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Saturday



Title: [Laylatu-l-Qadr: A Non-Material Experience](#)

DVD title: Faith and Belief needed for the Laylatu-l-Qadr:
A Non-Material Experience

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. Tomorrow I will be speaking about, Laylatu-l-Qadr. I am speaking about a process of something that is immaterial being perceived in a material world. As you will hear in my talk, it is the logical third leg of a four-legged stool, which comes from Isra Miraj and Nisfu Sha’ban. There really is a relationship between these holy nights. The analogy is that our brain is well protected. It is in the darkness; yet the brain perceives light, and never experiences light. In the same way, there are two aspects of one reality. Though they are apparently very close to one another, they are, in a sense, very separate from one another.

Most people use the terms faith and belief interchangeably, but they are not the same. To experience Laylatu-l-Qadr requires faith. We say in English, seeing is believing. That pretty well tells you what belief is. The difference between faith and belief, you can say is that belief is counting on the reality of something which one knows and which one eventually sees, and it can vary from person to person. Of course, it does because we all see things differently.

Faith is, in a sense, a form of belief, where faith is an acceptance and belief is an acceptance. Faith is, in a sense, a belief in the unseen. What makes belief real is seeing it. What makes faith real is love—love that one feels for the Creator, love that one feels for what the Creator created, love for the One in whom one has faith. The word of the One in whom one has faith, the Qur’an, was revealed to the heart of the Beloved of Allah (swt). As Allah says, and gives us this guidance, the Qur’an is the clear sign/’āyah from

Allah that enters into the hearts. The Qur'an is the clear sign that enters into the hearts. (2:118) *That* is faith. Therefore, where the average believer (in our case, we are talking about Muslims) is very much a ritualist, and is very anxious to portray or represent spirituality in some form that they can then believe in, the Sufi is a person who strives to unveil what is in the heart. That is why, to the Sufi, the inner fast in Ramadān is more important than the outer fast. The outer fast is just a means and, in some sense, a ritual. It is like the covers of the book; they bind to hold the pages together.

The Qur'an is the clear sign from Allah which enters into the hearts... and the rest of the *'āyat* isof the one's who are given knowledge. You see, it requires some kind of knowledge also. We all have only one heart. Allah says, "**Allah has not placed two hearts in the chest of any man.**" (33:4) But He also says, "**We have given them ears and eyes in addition to their hearts.**" (23:78) This allows a person to have faith, because of the heart, and belief because of the eyes and ears, the senses. What we hear with our ears and see with our eyes can be a doorway to the heart, but in the heart is where we are going to find belief. At some point, when you are dealing with the Laylatu-l-Qadr, you have to stop thinking about seeing and hearing. There are signs, but the sign, as you know, is not the thing. Just because the sign says Los Angeles does not mean that you are in Los Angeles. You could be 500 miles away.

The other thing to realize is that love is not an entitlement. It is a gift. It is a privilege that Allah (swt) has given to us. But without the eyes to see and the ears to hear the signs of the beloved, and without a heart to contain that love, it is like a gift that is offered to someone who has no place to put it or to use it. Yet every one of us has this immense gift of invaluable, this invaluable treasure that is given to us at our birth. We know and we find this immense gift. We find that we become, in fact, that love. When you love someone, you become that love. It overpowers you—all your decisions. Basically, Allah (swt) made human beings His *khalifa* because He knew that He had bestowed on all human beings everything that they needed in order to be the *khalifa*.

Yet there are so many people who are not aware of the treasures that are within themselves. They follow the ritual, which in a sense distracts them and diverts them from the treasure that belief is sufficient. Of course, it gets even more confused when you say *mu'min*, but we always say 'in the heart of the believer.' You find Allah in the heart of the believer. The believer believes for many reasons that are obvious to that believer, that if you want to find Allah it is in the heart of the believer. That is where the faith lies. Just because someone gives us a gift of appreciation, does not necessarily mean that we are worthy of it.

I received an award last week from TLC. *Alhamdulillah*, may Allah bless them for their kindness to me. It is a very nice award that they have been giving out since 2002. But as soon as you get an award like that, you think, "What did I do to deserve that? Am I deserving of that?" We ought to be asking ourselves, what have we done to be worthy of that love and the greater gift that comes with it, the gift of faith in the One Who gave us the love. Allah also tells us what to do. He says,

Whether you turn to the East or to the West in prayer does not suffice to be worthy. The one who is worthy is the one who believes in Allah and the day of judgment and the angels and in His books and in His prophets, and with His love serves for His sake the ones close to Him – the orphans, the poor, the wayfarers and to those who ask for help – and who sets slaves free, and keeps the prayer, pays the *zakat*, keeps promises, shows patience in distress and affliction, and in time of conflict . Those are the ones who are sincere and on the straight path. Those are the ones who fear the consequences of their actions.

That's a pretty clear guideline. There are things we have to do to be worthy to receive the gifts of love, of faith, and of hope. We also have to be aware that this ability to

understand that we have to do these things, the ability we have to do them, and the results of those actions are all in the hands of Allah (swt), not in our hands. There are those among you who know that you can struggle over many, many decisions; but when you really get to the point where you just turn it over to Allah, everything is okay. It's not that you are divesting yourself of responsibility. You are actually taking a big step in faith. **“Surely Allah makes those whom He wishes, hear.”**

At the same time, we are also protected from those whom Allah (swt) mentions as “those whose eyes and ears are sealed shut by Allah, and those who are heedless.” He also says, **“Certainly we have created many jinn and men in hell. They have eyes which do not see, and ears which do not hear. They have hearts which do not feel. They are the heedless ones.”** (7:179) The heart that cannot feel has no capacity for real faith. Again in Qur'an, **“But Allah watches over all creation. His Beneficence covers all, even those who think that their lives are good.”** They think they are having fun. Those who are having a better life have faith. He says that in this way: **“Hell looks the way one sees it.”** You are having fun, doing whatever you want to do. Everything's fine, and you think things are good. Your concept of hell is anything other than that... that's what you think it is. That's the way it looks. That's not the way it necessarily is.

There is another warning where He says, **“Whatever good comes upon you is from Allah, and whatever bad comes to you is from yourself.”** Many people, including us, quote these things many times. But there are some people who are not able to differentiate between the good and the bad. Some people are even hesitant or ashamed to show their good deeds, because they feel they will be taken as weak people. We see that even in the political sphere today. Some people are very prideful and arrogant about how tough they are – how they treat, beat, and kill their fellow human beings. It's true.

Allah (swt) says in Qur'an, **“O believers! If you fear Allah, Allah will offer you the light to see what is right and what is wrong.”** I'll be speaking about that light

tomorrow, too. The subtext is the assumption or the desire for people to see the Laylatu-l-Qadr, instead of to have faith that it is present. It is the night of *qadr*, your destiny. It is the inevitable light, an inevitable moment. What are the signs of the people who have this *taqwa*? First of all, it is to be able to recognize that you have to find the example of a guide or the guide Allah has sent to you, which of course is the example of Rasulallah (sal). That is the example that is presented in every *ba'īat*: **“O Muhammed, those who swear allegiance to you do but swear allegiance to Allah. Allah’s Hand is above your hand which holds their hand.”**

There seems to be these two parts of the Dīn. For the people who need ritual, Allah says, **“There is no prophet who has not been ordered to impose a ritual prayer and fasting upon his followers.”** (Hadith) Then there are those whose faith is substantiated by a kind of non-material experience, which is the Laylatu-l-Qadr. It may have signs to it, but the experience itself is non-material. Whereas, in the Isra Miraj, the Prophet (sal) has a very material experience, and brings back guidelines that are material to us. In Nisfu Sha’ban, it is a kind of expressive moment in which certain things have happened that relate to the world. Like the names of the people who are going to die that year are written on a tablet. It’s oriented to the material. Laylatu-l-Qadr is virtually totally immaterial, just like love or faith, which runs counter to our human tendencies and desires to have everything in a material form so we can recognize it, label it, name it, accept it, or reject it.

Allah (swt) also gives us another clue in a *hadith*. **“If you lower yourself before men, Allah will raise you above them.”** There is something that is being implied that is valuable outside of just the social sphere in human interrelationships. What one comes out of this month of Ramadān with, *inshā’a-llāh*, especially after the *zakat al-fitr*, is the idea that the hand that gives is above the hand that takes. If we want to follow the example of Rasulallah (sal) and to serve in the name of Allah (swt), to give and not to take, to be humble and show respect and love to all of Allah’s creation, then one needs to

have some of the ritual, the *salat*, for example. But at the same time, it is a non-material love that causes you to give and to sacrifice and to be kind and generous to other human beings. We say it in English, “the faith community.” Or “what faith do you belong to?” We make it into a noun. In Arabic the same word can be a noun or a verb. But it’s interesting in English to say, “The people of faith.” It’s a material thing. But it’s more than that.

We flip the concept of “believer” and “faith.” You heard me do it myself. It’s as if believing is more subtle than faith itself, but it is not. If we are going to look for things, rituals, to identify with (other than to just give us a sense of cultural and historical foundation), if we want to look to rituals that will move us dynamically into this state of faith, Islam does provide that. Of course, people can use any ritual in any way they want to use it. The ritual perhaps that does the most is the prayer itself, and it is the singular issue Allah emphasized to Prophet Muhammed (sal) on Isra Miraj. He comes back with the prayer.

That is because *salat* is a key. It is a way to remember Allah (swt). It is a time when you verbalize your gratitude. It is a prostration to Allah (swt), and in a sense to our progenitor, Adam (as). Allah ordered the angels to prostrate before Adam, so we are carrying on that tradition when we are in *sajdah*. It is a time when we are affirming the attributes of His Names, and it is a time when the purpose of worship is spoken very clearly to us. You could say that the prerequisite that one’s prayer is accepted is to feel for and show love and respect to, not only Allah (swt) whom you are praying to, but those whom you are praying with. Because there are both positive and negative aspects in our creation, and because our eyes (depending on the state of our heart) will see and hear or not see and hear, or see and hear what they want to see and hear, this subject of faith becomes even more important. There is a nice translation of 33:72,

We have offered our Trust to the heavens, and to the earth and to the mountains. They shied away from accepting it, and begged for Our compassion. But man accepted our trust without knowing it, and without asking for compassion.

I like this translation; but I don't know who did it. I think it is an accurate translation because it tells you about faith. We all use the shortspeak, "**The mountains and the rivers refused, but humankind accepted, and Allah said, 'Woe unto you, this is a heavy burden.'**" That's the way it is usually translated, but I like this one. Faith.

I guess the end of the story, or the beginning of the story (as Khaled might say, the end of the story and the beginning of the story are the same) is that it is only when we accept Allah's trust without any conditions, without asking for anything in return, that Allah (swt) gives us His strength, His mercy, His compassion and His justice. When we truly become an *abdallah*, the loving, fearing, devoted '*abd*' of Allah, our prayers become an affirmation of our state. It is a state within which our heart is the Ka'ba. The Ka'ba is not just our heart, but the hearts of all people become the Ka'ba.

The realization comes to us of our gratitude/*shukr* for all the gifts we receive from Allah (swt) through the hands of other human beings, as well as directly from Allah. Like the gift of the food from the garden, or the gift of compensation for activity or work, or the gift of trust from another human being – these all come through the hands of others to us from Allah. In addition is the gratefulness for everything around us in which we see the Rahmat of Allah, and the beauty: the Jamal and Jalal of Allah. This is a little excursion into faith and belief, which thank God I left out of my talk. I thank Allah, too. I thank God and Allah. *Asalaam aleikum.*