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Surah Al-Qadr

The Power · Makki · 5 ayat — reflections on surah 97
of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Al-Qadr

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القدر — Al-Qadr, "The Power". Surah 97 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 5 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/97/.

ONE

The surah in brief

Honoring Laylat al-Qadr, the Night of Decree on which the Qur'an began to descend — a night better than a thousand months, when the angels and the Spirit descend by their Lord's permission, filling it with peace until dawn.

Al-Qadr honours the single night on which the Qur'an began its descent — the Night of Decree, better than a thousand months. It portrays a night when angels and the Spirit (Jibril) descend by their Lord's permission, saturating it with peace until the break of dawn. The surah magnifies the worth of a night many would sleep through, teaching that its value lies in what God did on it and what a servant can gain by standing in it. Worship on this one night outweighs a lifetime of ordinary devotion.

TWO

Its themes

- Night of Decree
- Revelation of the Qur'an
- Worth of worship
- Descent of angels
- Peace until dawn

THREE

Key verses

We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:

Qur'an 97:1

'We sent it down' — the Qur'an's dignity is that it comes from God's own act, not from any human origin.

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

Qur'an 97:3

A night better than a thousand months means devotion in it eclipses over eighty years of worship — mercy compressed into hours.

Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:

Qur'an 97:4

Angels and the Spirit descend with every decreed matter, so the believer stands amid a night crowded with unseen visitors of light.

Peace!... This until the rise of morn!

Qur'an 97:5

The night is 'peace' from beginning to dawn — safety from harm and a calm that mirrors the tranquillity revelation brings to the heart.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Al-Qadr — “The Night of Decree” or “The Night of Power” — is a short Makkan surah of five verses, entirely devoted to a single night: Laylat al-Qadr, the night on which the Qur'an began to descend. It is a jewel of a surah, brief but immense in what it celebrates — the night that God set above a thousand months in worth, and on which His revelation entered the world.

The character of the surah is exalted and serene. It has none of the confrontation of some of its neighbours; it simply lifts up the greatness of this night, describes the descent of angels and peace upon it, and leaves the reader in awe. It follows fittingly after al-‘Alaq, whose first verses were the very revelation that this night brought down — as if to say, that reading you were commanded, this is the night it began.

How the surah unfolds

The surah opens (97:1) with the announcement: “Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Decree.” The pronoun “it” refers to the Qur'an, whose revelation the surah is honouring. The very sending-down of the divine word is the reason this night has its rank; the greatness of the night derives from the greatness of what descended on it.

It then poses a question to magnify the night's worth (97:2–3): “And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.” The

rhetorical question signals that the night's value exceeds ordinary reckoning, and the answer stuns: worship and good on this one night surpass that of a thousand months — over eighty years — without it. A lifetime's worth of reward is folded into a single blessed night.

The surah closes by describing what happens on it (97:4–5): “The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, for every matter. Peace it is, until the emergence of dawn.” The heavens open; the angels, led by Jibrīl (“the Spirit”), come down in throngs carrying the decrees of the coming year; and the whole night is enveloped in peace — safety, blessing, and the greetings of angels — until the first light of morning.

The major themes, in depth

The first theme is the night's greatness as a function of the Qur'an's descent. The surah grounds Laylat al-Qadr's supremacy in one fact: “We sent it down” on it. The night is holy because the word of God entered creation through it. This teaches something about how Islam measures worth — a moment of time is exalted not by any natural feature but by its relation to revelation and to God. The commentators explain that the Qur'an descended in its entirety from the Preserved Tablet to the lowest heaven on this night, and thereafter came to the Prophet ﷺ in stages over twenty-three years. Either way, the surah ties the honour of the night indissolubly to the honour of the Book, so that revering this night is a way of revering the guidance God gave.

The second theme is the immensity of the reward — “better than a thousand months” (97:3). This is God's generosity toward a community whose lifespans are short; He grants a single night whose worship outweighs a lifetime's. The commentators note the mercy in this: the believer who might despair at how little time he has to accumulate good is offered, once a year, a night that can transform his entire ledger. It is a standing invitation to seize a disproportionate gift, and it reframes the last ten nights of Ramaḍān as the most valuable hours a person may ever spend. The Prophet ﷺ urged the seeking of this night especially in the odd nights of the final ten, and taught the supplication of asking God's pardon, for the night is above all an occasion of forgiveness.

The third theme is the descent of the angels and the reign of peace. On this night “the angels and the Spirit descend... for every matter” (97:4) — the commentators explain that the decrees of the coming year, already known to God, are apportioned and handed to the angels who carry out His command. The heavens draw near the earth in a way they do not on other nights. And the defining quality of the night is salām — peace (97:5): it is a night free of harm and full of blessing, in which the angels descend with greetings of peace, from sunset until the break of dawn. The image is of a world briefly bathed in the tranquillity of heaven, its Lord's mercy and safety poured out upon those who stand in worship.

Points of reflection

The surah is an invitation the believer cannot afford to miss. Once a year, God places within reach a night worth more than a thousand months. To let it pass in heedlessness is to forfeit the single greatest bargain of the religious year; to seek it out — in the odd nights of the last ten of Ramaḍān, in prayer, recitation, and seeking pardon — is to grasp a mercy of staggering proportions.

It also reframes our anxiety about time. Many believers feel their lives are too short and their deeds too few. This surah answers that God's generosity is not bound by the clock: He can compress into one night what would otherwise take a lifetime. The reflection is to trust that quality, sincerity, and God's grace can outweigh mere quantity of days.

Finally, the night's signature is peace. The believer who spends it in worship is meant to taste that peace — the calm of a heart turned wholly to its Lord while the angels descend and the heavens draw near. The surah leaves us longing not only for the reward of the night but for its quality: to be, if only for those hours, wrapped in the salām that fills the earth until dawn.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Pursue the last ten nights of Ramadan seeking Laylat al-Qadr in earnest worship.
2. Judge the value of time by what God attaches to it, not by its length.
3. A short act of sincere worship can outweigh years — never belittle a single night of standing.
4. Let awareness of descending angels lift the seriousness of your night prayer.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari, al-Sa'di. A summary is not a tafsir: for the verse-by-verse treatment go to the works themselves, or to the close studies at deen2u.com/tadabbur/.