233677 - On Laylat al-Qadr Allah transfers from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz and gives to the angels what is to happen by His decree in the coming year

the question

What is meant by the words: “because Allah decrees provision and His slaves’ affairs (on that Laylat al-Qadr), and the angels take the books of decrees for an entire year, from one Laylat al-Qadr to the next, and there is no one, prominent or insignificant, but Allah decrees his affairs for an entire year”? When the angels take the books of decrees, what do they do with them? Do they read them? Do the angels know what will happen of unseen matters during that year, and is that something which Allah discloses to them, or what?

Summary of answer

To sum up our answer:

Allah, may He be exalted, informs some of the angels (namely the angelic scribes) of the events that will happen in the coming year, and He instructs them to copy it from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz.

With regard to any additional information about the giving of individual instructions to each of the angels from those pages, there is no evidence to support that.

And Allah knows best.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Allah, may He be exalted, said:

“We sent it (this Qur’an) down on a blessed night ((i.e. night of Qadr) in the month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar). Verily, We are ever warning (mankind that Our Torment

will reach those who disbelieve in Our Oneness of Lordship and in Our Oneness of worship).

Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments”

[ad-Dukhaan 44:3-4].

That is, Allah, may He be exalted, instructs the angelic scribes to copy down what will happen during that year from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz. This was narrated from some of the early generations and was quoted by the commentators on the Qur’an.

Ibn Abi Haatim narrated in his Tafseer (18527) that Ibn ‘Abbaas said concerning the words “Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments”: There is written down from the Mother of the Book on Laylat al-Qadr what is to happen during the coming year of provision, death, life, or rain, to the extent that it is written down: So and so will perform the Hajj, and So and so will perform the Hajj.

Al-Haakim (3678) narrated – and classed it as saheeh – from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: Verily you will see a man walking about in the marketplaces, when his name has been included among those who are to die. Then he recited the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“We sent it (this Quran) down on a blessed night ((i.e. night of Qadr) in the month of Ramadan,, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar). Verily, We are ever warning (mankind that Our Torment will reach those who disbelieve in Our Oneness of Lordship and in Our Oneness of worship).

Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments”

[ad-Dukhaan 44:3-4].

That is Laylat al-Qadr; on that night worldly matters are decreed throughout the coming year until the following Laylat al-Qadr.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is, on Laylat al-Qadr the decrees of the coming year are transferred from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz, ordaining what is to happen during the year of deaths and provision, and what is to happen until the end of the year. This was narrated from Ibn ‘Umar, Abu Maalik, Mujaahid, ad-Dahhaak and more than one of the early generations. The phrase amrin hakeem (translated here as “every matter of ordainments”), means something which has been determined and cannot be altered or changed.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (7/246). Something similar was stated by at-Taahir ibn ‘Aashoor in at-Tahreer wa’t-Tanweer (6/422) and by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen in his Fataawa (20/344)

Secondly:

No one knows the unseen except Allah. He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: ‘None in the heavens and the earth knows the Ghaib (unseen) except Allah, nor can they perceive when they shall be resurrected’”

[an-Naml 27:65].

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Here Allah, may He be exalted, commands His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to say, informing all people, that no one knows the unseen except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, for He is the only One Who has knowledge of that, alone, with no partner or associate.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (6/207)

But Allah, may He be exalted, discloses to whomever He will of His creation whatever He will of matters of His unseen. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“(He Alone) the All-Knower of the Ghaib (unseen), and He reveals to none His Ghaib (unseen).’

Except to a Messenger (from mankind) whom He has chosen (He informs him of unseen as much as He likes), and then He makes a band of watching guards (angels) to march before him and behind him”

[al-Jinn 72:26, 27].

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

Knowledge of unseen matters is something that belongs exclusively to Allah, may He be exalted, so no one among His creation – no jinni or anyone else – has any knowledge of it, except what Allah reveals to whomever He will among His angels or His Messengers.

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (1/346)

What is mentioned about the angels copying down what is to happen of events in the coming year indicates that Allah, may He be exalted, shows the angelic scribes what is to occur during this year, and instructs them to copy it down from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars said: Laylat al-Qadr is so called because of what the angels write down during this night of decrees (aqdaar, sing. qadr), provision and deaths that will occur during that year, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments” [ad-Dukhaan 44: 4].

What is meant by the words of Allah, may He be exalted (interpretation of the meaning): “Therein descend the angels and the Rûh [Jibril (Gabriel)] by Allâh's Permission with all Decrees” [al-Qadr 97:4] is that during this night, Allah shows to the angels what is to happen, and he instructs them to carry out their duties, and all of that is because of Allah’s prior knowledge and ordainment of that.

End quote from Sharh an-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim (8/57).

Thirdly:

Some of the scholars stated that when the angelic scribes have finished writing down what is to happen during the coming year, Allah, may He be exalted, instructs them to give each angel his individual instructions from those pages, but they did not mention any evidence or proof for that.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shinqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

To explain the meaning of the verse: On every Laylat al-Qadr, Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, explains to the angels and writes down for them in clear detail everything that is to happen during the coming year, until the following Laylat al-Qadr.

So that explains whatever He has decreed of deaths, provision, poverty and wealth, good yields and drought, health and sickness, wars, earthquakes, and everything that is to happen during the coming year, no matter what it is.

Az-Zamakhshari said in al-Kashshaaf:

What is meant by “is decreed” [in ad-Dukhaan 44:4] is determined and ordained

“every matter of ordainments” of people’s provisions and deaths, and all their affairs, until the following year.

… Then a copy of the decrees concerning provision is given to Meekaa’eel; and a copy of the decrees concerning war is given to Jibraa’eel, and also the decrees concerning earthquakes, thunderstorms and landslides. A copy of the decrees concerning deeds is given to Ismaa‘eel, who is in charge of the lowest heaven; he is a mighty angel. And a copy of the decrees concerning calamities is given to the Angel of Death. End quote.

What we are aiming to do here is explain the meaning of the verse; it does not necessarily mean that the report about the giving of the copies mentioned to the angels mentioned is sound, because we do not know of any sound basis for it.

End quote from Adwa’ al-Bayaan (7/271) .