

Sūrah 97: al-Qadr

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani revelation is disputed. Abu Hayyan in *Al-Bahr al-Muhti* has made the claim that the majority of scholars regard it as a Madani Sūrah. Ibn Mardayah has cited Ibn Abbas, Ibn Zūbair and Ā'isha as saying that this Sūrah was revealed at Makkah. A study of the contents also shows that it should have been revealed at Makkah as we shall explain below.

Theme and Subject Matter

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

At the outset, God says: **“We have sent the Qur'ān down.”** That is, it is not a composition of Muhammad himself, but We Ourselves have revealed it.

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

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

Sūrah 97: al-Qadr¹⁸²³

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. Indeed, We sent it [i.e., the Qur'ān] down during the Night of Decree.
2. And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree?
3. The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.
4. The angels and the Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter.¹⁸²⁴
5. Peace it is¹⁸²⁵ until the emergence of dawn.

¹⁸²³ *Al-Qadr*: Decree or Destiny. Other meanings are “precise measurement [i.e., amount or extent],” “value,” “gravity” or “greatness.”

¹⁸²⁴ They bring down the decree for everything destined to occur in the coming year.

¹⁸²⁵ Upon the believers.