According to the Arabic lexicographers, the term *sawīq* denotes “a meal of parched barley and/or wheat, that is generally made into a kind of gruel, being moistened with water, or clarified butter, or the fat of a sheep’s tail, etc.” Sugar and dates may also be added. (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic English-Lexicon*, art. S–W–Q.)



“As a result of this experience, they had come to have faith in Jesus (peace be upon him), and to believe that he spoke the truth. So they now returned to their own people, the Jews [*Yahūd*]*—*the Children of Israel [*Banī Isrāʾīl*], in other words*—*and with them they took the leftover food from the table [*māʾida*]. Their own people did not give them a moment of peace, however, until they had persuaded them to renounce Islām [submission to the Will of the One Almighty God], to forsake their belief in Allāh, and to deny the coming down of the table [*māʾida*] from heaven. So, while they were sleeping, Allāh transmogrified them into swine [*khanāzīr*]. (All of them were adult males; there was not a boy nor a woman among them.)”

A wise man once remarked: “This story is about a table [*māʾida*] on which a limited amount of food was placed. A large throng and a numerous gathering of people came away from it [fully satisfied], and yet it was still in the same condition. So how about the table of grace [*māʾidat ar-riḍā*], and the dining sheet whereon is spread the mercy [*bisāṭ ar-raḥma*] that has neither limit nor end?”

As we are informed in the words of one traditional report [*khābar*]:

“Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has no fewer than a hundred mercies at His disposal. One of these mercies He has already sent down to the earth, where He has distributed it among His creatures, and this is what enables them to feel sympathy for one another [*yatarāḥamūn*], and to treat one another with considerate kindness [*yataʿāṭafūn*]. The other ninety-nine He has kept back for His own eventual use, His purpose being to use them for the merciful treatment of His servants on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*].”

Another traditional report [*khābar*] reads as follows:

“On the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], the All-Majestic One [*al-Jalīl*] (Magnificent is His Majesty) will spread the dining sheet of glory and honor [*bisāṭ al-majd*]. The sins of the ancients and the moderns will gather around the edges, while the sheet itself remains empty, in the hope of catching Iblīs³¹⁴ when he arrogantly trespasses upon it.”

³¹⁴ Iblīs is the personal name of the Devil. Some Western scholars consider it to be an arabicized version of the Greek *diabolos*, but the Arab philologists derive it from the root *b-l-s*, on the grounds that Iblīs “has nothing to expect [*ubliṣa*] from the mercy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).” He is also called *ash-Shaiṭān* [Satan, the Devil], *ʿaduww Allāh* [the enemy of God] or simply *al-ʿaduww* [the Enemy]. Unlike the English word Satan, however, *ash-Shaiṭān* is not strictly speaking a proper name, as A.J. Wensinck points out in his article IBLĪS in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. (See also: T.P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, art. DEVIL).



It would be entirely inappropriate, however, for any intelligent and rational person to take all of this for granted, and to be deluded by it into taking unnecessary risks. He must not let himself be carried away by unduly optimistic expectation, for such folly would doom him to perdition. Instead of embarking on that perilous course, he must expend all his effort, and exhaust all his energy, in the earnest endeavor to fulfill the commandments and observe the prohibitions [decreed by the Lord], and to surrender all concerns to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He must make a frequent practice of seeking forgiveness [*istighfār*] and turning in repentance [*tawba*], and he must always be warily on his guard.

No amount of fear and dread should ever cause a believer to despair of the mercy of Allāh, and no degree of optimism should ever induce him to fall into the commission of unlawful acts, and into negligent disregard of the commandments. Instead of going to such extremes, he must find a middle way. As someone wisely put it: “If the believer’s fear and hope were of equally balanced weight, his fear and his hope would be like the two wings of a bird—and a bird cannot fly with one wing only!”

4. The Festival [*Īd*] of the Community of Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

At this point, the fourth Festival [*Īd*] is mentioned only in order to complete the list, since we have already dealt with the relevant details of the subject, at the beginning of [this section of] the present Discourse.³¹⁵



³¹⁵ See pp. 146–49 above.





On the fact that the believer [*mu'min*] and the unbeliever [*kāfir*] both take part in the Festival [*Īd*], albeit for very different reasons.

The believer [*mu'min*] and the unbeliever [*kāfir*] both take part in the Festival [*Īd*], since each of them has cause to celebrate the occasion. The believer celebrates it for the sake of pleasing the All-Merciful [*ar-Rahmān*], whereas the unbeliever celebrates it for the sake of pleasing the Devil [*ash-Shaitān*].

When the believer [*mu'min*] sets out to celebrate his Festival [*Īd*], he wears on his head the crown of right guidance [*tāj al-hidāya*]; on his eyes, the emblem of respect for wise advice [*fikrat al-'ibra*]; on his ears, the mark of attentive listening to the Truth [*istimā' al-Haqq*]; on his tongue, the profession of faith in the Divine Oneness [*ash-shahāda bi't-tawhīd*]; on his heart, intuitive knowledge and certitude [*al-ma'rifā wa'l-yaqīn*]; over his neck, the garment of submission to the Will of Allāh [*ridā' al-Islām*]; around his waist, the belt of servitude [*minṭaqat al-'ubūdiyya*].

The environment in which the believer celebrates his Festival [*Īd*] consists of prayer-niches [*mahārīb*], large congregational mosques [*jawāmi'*], and smaller places of worship [*masājid*]. His adored Master [*Ma'būd*] is the Lord of all servants and creatures, so to Him he addresses his humble entreaty and request, and the Lord grants him acceptance and bountiful favor [in the present life], then allows him to dwell [in the life hereafter] in the Abode of Honor [*Dār al-Karāma*] and the Gardens of Paradise.

As for the unbeliever [*kāfir*], on the other hand, when he sets out to celebrate his Festival [*Īd*], he wears on his head the crown of abject loss and error [*tāj al-khusrān wa'd-dalāl*]; on his ears, the seal of heedlessness and blockage [*khatm al-ghafla wa'l-hijāb*]; on his eyes, the tell-tale signs of negligence and indulgence in the carnal passions [*alāmat as-sahw wa'sh-shahawāt*]; on his tongue, the stamp of mischief and alienation



[*khatm ash-shaqāwa wa 'l-ib'ād*]; in his heart, the dismal darkness of denial and negation [*ẓulmat an-nakara wa 'l-juhūd*]; around his waist, the girdle of disunity, mischief and discord [*ẓunnār*³¹⁶ *al-furqa wa 'sh-shaqāwa wa 'sh-shiqāq*].

The setting in which the unbeliever celebrates his Festival [*'Īd*] is the synagogue [*bī'a*], or one of the churches [*kanā'is*], or the temple devoted to fire-worship [*bait an-nār*]. The objects of his worship are graven images and idols [*al-wuthun wa 'l-aṣṇām*], and he is bound for his ultimate destination in Hell [*Jahannam*] and the fires thereof.



³¹⁶ The *ẓunnār*, a kind of girdle or waistband traditionally worn by non-Muslims (especially Christians) was often used by Islamic authors as a symbol of imperfect faith. In the Forty-third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faḥ ar-Rabbānī]*,* Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

There is nothing to be said until you cut the waistband [*ẓunnār*], renew your Islām, truly repent with your heart, and leave the house of your natural urges [*ṭab'*], your passions [*hawā'*], your existence [*wujūd*], and your efforts to attract benefit to you and repel harm from you.

(*See p. 278 of the edition published by Al-Baz.)





On the true significance and character of the Festival [*‘Īd*].

The Festival [*‘Īd*] is not really about dressing up in fine new clothes, eating delicious treats, embracing attractive ladies, and pursuing carnal pleasures and delights.

In its outward celebration, the Festival [*‘Īd*] is actually meant to symbolize the acceptance of acts of worshipful obedience; the remission of sins and mistakes; the conversion of bad deeds into good deeds; the glad tidings of promotion to higher spiritual degrees; the conferring of robes of honor, exquisite gifts, presents, and gracious favors; the expansion of the feelings through the light of faith [*īmān*]; the calming of the heart through the strength of certainty [*yaqīn*], and through the signs it has come to recognize; and the pouring forth of the oceans of knowledge and all kinds of wisdom, from the heart onto the tongue, to be expressed with fluency and eloquence.

It was on a Festival day [*yawm ‘Īd*], as the story is told, that a man once entered the presence of ‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and may Allāh ennoble his countenance) and found him eating coarse brown bread [*khubz khushkār*]. “Today is the day of the Festival [*‘Īd*],” the man exclaimed, “yet here you are, eating coarse brown bread!” So he said to his puzzled visitor:

“Today is the day of the Festival [*‘Īd*] for someone whose fast [*ṣawm*] has been accepted, whose effort has been deemed worthy, and whose sin has been forgiven. Today is a Festival [*‘Īd*] for us, and tomorrow is a Festival [*‘Īd*] for us. Every day in which we do not disobey Allāh is a Festival [*‘Īd*] for us.”

It is therefore important for every intelligent person to stop focusing on the external aspect [*ẓāhir*], and not to let it capture his attention. His perspective on the day of the Festival [*‘Īd*] should be from the standpoint of contemplation and reflection. He should regard the Festival





[‘*Īd*] as comparable to the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. When he hears the sound of the Sultan’s bugle [*būq*] announcing the advent of the Night of the Festival [*Lailat al-‘Īd*], he should be reminded of the blast of the trumpet [*ṣūr*] on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. While most of the people are spending the Night of the Festival [*Lailat al-‘Īd*] asleep, resting themselves in preparation for the day of celebration that lies ahead of them, he should remember the interval of slumber between the two blasts [that will be sounded on the Day of Resurrection].

On the morning of the Day of the Festival [*Yawm al-‘Īd*], he will see how the people look, as they come into town from their mansions and their houses. He will notice the differences in their states of being, and the variety of style and color in the clothes they wear, for each person will be dressed in a special outfit and a special set of ornaments. One person will look happy, while another looks depressed. One will be riding, while another walks on foot. One will be rich, while another is poor. One will be in a cheerful mood, while another is in some kind of distress.

As he surveys this scene, the intelligent observer should be reminded of the variety there will be among the people present at the Resurrection [*ahl al-Qiyāma*]. Those who have practiced worshipful obedience [*ahl at-tā‘a*] will be joyfully happy, while those who are guilty of sinful disobedience [*ahl al-ma‘ṣiya*] will be miserably despondent. The truly devout [*muttaqī*] will be riding in comfort, while the offender who is a *mushrik* [one who associates partners with Allāh] will be stumbling, getting tripped and dragged along with his face to the ground, or walking at best.

As Allāh has said (More Glorious is He than any other sayer):

On the day when We shall muster the truly devout unto the All-Merciful, in fine style... (19:85)	<i>yawma nahshuru ‘l-muttaqīna ila ‘r-Rahmāni wafdā...</i>
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That is to say, “riding on thoroughbred she-camels.”

and We shall drive the guilty culprits into Hell, like a herd of beasts. (19:86)	<i>wa nasūqu ‘l-mujrimīna ilā jahannama wirdā.</i>
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That is to say, “like a thirsty herd.”





As for the pious abstainer [*zāhid*], the person endowed with direct intuition [*ʿārif*], and the spiritual deputy [*badal*],³¹⁷ each and every one will be in a state of comfort and affluent well-being, in the presence of their King [*Malīk*] and their Beloved [*Maḥbūb*], beneath the shadow of the Heavenly Throne [*ʿArsh*]. They will be invested with ornaments and fine attire, and the radiant lights of worshipful acts and spiritual experiences [*anwār at-tāʿāt wa'l-maʿārif*] will be visible upon their faces, for they will be glowing and resplendent. Tables will be set in front of them, spread with all kinds of cooked food, drinks and fruits, until the Reckoning [*Ḥisāb*] is over, and the accounts of all creatures have been settled. Then they will move on to the Garden of Paradise, to occupy the dwellings that Allāh (Exalted is He) has made ready for them. There they will find pleasures and delights the likes of which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever conceived.

Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

So no soul knows what comfort
is laid up for them secretly,
as a reward
for what they used to do. (32:17)

*fa-lā taʿlamu nafsun
mā ukhfiya la-hum
min qurrati aʿyun:
jazāʿan bi-mā kānū yaʿmalūn.*

As for the condition of someone who is strongly addicted to this lower world, that person will be in a state of wailing and weeping and terrible distress. He will be prevented from sharing in the blessings enjoyed by the people [of Paradise], because of his worldly attachment, his acquisition of unlawful and dubious assets, and his mixed performance where obedience to his Lord is concerned. He will see his place in the Garden of Paradise, but he will not be able to reach it, until he has acquitted himself of the debts and liabilities he has incurred.

As for the unbeliever [*kāfir*], he will burst into loud laments, wailing and moaning in reaction to what his eyes behold, as he is given a preview of the kinds of torment that await him, for he will find himself facing the prospect of chastisement, degradation, perdition, and everlasting existence in the Fires of Hell.

When the intelligent Muslim sees the flags unfurled, and the banners hoisted to mark the celebration of the Festival [*ʿĪd*], he should be reminded of the angelic flagbearers [*aṣḥāb al-aʿlām*] who will appear when the herald of the All-Merciful [*munādi ʿr-Raḥmān*] announces

³¹⁷ See Vol. 2, note 254, p. 175.



[to the inhabitants of the Garden of Paradise] that the moment has come for them to visit the Lord of Mankind [*Rabb al-Anām*] in the Abode of Peace [*Dār as-Salām*], at the command of the Source of Peace [*bi-amri 's-Salām*].

When he sees that the rows [of worshippers] have been properly formed, and that his fellow creatures have assembled for the congregational prayer, he should be reminded of how all creatures will stand in the presence of the All-Compelling One [*al-Jabbār*], and of the rows formed by the profligate and the righteous [*al-fujjār wa 'l-abrār*] on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm an-Nashr*], when all secrets [*asrār*] will be revealed.

When he sees the people disperse from the site used for congregational worship in the open air [*jabbāna*]—as each individual returns to his allotted house, or mosque [*masjid*], or hostel [*khān*]—the intelligent observer should be reminded of the moment when all creatures will disperse from the presence of the King [*al-Malik*] the All-Bounteous One [*al-Mannān*], the Requirer [*ad-Dayyān*], bound for the Garden of Paradise, or for the Fire of Hell.

As the Lord of Exalted Majesty and Gracious Favor [*Dhu 'l-'Aẓama wa 'l-Imtīnān*] has told us:

And on the day when the Hour comes, on that day they will be divided. (30:14)	<i>wa yawma taqūmu 's-sā'atu</i> <i>yawma'idhin yatafarraqūn.</i>
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A host of them will be in the Garden [of Paradise], and a host of them in the Blaze [of Hell]. (42:7)	<i>fariqun</i> <i>fi 'l-jannati</i> <i>wa fariqun fi 's-sā'ir.</i>
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This brings us to the end of the Seventh Discourse.

Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of All the Worlds!
[*al-ḥamdu li'llāhi Rabbi 'l-'ālamīn*].

