

Ibn Taymīyah on when to seek the Night of Decree

Translation and notes by Abū ‘Abdillāh Owais Al-Hāshimī

Shaykh Al-Islām Ibn Taymīyah – Allāh have mercy on him – was asked about the Night of Decree (Laylatu Al-Qadr) while he was imprisoned in the Tower of Al-Jabal. He replied:¹

All praise is for Allāh. The Night of Decree occurs in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan. This is how it is authentically reported from the Prophet – praise and peace of Allāh be upon him. He said it is on one of the last 10 nights of Ramadan.²

And it happens on one of the odd nights [of these 10]. However, the odd nights can be in terms of what has passed, so it is sought on the night of the 21st, the 23rd, the 25th, the 27th, and the 29th. And [odd nights] can also be in terms of what remains [of the month], as the Prophet – praise and peace of Allāh be upon him – said:

[Seek it in the last ten nights], when nine [nights] remain, when seven remain, when five remain,³ or when three remain.

Based on this, if the month is 30 days long, these (odd *remaining* nights) correspond to the [last ten] even nights (from the beginning of the month): the 22nd is when nine remain, and the night of the 24th is when seven remain. And this is how it was explained by Abū Sa’īd Al-Khudrī in the authentic hadith.⁴ And this is how the Prophet – praise and peace of Allāh be upon him – held the night prayers during the month.

And if the month is 29 days long, [counting the nights that] remain of the month [produces the same result as counting] what has passed.*

That being the case, the believer should seek [the Night of Decree] on all of the last 10 nights, as the Prophet – praise and peace of Allāh be upon him – said:

Seek it in the last 10 nights.⁵

* Table 1 Showing how Laylatu Al-Qadr might occur on any of the last ten nights, based on the narrations about seeking it on the last ten odd nights in terms of what has *passed* or what *remains*, because we don’t know if the month will be 29 or 30 days long. - *Translator*

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|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| n th Day of Ramadan | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| n th Night from beginning of month | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| Nights Remaining / 29 day month | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | | |
| Nights Remaining / 30 day month | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

¹ Ibn Taymīyah, Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Al-Ḥalīm. *Majmū’ Al-Fatāwā*, 25: 153, 154. 3rd ed. 2005. Dār Al-Wafā, Al-Manṣūrah, Egypt.

² Recorded by Al-Bukhārī and others.

³ Recorded by Al-Bukhārī, see his chapter on *Seeking Laylatu Al-Qadr on the odd nights of the last ten*.

⁴ Recorded by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and others.

⁵ Op. cit. Al-Bukhārī.