



On The Timing and Virtues of the Night of Power: The Heart's Joy in Remembering Laylat al-Qadr by Ibn al-ʿIrāqī

ABŪ ZURʿAH AḤMAD IBN ʿABD AL-RAḤĪM AL-ʿIRĀQĪ

Translator

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Translator’s introduction to *Sharḥ al-ṣadr*

The author of this text, Walī al-Dīn Abū Zur‘ah Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-‘Irāqī, was born in Egypt in 762/1361. His father is the famous hadith scholar and Shāfi‘ī jurist al-Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1403); hence Aḥmad was known as “Ibn al-‘Irāqī.” After moving with his father to Damascus to study, Ibn al-‘Irāqī returned to Egypt and became its Chief Judge. However, as he refused to compromise his integrity or religion to comply with the authorities, he was removed from judicial office within a year. Ibn al-‘Irāqī authored several works on hadith, Islamic law, and Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsīr*). He passed away in Cairo in 826/1423.

This book begins by exploring the *tafsīr* of the chapter (*sūrah*) of al-Qadr, reflecting on the origin of the name of *laylat al-qadr*, its virtues, and events. It then delves into frequently asked questions regarding its timing by comprehensively narrating majority and minority scholarly opinions and providing proof for each opinion from prophetic reports. The book presents a total of 27 opinions on the timing of *laylat al-qadr*. These opinions may be categorized as follows:

- 1) the occurrence of *laylat al-qadr* has been abrogated (one opinion);
- 2) the timing of *laylat al-qadr* is entirely hidden (one opinion);
- 3) *laylat al-qadr* is a fixed night every year (23 opinions); and
- 4) *laylat al-qadr* shifts from year to year (two opinions).

The number of opinions on the timing of *laylat al-qadr* even exceeds what Ibn al-‘Irāqī listed in this book. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, for instance, reported 46 opinions in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The disagreement is likely semantic, as most opinions agree that its exact time is not definitively known. The varied opinions prompt reflection on the wisdom of keeping the exact timing of this night unknown to us. The apparently conflicting reports from the Prophet ﷺ, his companions, and their successors demonstrate that the purpose of this ambiguity is to encourage Muslims to exert their utmost effort in worship. This

wisdom is applicable to most opinions, whether they posit that *laylat al-qadr* may occur on any night of the year or any night during the entire month of Ramadan, on one of its last ten nights, or one of the odd nights among the last ten. After listing the 46 opinions, Ibn Ḥajar commented, “All of these opinions which we reported, from the third one onwards, agree on the possible occurrence of *laylat al-qadr* and on encouraging seeking it.”¹ He then added, “These are all that I could gather from the reported opinions [on *laylat al-qadr*]. Some of them can be amalgamated with others, even if they seem different.”²

Ibn al-‘Irāqī’s book concludes with a reflection on Allah’s wisdom in concealing the exact timing of *laylat al-qadr*, along with a summary of its signs, as reported in several hadiths from the Prophet ﷺ.

Translator’s note

The translation is based on an Arabic print edition which includes another monograph written by the Shāfi‘ī jurist Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355) on Ramadan’s night prayer (*tarāwīḥ*).³ Ibn al-‘Irāqī’s monograph starts on page 23 and continues until page 55. This English translation closely reflects the Arabic wording of the primary source but includes additional notations by the translator to bolster reading comprehension. These notations are found in the footnotes and may include explanatory notes, hadith citations, and references for scholarly statements or attributions. The titles of the subsections were added by the editor of the original monograph; the translator decided to retain some of these sub-titles and delete others, based on what was deemed more appropriate for continuity.

¹ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arān’ūt et al., 1st ed., 26 vols., (Damascus: Dār al-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 2013), 6:578.

² Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:578.

³ Walī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Irāqī, *Sharḥ al-ṣadr bi-dhikr laylat al-qadr: Fadā’il wa ‘alāmāt laylat al-qadr*; Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ishrāq al-maṣābih fī ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ*, ed. Majdī Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Sā‘ī, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1987).

The text of *Sharḥ al-ṣadr*

All praise is due to Allah, for Whom tongues express gratitude. He is exalted beyond being overtaken by slumber or sleep. He glorified times as He glorified places. He made the Night of Glory (*laylat al-qadr*) better than 83 years, as He said,⁴

We sent it down on the Night of Glory. What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months; on that night the angels and the Spirit descend again and again with their Lord's permission on every task; [there is] peace that night until the break of dawn.⁵

The exegetes have stated that the object pronoun [“it”] in the sentence “We sent it” refers to the noble Qur’an, even if it was not previously mentioned [in the *sūrah*] as its meaning is signified. [It is] like when Allah said, “until it [the sun] was hidden in the veil [of night],” while the sun was not initially mentioned.⁶

The exegetes held differing opinions on this matter. ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, among others, said that Allah sent down the entire Qur’an to the nearest heaven on *laylat al-qadr* and then revealed it to Muhammad ﷺ over the course of twenty years, as this is the meaning of Allah’s saying, “I swear by the positions of the stars.”⁷ On the other hand, al-Sha‘bī and others interpreted it to mean “We initiated the descent of this Qur’an to you on *laylat al-qadr*.” This [interpretation] is supported by some who said that Gabriel (Jibrīl) started coming to the Prophet ﷺ in Ramadan, with some saying on the 7th and others on the 17th. [There are also opinions] that Jibrīl started coming to the Prophet ﷺ in the [Islamic Hijrī] months of Rajab or Rabī‘ al-Awwal. Some argue that this verse indicates that the descent of the Qur’an

⁴ All Qur’an translations in this piece are taken from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur’ān: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵ This *sūrah* is known across different copies of the Qur’anic codex (*muṣḥaf*), *tafsīr* works, and Sunnah collections as *Sūrat al-Qadr*. However, Ibn ‘Aṭīyah and Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ called it *Sūrat Laylat al-Qadr*. Muḥammad al-Tāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*, 30 vols. (Tunisia: al-Dār al-Tūnusiyyah li-l-Nashr, 1884), 30:455.

⁶ The arranged order of *Sūrat al-Qadr* in the *muṣḥaf* reflects deep wisdom. Although its number of verses is less than that of *Sūrat al-Bayyinah*, it precedes it after *Sūrat al-‘Alaq*, indicating that the pronoun “it” in “sent it down” refers to the Qur’an, whose first piece of revelation was the beginning of *Sūrat al-‘Alaq*. Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*, 30:456–57.

⁷ Qur’an 56:75.

began in Ramadan, as Jibrīl used to review the Qur’an with the Prophet ﷺ and Allah would erase or confirm whatever He willed.

The occasion of the revelation of *Sūrat al-Qadr*

Some scholars have suggested that the meaning [of the first verse of the *sūrah*] is that “We sent down this *sūrah* about the position of *laylat al-qadr* and its merit.” They interpreted the preposition “in” (*fī*) as indicating causation. This interpretation is similar to what ‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] said on the night when *Sūrat al-Faṭḥ* was revealed, “I feared that Qur’an might be revealed about me (*fiyy*) [due to his overly inquisitive attitude with the Prophet ﷺ],”⁸ and to what ‘A’isha said in the story of the false accusation (*al-ifk*), “I am too insignificant for Qur’an to be revealed because of me (*fiyy*) [regarding the revelation of Qur’an 24:11-20, which declared her innocence].”⁹

These same scholars further suggested that since [*al-qadr*] is a *sūrah* from the Qur’an, the Qur’an is referred to with a [third-person] pronoun in order to imply reverence and magnification. This is similar to how Allah says, “The Inevitable Hour! What is the Inevitable Hour? What will explain to you what the Inevitable Hour is?”¹⁰ and “The Crashing Blow! What is the Crashing Blow?”¹¹ Then, Allah informs the Prophet ﷺ saying, “The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months.”

Al-Bukhārī reported in his authentic collection that Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah said, “Regarding the phrase in the Qur’an, ‘What will explain to you’ (*wa mā adrāk*), Allah explained it to the Prophet ﷺ. When Allah says, ‘How can you tell?’ (*wa mā yudrīk*), He did not inform him of it.”¹²

⁸ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 5012.

⁹ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2661 (with a slight difference of wording: “I am far too insignificant to be spoken about in the Qur’an”).

¹⁰ Qur’an, 69:1-3.

¹¹ Qur’an, 101:1-2.

¹² *Al-Bukhārī*, 3:45. It is possible to counter argue this extrapolation with the verse, “For all you know, (*wa mā yudrīk*), he might have grown in spirit, or taken note of something useful to him.” Qur’an, 80:4-5. This verse was revealed about the companion ‘Abd Allāh ibn Umm Maktūm, whom the Prophet knew had grown in spirit and taken note of something useful to him.

The difference of opinion over the naming of *laylat al-qadr*

Scholars differed on why the night is named *laylat al-qadr*. The first opinion is that it is named so because Allah Almighty decrees provisions, fates, and all created things in the universe during this night, and reveals them to the angels to abide by. Allah Almighty [called it] “a night when every matter of wisdom is made distinct.”¹³ This opinion is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, Qatādah, and others. Al-Nawawī attributed it to the scholars. The meaning of revealing [through] the angels is that Allah informs them of His decree. Otherwise, [it should be noted that] Allah’s decree is pre-eternal.¹⁴

The second opinion holds that the name “*laylat al-qadr*” denotes high esteem, honor, and position. It is similar to saying that someone has a high position (*qadr*). This is the opinion of al-Zuhrī.¹⁵ The third opinion states that [the night] is named so because whoever spends it in worship is granted great honor they never had, and their nobility with Allah the Most High is increased. The fourth opinion is that it is named so because worship during this night has tremendous value.¹⁶

¹³ Qur’an 44:4.

¹⁴ This interpretation holds that *qadr* in this context means predestination (*qadar*).

¹⁵ This interpretation parallels the meaning of the Qur’anic verse, “They have no grasp of God’s true measure” (*wa mā qadaru Allāh haqq qadrih*). Qur’an 6:91. The significance denoted by the word *al-qadr* in *laylat al-qadr* may refer to the revelation of the Qur’an on that night, the descent of angels, or the abundance of blessings, mercy, and forgiveness bestowed during it.

¹⁶ Scholars have also suggested another interpretation of the word *al-qadr*: that it means restriction or narrowness, as in the verse “But let him whose provision is restricted spend according to what God has given him” (*wa man qudira ‘alayh rizquh*). In the context of *laylat al-qadr*, the meaning of restriction could be that Allah has hidden its exact timing or that the earth is filled with angels on that night, causing it to become narrow and restricted to accommodate them. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:545.

The reason why *laylat al-qadr* is special for the Muslim *ummah*

Allah has made *laylat al-qadr* special for this *ummah*. There is a disagreement over the reason for its significance. Mālik reported in the *Muwattaʿ* from a trustworthy source among the people of knowledge that, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was shown the lifespans of the people before him, or what Allah willed of that. It was as if the lives of the people of his community had become too short for them to be able to do as many good deeds as others before them had been able to do with their long lives. As a result, Allah granted them *laylat al-qadr*, which is better than a thousand months.”¹⁷

Al-Tirmidhī reported in his *Jāmiʿ* from Yūsuf ibn Saʿd that a man stood up in front of al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī, after he pledged to Muʿāwiyah, and said, “You have made fools of the believers,” or, “O you who have made fools of the believers.” Al-Ḥasan responded, “Do not scold me so, may Allah have mercy upon you, for indeed the Prophet had a dream in which he saw Banū Umayyah upon his pulpit. That distressed him and it was revealed: ‘Verily We have granted you *al-Kawthar* (O Muhammad)’ meaning a river in Paradise, and then it was revealed: ‘We sent it down on the Night of Glory. What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months,’ in which Banū Umayyah rules after you, O Muhammad.” Al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl, one of the transmitters of this report, said: “So we counted them, and found that they were one thousand months, not a day more nor less.” Al-Tirmidhī commented that this hadith is rare (*gharīb*).¹⁸

¹⁷ Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr Abū Muṣʿab Zuhri. Mālik, *al-Muwattaʿ*, no. 889. In the *tafsīr* tradition, there are different interpretations of “*laylat al-qadr* is better than a thousand months.” These interpretations include the following: (1) *laylat al-qadr* is better than the span of a thousand months, (2) it is better than a thousand months in which there is no *laylat al-qadr*, and (3) worship on *laylat al-qadr* is better than worship for a thousand months in which there is no *laylat al-qadr*.

¹⁸ *Al-Tirmidhī*, no. 3350. A *gharīb ḥadīth* refers to a report which has been transmitted by only one narrator in any particular era, regardless of the number of narrators in other eras. Several scholars have pointed out that this hadith is considered disclaimed (*munkar*) for two main reasons. First, it contradicts the historical fact that the Umayyad reign lasted for more than a thousand months, for approximately 92 years. Second, even if the hadith is condemning the Umayyads, preferring *laylat al-qadr* over their days does not necessarily mean condemning their reign. The

The descent of the angels and the peaceful night

In regards to Allah’s saying, “the angels and the Spirit descend,” it has been suggested that “the Spirit” refers to Jibrīl, peace be upon him, while others believe it refers to a group of angels. In either case, it is [syntactically] a conjunction between a universal and a particular. Another interpretation is that “the Spirit” refers to a type of heavenly creature that watches over the angels, just as the angels watch over human beings. These creatures have physical features similar to the sons of Adam, but the angels cannot see them.

In regards to Allah’s saying, “with their Lord’s permission” until the end of the verse, those who believe that provisions are decreed on this night explain the descent of the angels as being for that purpose. They interpret “on” (*min*) in “on every task” to reference the cause of decreeing (i.e., the angels descend with the cause of every matter), and render “[there is] peace that night” as the start of a new statement (i.e., it is [full of] peace until the break of dawn). On the other hand, those who do not believe that provisions are decreed on this night link “on every task” to “peace” (i.e., it is a night of peace and protection from every matter). According to Mujāhid, no disease afflicts anyone on this night. Al-Sha‘bī and Manṣūr hold that it is a time of peace in the sense of salutation, as the angels greet the believers during this night.¹⁹

nobility and significance of *laylat al-qadr* cannot be emphasized by preferring it over the time of the Umayyads. Interestingly, al-Rāzī found this second argument weak. He mentioned that the reign of the Umayyads can be viewed as praiseworthy by worldly standards. Hence, the meaning can be “I gave you a night whose religious pleasures are better than those worldly pleasures.” Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātih al-ghayb*, 1st ed., 32 vols. (Jeddah: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 32:31.

¹⁹ Al-Razī noted that the description of *laylat al-qadr* as full of peace (*salām*) should not be taken lightly. When seven angels greeted the Prophet Ibrāhīm with peace in the story of the roasted calf, he was happier with their greeting than with being the king of the entire world. In fact, Ibrāhīm was saved from the fire because of the angels’ *salām* to him: “O fire, be cool and safe (*salāman*) for Ibrāhīm.” Qur’an 21:69. Therefore, Allah may make the Hellfire cool and safe for us by the blessing of the angels’ *salām* to us on *laylat al-qadr*. The difference is that Ibrāhīm offered them a roasted calf, while we should offer a “roasted heart.” Al-Razī added that this verse subtly indicates the special honor Allah has granted this *ummah*. That is, while the angels were sent down to the friend of Allah (*khalīlullāh*) Ibrāhīm in that story, they are sent down to the entire *ummah* of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in *Sūrat al-Qadr*. Al-Rāzī, *Mafātih al-ghayb*, 32:36.

These verses explicitly honor *laylat al-qadr* and make its name and mention prominent. It is authentically reported from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, “Whoever performs night prayer during *laylat al-qadr* out of faith and hope for Allah’s reward, will have their former sins forgiven.”²⁰ In *al-Sunan al-kubrā* of al-Nasā’ī, [this is also reported to include] “and their future sins.”²¹ This addition is similarly reported in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad and the *Mu‘jam* of al-Ṭabarānī from the narration of ‘Ubādah, as will be mentioned later.²² This [promise of forgiveness] is a great virtue that prompts the seeking of *laylat al-qadr*.

***Laylat al-qadr* will remain until the end of time**

Reliable scholars have unanimously agreed that *laylat al-qadr* has not been abrogated, and will remain until the end of time. Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, may Allah have mercy on him, said,

In an anomalous dissent,²³ some people claimed that it was abrogated because the Prophet ﷺ said, in reference to two men quarreling, “so it [*laylat al-qadr*] was taken away.”²⁴ However, this is a mistake on the

²⁰ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 1901. Scholars have debated whether all sins will be forgiven or only minor ones. Many of them affirmed that the hadith primarily applies to minor sins. Some scholars suggest that if only major sins are reckoned, the punishment for these sins may still be reduced.

²¹ *Al-Nasā’ī*, no. 2523. The addition of “future sins” raises the question of how sins that have not yet occurred can be forgiven. Some scholars suggested that this forgiveness is figurative, indicating that those individuals will be protected from committing major sins. Other scholars interpreted the phrase to mean, “their sins will occur forgiven.” This discussion also applies to the hadith that states fasting on the day of ‘Arafah expiates the sins of the past and the coming year, as well as to Allah’s statement about the companions who fought in the Battle of Badr, as the Prophet ﷺ reported: “Do as you please, for I have forgiven you.” There are several hadiths that mention the forgiveness of future sins upon the performance of certain good deeds. These hadiths have been compiled by Imam Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, and he examined their authenticity and interpretation. See Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Khiṣāl al-mukaffirah li-l-dhunūb al-mutaqaddimah wa-l-muta’khirah*, ed. ‘Amr Salīm, 1st ed. (Jeddah: Dar Mājid ‘Asīrī, 2001).

²² Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 22713.

²³ In the Arabic print used for the translation, the quote reads as “some people doubted” (*shakka*), instead of *shadhdha*, which means adopting an anomalous view. The translation used the latter phrase as cited in many sources from al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

²⁴ This is one occasion in which the Prophet ﷺ stated the reason behind the knowledge of the time of *laylat al-qadr* being taken away. However, he gave another reason as reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: “I was shown *laylat al-qadr*; then some members of my family woke me up, then I was caused to forget it.” *Muslim*, no. 1166. There are three possible interpretations of both occasions. First, they reference two separate occasions; he was shown the timing of *laylat al-qadr* in a dream and then forgot it because he was awakened, and he was informed of it while awake and then he forgot it due to the dispute between the two men. Second, the two hadiths reference the same

part of those who dissented, as the end of the hadith provides a response to their doubt. The Prophet ﷺ said, “it was taken away and maybe it is better for you. So seek it on the seventh or the ninth [night].”²⁵ This is stated at the beginning of the authentic collection of al-Bukhārī, and it clearly shows that the meaning of “taking it away” refers to taking away the knowledge of its exact time. If the meaning had been the annulment of its existence, the Prophet ﷺ would not have commanded people to seek it.²⁶

Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah mentioned that this opinion (that *laylat al-qadr*’s existence was taken away) is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah and others but added that the opinion is rejected. Only the knowledge of its exact time was taken away.²⁷

The difference of opinion over the specific time of *laylat al-qadr*

Scholars have debated the exact timing of *laylat al-qadr*, with a large group of them holding that it occurs on a specific night. However, even within this group, there is disagreement as to which night is the one.

story with two causes of forgetting it. Third, it is possible that the meaning is: “I saw it in a dream, my family woke me up and I heard the two men arguing. I went to reconcile their situation, and then I forgot it as I became busy with them.” ‘Abd al-Razzāq reported from Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib, with a disconnected chain of transmission (*mursal*), that the Prophet said, “Shall I inform you of the time of *laylat al-qadr*?” The companions replied, “Yes!” The Prophet remained silent for a while and then said, “I asked you when I knew of it, then I was caused to forget it.” Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī commented on this hadith, stating that it supports the opinion that the forgetting happened on different occasions. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:582.

²⁵ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 49.

²⁶ See the quote in, for instance, Yahyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2nd ed., 18 vols. (Cairo: Mu‘ssasat Qurṭubah, 1994), 8:83.

²⁷ Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-‘azīz*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad, 1st ed., 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), 5:505. Although the idea that *laylat al-qadr* had been abrogated is referenced in several sources, most references do not cite a reliable Sunni authority directly. The Shāfi‘ī jurist al-Mutawallī, in his book *al-Tatimmah*, attributed it to the Shia without citation. The reference to Abū Ḥanīfah by Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah is likely inaccurate, as Abū Ḥanīfah held that *laylat al-qadr* could occur on any night during the year, as Ibn al-‘Irāqī mentions below. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī commented on Tāj al-Dīn al-Fākihānī’s attribution of this opinion to the Ḥanafī scholars, stating that “it is likely a mistake. What al-Surūjī reported is that it is [only] the opinion of the Shia.” Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:569. In his *Muṣannaf*, ‘Abd al-Razzāq reported that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yuḥannis said to Abū Hurayrah, “[Some people] claim that *laylat al-qadr* has been lifted.” Abū Hurayrah replied, “Whoever said this has lied.” ‘Abd al-Razzāq, no. 7707.

Laylat al-qadr can occur on any night of the year

The first opinion suggests that *laylat al-qadr* may occur on any night throughout the year. This opinion is commonly attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah be pleased with him, and is supported by the saying of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, that “whoever spends the entire year praying at night will hit upon it.”²⁸ However, in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh is reported to have said,

I asked Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, “Your brother Ibn Mas‘ūd says, ‘whoever spends the entire year praying at night will hit upon *laylat al-qadr*.’” Ubayy replied, “May Allah have mercy on him. He did not want people to be negligent. Indeed, he knows that it is in Ramadan, in the last ten nights, and that it is on the night of the 27th.”²⁹

This is how Ubayy understood Ibn Mas‘ūd’s statement. It is evidenced by what is in Aḥmad’s *Musnad* from Abū ‘Aqrab, that he said,

One early morning, I went to visit Ibn Mas‘ūd and found him sitting on the roof of his house. We overheard him saying, “Allah has spoken the truth and his Messenger has conveyed [the message].” We said, “We heard you saying, ‘Allah has spoken the truth and his Messenger has conveyed [the message].’” He said, “Allah’s Messenger said, *laylat al-qadr* is in the last seven nights, with the sun rising the following morning clear without rays.” I observed it and found it exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had described.³⁰

The hadith is also reported with similar wording by al-Bazzār in his *Musnad*, and in al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu‘jam* where Ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Messenger of Allah was asked about *laylat al-qadr* and he said, who among you remembers the reddish-yellow *laylat al-qadr*? ‘Abd Allāh [Ibn Mas‘ūd] said, “I remember it, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger

²⁸ *Muslim*, no. 762.

²⁹ *Muslim*, no. 762.

³⁰ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 3857.

of Allah; it was the night of the 27th when the dawn rose.”³¹ Although this hadith is reported in several books of hadith, I have only seen the explicit mention of the night of the 27th in al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, and therefore I have attributed the hadith solely to it.

Laylat al-qadr can be any night of Ramadan

The second opinion regarding *laylat al-qadr* is that it can occur on any night of Ramadan, and this is the view of Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them [Ibn ‘Umar and his father], and a group of the companions. Ibn ‘Umar is reported in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* to have said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked about *laylat al-qadr* while I was listening, and he replied, ‘It is [any night] during the entire [month of] Ramadan.’”³² Abū Dāwūd noted that this hadith is a halted-companion report (*mawqūf*).

This hadith can possibly be interpreted to mean that *laylat al-qadr* occurs repeatedly every year during Ramadan since it only occurs once a year. Therefore, this hadith alone does not serve as [adequate] proof for the opinion that *laylat al-qadr* moves throughout all the nights of Ramadan. This is the view of Abū Ḥanīfah, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Muḥāmī, and al-Subkī, who preferred it in his commentary on *al-Minhāj*. Ibn al-Ḥājj listed it as one reported opinion.

Laylat al-qadr is the first night of Ramadan

The third opinion regarding *laylat al-qadr* is that it is the first night of Ramadan. This view was held by Abū Ruzayn al-‘Aqīlī, a companion of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with him.³³

³¹ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, no. 10289.

³² Abū Dāwūd, no. 1387.

³³ The hadith scholar Ibn Abī Āṣim stated, “We do not know of anyone else [other than Abū Ruzayn] who upheld this opinion.” Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:570.

***Laylat al-qadr* is in the middle and last ten nights of Ramadan**

The fourth opinion regarding *laylat al-qadr* is that it falls within the middle and last ten nights of Ramadan. However, this opinion is contradicted by an authentic hadith narrated by Abū Sa‘īd in which Jibrīl, peace be upon him, said to the Prophet ﷺ during his spiritual retreat (*i‘tikāf*) in the middle ten nights, “What you are seeking is ahead of you.”³⁴

***Laylat al-qadr* is in the last ten nights of Ramadan**

The fifth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is exclusively in the last ten nights of Ramadan. This view is supported by the Prophet’s statements, “Seek it in the last ten nights,”³⁵ and “I observed *i‘tikāf* in the first ten [nights] to seek that night [*laylat al-qadr*]. I then observed *i‘tikāf* in the middle ten. Then [an angel] was sent to me and I was told that this [night] is among the last ten.”³⁶

***Laylat al-qadr* is an odd night of the last ten nights of Ramadan**

The sixth opinion holds that *laylat al-qadr* is limited to the odd nights of the last ten nights.³⁷ This view is based on the Prophet’s statement, “Seek it in the last ten nights, in an odd [night].”³⁸ In Aḥmad’s *al-Musnad* and al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit is reported to have asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about *laylat al-qadr*. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, “So, seek it in the last ten [nights]. It is one of the odd nights of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, or the

³⁴ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 813.

³⁵ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2020.

³⁶ *Muslim*, no. 1167.

³⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī attributed this opinion to Abū Thawr, al-Muzanī, Ibn Khuzaymah, and a group of scholars from all schools of thought (*madhhabs*), and he commented that this is the most preponderant opinion. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:575.

³⁸ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2017.

last night. Whoever spends this night praying, seeking it out of faith and sincerity, and it was gifted to him, his past and future sins will be forgiven.”³⁹ ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Aqīl is one of the transmitters of this hadith. His hadith [transmission] is fair (*ḥasan*) and is narrated by ‘Amr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. Ibn Ḥibbān listed ‘Amr among the reliable transmitters and noted that he is not the son of [‘Abd al-Raḥmān] Ibn ‘Awf [the Prophet’s companion]. Al-Ṭabarānī said, I suppose he is the son of al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām.

There are two subtle benefits from this hadith. The first is found in the statement “and his future [sins],” as noted earlier. The second benefit is that the reward is dependent on praying that night with the intention of seeking *laylat al-qadr*, rather than the general intention of night prayer. [However] there is an issue in the hadith regarding the statement, “or the last night,” because the beginning of the hadith specifies an odd night, and the last night is not an odd night if the month is full. If the month is not full, then [the last night] is the night of the 29th, so mentioning it after the “29th” is meaningless since conjunction necessitates difference. [This issue] can be explained by understanding that the phrase “or the last night” is linked conjunctively to the phrase “it is one of the odd nights,” and not to the phrase “29th.” Hence, the phrase “or the last night” is not an explanation for the odd nights but is added to it by way of conjunction.

***Laylat al-qadr* is an even night of the last ten nights of Ramadan**

The seventh opinion holds that *laylat al-qadr* is one of the even nights of the last ten nights, based on Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī’s response when he was asked about the ninth, seventh and fifth night. He said, “When the 21st night passes, the night which follows it is the 22nd and it is the ninth; when the 23rd night passes, the

³⁹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 22713.

night which follows it is the seventh; when the 25th passes, the night which follows it is the fifth.”⁴⁰

Laylat al-qadr is the 17th night of Ramadan

The eighth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is on the 17th night. This view is reported from Zayd ibn Arqam and also Ibn Masʿūd. In the *Muʿjam* of al-Ṭabarānī, Zayd ibn Arqam is reported to have said, “I do not doubt or suspect that it is the night of the 17th; the night in which the Qurʾan was sent down and when the two factions confronted each other.”⁴¹ Zayd ibn Thābit was also reported to have spent the 17th night in worship. When asked, “Why do you choose the night of the 17th,” he said, “The Qurʾan was sent down on this night, and the truth was made distinct from falsehood in its morning.”⁴² He used to wake up the following morning with a pleased face. This opinion was also reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

Laylat al-qadr is the 19th night of Ramadan

The ninth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is on the 19th night. This view is reported from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn Masʿūd.

Laylat al-qadr is the 17th, 21st, or 23rd night of Ramadan

The tenth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* could be on the 17th, 21st, or 23rd night. This view is also reported from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn Masʿūd. It is supported by a narration in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* from Ibn Masʿūd, may Allah be pleased with

⁴⁰ *Muslim*, no. 1167.

⁴¹ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, no. 5079.

⁴² Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, no. 4865.

him, in which he said, “Seek it on the 17th night of Ramadan, and on the 21st night, and on the 23rd night. He then kept silent.”⁴³ Allah knows best.

Laylat al-qadr is the 21st night of Ramadan

The eleventh opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is the 21st night of Ramadan. This opinion is supported by the hadith of Abū Sa‘īd, which is reported in the authentic collections. In the hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said, “I saw it one of the odd nights. I saw myself prostrating the following morning in water and clay.” Abū Sa‘īd said, “So, the Prophet ﷺ woke up after the night of the 21st to perform the *fajr* prayer while it was raining. The roof of the mosque was leaking and I saw the water and clay. After the Prophet ﷺ finished the prayer, he left with traces of water and clay on his forehead and nose. It was the morning after the 21st from the last ten nights.”⁴⁴

Laylat al-qadr is the 23rd night of Ramadan

The twelfth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is the 23rd night of Ramadan, which is the opinion of many of the companions and others. This opinion is supported by a narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Unays, who reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “I was shown *laylat al-qadr*, then I was caused to forget it, and saw that I was prostrating in water and clay in the morning of that [night]. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Unays added, “There was a downpour on the 23rd night and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led us in prayer. As he returned, there was a trace of water and clay on his forehead and on his nose.”⁴⁵ Additionally, Abū Hurayrah is reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* to have said, “We were discussing *laylat al-qadr* in the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he said: Who amongst you remembers that night when the moon arose and it was like a piece of a plate?”⁴⁶

⁴³ *Abū Dāwūd*, no. 1384.

⁴⁴ *Muslim*, no. 1167.

⁴⁵ *Muslim*, no. 1168.

⁴⁶ *Muslim*, no. 1170.

In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, a companion of the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, “I looked at the moon the morning of *laylat al-qadr* and I saw it looking like a piece of a plate.”⁴⁷ Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī commented that the moon appears that way on the morning of the 23rd night. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad narrated this hadith in his additions [to the *Musnad*] from ‘Alī, that he said, “The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘I went outside when the moon rose like a piece of a plate and said, tonight is *laylat al-qadr*.’”⁴⁸ Abū Ya‘lā al-Mawṣilī also narrated this hadith connected to the Prophet ﷺ through ‘Alī.

In Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan*, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Unays is reported to have said, “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! I have a place in the desert where I live and pray, with the praise of Allah. Inform me of a night when I [should] come to this mosque. The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘Come on the night of the 23rd.’”⁴⁹ Al-Ṭabarānī reported in his *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr* a similar hadith from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Jaḥsh from his father with a connected [chain of transmission attributing it to the Prophet ﷺ].⁵⁰

In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with them, is reported to have said, “While sleeping in Ramadan, I was approached in a dream by someone who told me, ‘Tonight is *laylat al-qadr*.’ I woke up drowsy and I checked the edges of the Prophet’s tent and found him praying. I checked which night it was and it was the night of the 23rd.”⁵¹ The transmitters of this hadith are among the transmitters of the authentic [collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim]. This hadith is also reported by al-Ṭabarānī in his *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*.⁵²

⁴⁷ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 23129.

⁴⁸ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 793; al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id*, no. 5033

⁴⁹ Abū Dāwūd, no. 1380.

⁵⁰ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, no. 2199.

⁵¹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 2302; al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id*, no. 5046.

⁵² Scholars reconciled this hadith with the ones that state that *laylat al-qadr* occurs on an odd night by suggesting that these hadiths employ different methods of counting the days. In some instances, when half of the month had passed, the Arabs would count the number of days left instead of the number of days that had passed. According to the latter way of counting, the night of the twenty-fourth night would be the seventh night of the last ten nights. Ibn ‘Abbās himself was also reported to have said about *laylat al-qadr*, “Seek it in twenty-four nights,” which could mean, “Begin seeking it in the last remaining seven nights.”

***Laylat al-qadr* is the night of 24th of Ramadan**

The thirteenth opinion suggests that *laylat al-qadr* is the night of the 24th. This is the reported opinion of Bilāl, Ibn ‘Abbās, al-Ḥasan, and Qatādah. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said, without attributing [his opinion] to the Prophet ﷺ, “Seek *laylat al-qadr* on [the night of] the 24th.”⁵³ Al-Bukhārī reported this hadith after another one (which will be mentioned below), that states, “It is in the last ten [nights], either in the first seven or in the last seven nights.”⁵⁴ The former hadith seems to explain the latter one and therefore should be the primary evidence [for this issue]. In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, Bilāl is reported to have said that the Prophet ﷺ said, “*Laylat al-qadr* is the night of the 24th.”⁵⁵

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 23rd or 27th night of Ramadan**

The fourteenth opinion suggests that *laylat al-qadr* falls on the 23rd or the 27th, as reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him. This opinion is supported by what *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, that he said, “It is in the last ten nights, either in the first nine or in the last seven nights.” Ibn ‘Abbās commented, “He meant *laylat al-qadr*.”⁵⁶ This opinion is also supported by what is reported in the *Musnad* of al-Bazzār with a good chain of transmission from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, who said, “The Prophet ﷺ was asked about *laylat al-qadr* and he replied: I knew it, then I lost its knowledge. Seek it when seven nights remain or when three nights remain.”⁵⁷

***Laylat al-qadr* is the night of the 27th of Ramadan**

⁵³ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2022.

⁵⁴ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2022.

⁵⁵ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 23890.

⁵⁶ *Al-Bukhārī*, no. 2022.

⁵⁷ Al-Haythamī, *Majma’ al-zawā’id*, no. 5050.

The fifteenth opinion states that *laylat al-qadr* falls on the 27th. This opinion was adopted by many companions and others.⁵⁸ Ubayy ibn Kaʿb swore, without exception, that it is the night of the 27th, as reported in the authentic hadith collections. When asked, “What is your proof for saying that, O Abū al-Mundhir?” Ubayy replied, “The mark, or sign, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told us about: that the sun rises on that day without rays.”⁵⁹ In the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, Muʿāwyiah is reported to have narrated from the Prophet ﷺ regarding *laylat al-qadr*, “[It is] the night of the 27th.”⁶⁰ In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, with a chain of transmission meeting the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Ibn ʿUmar is reported to have said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Whoever is seeking it should seek it on the night of the 27th.’ The Prophet ﷺ also said, ‘Seek it on the night of the 27th,’ meaning *laylat al-qadr*.”⁶¹ This hadith is also reported by al-Ṭabarānī in his *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*.⁶²

In *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ* of al-Ṭabarānī, reported with a decent chain of transmission, Jābir ibn Samurah said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Seek *laylat al-qadr* on the night of the 27th.’”⁶³ Ibn ʿAbbās justified the specification of this night by stating that man is created over seven [stages] and his provision is placed in seven [items]. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) liked this justification. Others argued that Allah the Almighty repeated [the mention of] *laylat al-qadr* in the aforementioned *sūrah* three times. The phrase “*laylat al-qadr*” consists of nine letters, and three multiplied by nine equals 27. Hence, repeating it three times indicates that [it falls on the 27th night]. It was also argued that the number of the words in the *sūrah* until the phrase “that night” is 27, which further supports this claim.

⁵⁸ In addition to the companion Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, as referenced above, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī attributed this opinion to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s school and as one view reported from Abū Ḥanīfah. Ibn Ḥajar also mentioned that the Shāfiʿī scholar Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī attributed this view to “most of the scholars.” Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 6:574.

⁵⁹ *Muslim*, no. 762.

⁶⁰ *Abū Dāwūd*, no. 1386.

⁶¹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 4808.

⁶² I am unable to locate this version of the hadith in al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*.

⁶³ It is found in the printed edition of *al-Muʿjam awṣaṭ*, no. 285.

Abū Muḥammad ibn ʿAṭiyyah referenced similar interpretations in his *tafsīr* [regarding other topics]. [For example], some scholars mentioned that the number of the angels of Hellfire described by Allah—“Over it are nineteen [angels]”—is the same as the number of letters in *b-ism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, with one angel for each letter. These angels say *bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* in all of their actions, through which they obtain their strength and protection. [In another example] regarding the number of angels racing to record the companion’s supplication, “O our Lord, to You be the praise, abundant, good, blessed, sufficient,” some scholars have suggested that since the supplication has more than 30 letters, the Prophet ﷺ said, “I saw more than 30 angels racing one another to be the first to record it.” [However], Ibn ʿAṭiyyah commented that these interpretations are tangential to *tafsīr* and not from the core essence of knowledge.⁶⁴

***Laylat al-qadr* is the last night of Ramadan**

The sixteenth opinion is that the last night of Ramadan is *laylat al-qadr*. Abū Dāwūd reported from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Unays,

I was at the gathering of Banū Salamah, and I was the youngest of them. They said: Who will ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for us about *laylat al-qadr*? That was on the morning of the 21st of Ramadan. I went out, prayed the *maghrib* prayer with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and waited, standing, at the door of his house. He passed by me and said: Come in. I entered and dinner was brought for him. I refrained from eating as the food was scarce. When the Prophet ﷺ finished his dinner, he said to me: Give me my shoes. He then stood up and I also stood up with him. When we went out, he said: I assume you needed something [from me]. I said: Yes. Some people of Banū Salamah have sent me to you to ask you about *laylat al-qadr*. He asked: Which night is it tonight? I said: [The] 22nd. He said: This is the very night. He then returned and said: Or the following night, referring to the 23rd night.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ This comment is quoted by Ibn ʿAṭiyyah from Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī ibn al-Kharrāṭ (d. 581/1185). See, Ibn ʿAṭiyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 1:61.

⁶⁵ *Abū Dāwūd*, no. 1379.

In the *Jāmi‘* of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Bakrah is reported to have said, “I do not search for [*laylat al-qadr*], due to something that I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, except during the last ten nights; for indeed I heard him say: ‘Search for it when nine remain, or when seven remain, or when five remain, or during the last three nights.’”⁶⁶ Al-Tirmidhī classified this hadith as fair-authentic (*ḥasan-ṣaḥīḥ*). In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit is reported to have said, “The Prophet ﷺ came out to inform [us] about *laylat al-qadr*, but finding two Muslims engaging in a dispute he said, ‘I came out to inform you about *laylat al-qadr*, but the knowledge of it has been withdrawn due to the dispute between so-and-so and so-and-so. However, this may be better for you, so seek it on the ninth, the seventh, and the fifth [of the last ten nights].’”⁶⁷

In Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan*, Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said, “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Seek it in the last ten night of Ramadan, *laylat al-qadr*, when nine nights remain, when seven nights remain, and when five nights remain.’”⁶⁸ In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal is reported to have said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked about *laylat al-qadr* and he replied, ‘It is in the last ten nights on the third or the fifth.’”⁶⁹ Another hadith reported by Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, with a good chain of transmission from Abū Hurayra, stated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that *laylat al-qadr* “is either on the 27th or the 29th. The angels who descend to earth on that night are greater in number than the stars.”⁷⁰ In *al-Mu‘jam al-awsaṭ* of al-Ṭabarānī, Abū Hurayrah is reported to have narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Seek *laylat al-qadr* on the night of the 17th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or 29th.”⁷¹ However, this hadith’s chain of transmission includes Abū al-Mihzam, who is considered unreliable (*ḍa‘īf*).

⁶⁶ Al-Tirmidhī, no. 794.

⁶⁷ Al-Bukhārī, no. 2023

⁶⁸ Abū Dāwūd, no. 1381.

⁶⁹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 22043. There is probably a mistake in the Arabic source of the translation, adding “observe it on the third or fifth.” قم في الثالثة أو الخامسة. However, I was not able to locate this addition in the versions of the *Musnad*.

⁷⁰ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 10732 (with a slight difference in the wording).

⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam awṣaṭ*, no. 1284.

These hadiths contain opinions about the timing of *laylat al-qadr* that I have not found any scholar explicitly stating before. If we count them, there are 22 opinions; sixteen of them have been previously mentioned.

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 22nd or 23rd night of Ramadan**

The seventeenth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is the night of the 22nd or the 23rd.

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or the last night of Ramadan**

The eighteenth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is the night of 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or the last night [of Ramadan].

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 21st, 23rd, or 25th night of Ramadan**

The nineteenth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* falls on the 21st, 23rd, or 25th night of Ramadan. The proof for this opinion is the aforementioned hadith of ‘Ubādah, where the meaning of “the ninth” refers to the night when nine nights remain because he mentioned the ninth before the seventh, and the seventh before the fifth.⁷²

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 23rd or 25th night of Ramadan**

The twentieth opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* falls on the 23rd or 25th night, based on the aforementioned hadith of Mu‘ādh. The hadith clearly states to “seek it on the third,” which he mentioned before the fifth night.

⁷² The Arabic source states ‘he mentioned the ninth before the seventh, which is the fifth’ (وهي الخامسة). However, based on the context and the referenced hadith, it appears that the intended meaning is ‘and he [mentioned] it [the seventh] before the fifth’ (وهي على الخامسة)..

***Laylat al-qadr* is the 27th or the 29th night of Ramadan**

The twenty-first opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* is the 27th or the 29th night of Ramadan.

***Laylat al-qadr* is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights, or the 17th or 19th night of Ramadan**

The twenty-second opinion is that *laylat al-qadr* falls on [one of] the odd nights of the last ten nights, or on the 17th or 19th night of Ramadan.

All of these opinions are based on the view that *laylat al-qadr* occurs on a particular fixed night, which is al-Shāfiʿī's opinion. The sound opinion of his school is that it falls on one of the last ten nights, most likely on one of the odd nights rather than the even nights, and most likely on the 21st or the 23rd night. This last opinion can be considered an independent opinion, bringing the total number to twenty-three. Additionally, the opinion that the knowledge of *laylat al-qadr* was abrogated has been mentioned earlier, making the total number of opinions twenty-four.

Does *laylat al-qadr* move from one night to another?

A group of scholars held that *laylat al-qadr* moves from year to year. This view is held by Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, Ishāq ibn Rāhwayh, Abū Thawr, and others. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr attributed this view to al-Shāfiʿī in *al-Istidhkār*, although we do not have any record of him expressing this opinion. Among his companions, al-Muzanī and Ibn Khuzaymah are known to have adopted this stance. Al-Nawawī also favors this opinion as a means of reconciling the differing hadiths on the matter that can only be reconciled in this manner. Thus, there are a total of 25 different opinions on this issue.

Ibn Ḥazm, the literalist (*al-Zāhirī*), maintained that *laylat al-qadr* can only occur on the odd nights of the last ten nights. According to him, the first of the last ten nights is the night of the 20th if the month is incomplete (i.e., 29 days), or the night

of the 21st if the month is complete (i.e., 30 days). Therefore, *laylat al-qadr* may occur on the 21st and the following odd nights if the month is complete, or on the 20th and the following even nights if the month is incomplete. This is the twenty-sixth opinion.

Know that *laylat al-qadr* does indeed exist and Allah reveals it to whomever He chooses among mankind so that they may be certain of its presence. There are numerous accounts of pious individuals who have witnessed it. The minority opinion holding that it is impossible to witness *laylat al-qadr* should be dismissed as a serious error, as al-Nawawī has pointed out. Some scholars have suggested that Allah has hidden *laylat al-qadr* from His servants so they do not solely speak of its blessings and neglect their worship on other nights. He wants them to remain committed to their worship at all times, as they were created for that purpose. Allah said, “I have not created Jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” With this, the number of opinions on the matter reaches twenty-seven.⁷³

This opinion is supported by what is reported in al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, with a good chain of transmission from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Unays, that he asked the Prophet ﷺ: “O Prophet of Allah, inform me which night *laylat al-qadr* should be sought on?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “If it was not that people would leave prayer except on that night, I would have told you.”⁷⁴ In *Musnad* al-Bazzār, al-Awzā‘ī reported that Marthad, or Abū Marthad, reported from his father that he said, “I found Abū Dharr at al-Jamrah al-Wuṣṭā⁷⁵ and I asked him about *laylat*

⁷³ In his *tafsīr*, al-Rāzī provided several explanations behind the wisdom of keeping the exact timing of *laylat al-qadr* hidden. He gave examples of how Allah has hidden many other things including: His pleasure with worship to motivate people to pursue all acts of worship, His wrath about sins to discourage people from committing them, His righteous saints (*awliyā’*) among people so that they honor everyone, the acceptance of supplications (*du‘ā*) to motivate them to make more *du‘ā*, His greatest name so that people glorify all of His names, the “middle prayer” so that people maintain all their prayers, the acceptance of repentance so that people commit to all types of repentance, and the time of their death so that they stay fearful of death. Thus, Allah has also hidden *laylat al-qadr* so that people can glorify every night of Ramadan. Another reason is that human beings are vulnerable to sins by nature. If *laylat al-qadr* were clearly known, and one committed sins during it, the punishment would be severe as they would have known of the significance and sacredness of this night. For instance, imagine if worship on *laylat al-qadr* is worth the reward of a thousand months, while sinning during it is worth the punishment of a thousand months. Therefore, hiding the time of *laylat al-qadr* is a mercy from Allah, as preventing punishment takes priority over bringing reward. Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṣin al-ghayb*, 32:28–29.

⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, no. 21110.

⁷⁵ *Al-Jamrah al-wuṣṭā*, the medium pillar, is one of the three sites at which Hajj pilgrims throw pebbles, as a sign of “stoning the devil.”

al-qadr.” Abū Dharr replied, “No one would have asked more about this than me. I once said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! Was *laylat al-qadr* revealed to the Prophets and then lifted?’ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘No. It will remain until the Day of Judgment.’ I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! When is it?’ He responded, ‘If I were permitted to reveal it, I would have told you. However, seek it on the 90th or the 70th and do not ask me again.’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then turned and started to speak on a different matter. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! What is the 70th?’ This made the Prophet ﷺ angry in a way that he had never been before or after that occasion. He then said, ‘Have I not forbidden you from asking about it? If I were permitted to reveal it, I would have told you.’ The Prophet then indicated that *laylat al-qadr* is one of the last seven nights.”⁷⁶

Section on the signs of *laylat al-qadr*⁷⁷

It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned signs of *laylat al-qadr*, one of which is that the sun rises in the morning without any visible rays. This is considered the most authentic sign.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Al-Bazzār, *al-Musnad*, no. 4067. In his *ṣaḥīḥ* collection of hadith, Al-Bukhārī dedicated a section (*bāb*) to “Seeking *laylat al-qadr* in the last seven nights.” He reported a hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ said to his companions, “I see that your dreams all agree upon the last seven nights. Whoever seeks it, let him seek it in the last seven nights.” *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 2015. There are two opinions on identifying the last seven nights. Some scholars held that they are generally the last seven nights of the month, while others specified that they begin on the night of the 22nd and end on the night of the 28th. According to the former opinion, the nights of 21st and 23rd are not included, while according to the latter opinion, the nights of the 21st and the 29th are not included.

⁷⁷ Scholars have debated whether the promised reward of *laylat al-qadr* applies to those who pray during it, even if they do not realize that it is *laylat al-qadr* or do not look for its signs. The disagreement arises from the interpretation of the hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah, in which the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever prays on *laylat al-qadr* coinciding with it [the same night],” and I [Abū Hurayrah] believe he continued, “with faith and seeking reward, his sins will be forgiven.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 760. A similar hadith was reported by ‘Ubādah stating that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever prays on *laylat al-qadr* with faith and seeking reward, the night is gifted to him.” Aḥmad, *Musnad*, no. 22713. While the word “coinciding” (*yuwāfiqūhā*) implies that one should recognize *laylat al-qadr* in order to receive its reward, it may also mean coinciding with the night without necessarily knowing that it is *laylat al-qadr*. This debate does not negate the reward for everyone who prays during *laylat al-qadr*, even if they do not know which night it was. Rather, the debate is specifically about the exact reward promised in the *sūrah*.

⁷⁸ The Shāfi‘ī jurist al-Māwardī said, “It is recommended for one who recognizes *laylat al-qadr* to hide it and ask Allah with sincerity, good intention, and sound certainty for anything he likes regarding his religious or worldly matters, but his supplications (*du‘ā*) for matters concerning religion and the Hereafter should be greater [in number].” Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Hawī al-kabīr*, ed. ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Mu‘awwaḍ, 1st ed., 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994), 3:484. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī deduced from the story of the two disputing men, who were among the reasons that the Prophet ﷺ forgot *laylat al-qadr*, that one who recognizes the signs of *laylat al-qadr* should not share their knowledge of it with others. Al-Subkī argues that this recommendation

In Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, ‘Ubādah bin al-Ṣāmit is reported to have narrated, with a good chain of transmission, that the Prophet ﷺ said, “The signs of *laylat al-qadr* are that it is serene and clear as if the moon is shining in it. It is peaceful and calm. It is neither too cold nor too hot, and no shooting star appears in it until morning. Among its signs is that the sun rises evenly the following morning without any visible rays, like the full moon. The devil will not be able to rise with it.”⁷⁹

Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ mentioned two opinions regarding the the sun rising “without rays.” The first opinion is that it is a sign that Allah assigned [as a way to distinguish *laylat al-qadr* from other nights]. The second opinion is that it is because many angels move around on that night, descending on earth and ascending with what they brought down [to earth]. In doing so, the angels will block the sun’s rays with their wings and ethereal bodies.

According to al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, Wāthilah ibn al-Asqa‘ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “*Laylat al-qadr* is clear and has neither heat nor coldness. It is devoid of clouds, rain, or wind, and shooting stars are not visible. One of its signs is that the sun rises without rays.”⁸⁰ [However] the chain of transmission for this ḥadīth includes Bishr ibn ‘Awn and Bakkār ibn Tamīm, both of whom are considered weak narrators. In al-Bazzār’s *Musnad*, Ibn ‘Abbās reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “*Laylat al-qadr* is a cool night that is

is suggested by the fact that Allah did not want His Prophet to remember and share it, and since “all good is in whatever was willed for the Prophet,” it is recommended to follow him in that. According to al-Subkī, the wisdom behind this recommendation is that knowing the time of *laylat al-qadr* is a divine gift (*karāmah*), and all the people of the spiritual path have agreed that *karāmahs* should be hidden except for legitimate purposes. The reasons one should hide their gifted *karāmahs* are the following: (1) so that one does not see themselves as better than others or does not recognize that the *karāmah* may be test from Allah; (2) guarding against showing off (*riyā’*) or feeling safe from being deprived of the *karāmah*; (3) politeness (*adab*), so that one does not get distracted by the *karāmah* and talking to others about it, instead of thanking Allah; and (4) avoiding prompting envy among others. This last reason is supported by Jacob’s statement in the Qur’an, “My son, tell your brothers nothing of this dream, or they may plot to harm you.” Qur’an 12:5. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Qaḍā’ al-‘Arab fī as’īlat Ḥalab*, ed. Muḥammad al-Afghānī (Mecca: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah, 1992), 502–6.

⁷⁹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, no. 22765.

⁸⁰ Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd Salafī (Cairo, Riyadh: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, Dār al-Ṣumay‘ī, 1983), 22:59 (number unavailable). I would like to express my gratitude to my research colleague, Justin Parrott, for his timely and enthusiastic assistance in verifying the hadith citations referenced in this translation. Without his prompt help, this publication would have faced delays.

neither hot nor cold.”⁸¹ [However], the chain of transmission for this hadith includes Maslamah ibn Ḥibbān, alongside other transmitters, whose reliability was debated.

You [the reader] may argue that al-Ṭabarānī reported in his *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr* from Sharīk, from Simāk ibn Ḥarb, from Jābir ibn Samurah, who attributed the hadith to the Prophet ﷺ that he said, “I saw *laylat al-qadr* but I was caused to forget its time. So, seek it in the last ten nights. It is a night of wind, rain and thunder.”⁸² Al-Bazzār also reported this hadith with similar wording.⁸³ This hadith aligns with the hadith of Abū Sa‘īd (mentioned above) which states, “The roof of the mosque was leaking and I saw the Prophet ﷺ with traces of water and clay on his face.” I would say that this is what you established as your opinion. What we adopt is that *laylat al-qadr* is not fixed on one night but rather moves, so it is possible that this hadith refers to a year when there was no wind or rain. Allah knows best.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The book has come to an end, thanks to Allah’s praise, assistance, and benevolent guidance. Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best Disposer of affairs. There is no might and no power except by Allah, the Magnificent and Most High. I completed writing this book on a blessed Sunday, the 22nd of the sacred month of Ramadan, in the year 1137 of the *hijrah* (migration) of the Prophet, may Allah’s best prayers and greetings be upon him. All praise is due only to Allah.

⁸¹ *Ibn Khuzaymah*, no. 2192.

⁸² Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, no. 1962.

⁸³ Al-Bazzār, *al-Musnad*, no. 4267.

⁸⁴ What is the purpose of recognizing the signs of *laylat al-qadr* after it has already passed? Al-Nawawī answers that there are two benefits. First, it is recommended to exert as much effort in worship as possible the following day. Second, according to the well-known (*mashhūr*) opinion of the Shāfi‘ī school, *laylat al-qadr* does not shift to other nights; hence, whoever recognizes it should commit to worship during it in the following years. Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū‘ sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab li-l-Shīrāzī*, ed. Najīb al-Muṭī‘ī, 23 vols. (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1980), 6:490.