

## THE MEANING OF *LAYLAH AL-QADR* IN THE VIEW OF KHUMAYNĪ: A SUFI INTERPRETATION OF Q.S. AL-QADR [97]: 1–5

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Article History: Received: 13 Desember 2025    Revised: 23 February 2026

Accepted: 4 March 2026



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20871/tjsq.v8i2.528>

**Abstract:** *The concept of the Night of Qadr (lailah al-qadr), an event immortalized and mentioned in the Qur'an, has even become part of the name of a surah in the Qur'an and has become a dream for people to be able to obtain or meet the Night of Qadr (lailah al-qadr), which is considered to have a reward exceeding a thousand months of worship. The Night of Qadr (lailah al-qadr) is interpreted and understood in an exoteric sense, referring to the process of the Qur'an's revelation, while interpretations that go beyond the literal meaning or that penetrate further to reveal the esoteric meaning of the concept are rarely found. This article attempts to analyze the meaning of the Night of Qadr in the view of Ayatullah Khumayni, a great figure from Iran who became a revolutionary leader and a cleric who became a great leader in Iran. Using a Sufi hermeneutic framework such as tajalliyat, qurb, and maqam, as well as a textual-thematic tafsir method, this study examines how Khumayni reads Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5 not merely as a ritual explanation, but also as an ontological revelation, a tajalli of Muhammadiyah reality and maqam wilayah. The results of this study show that, for Khumayni, laylah al-qadr is not only the moment when the revelation of the Qur'an was sent down, but furthermore that night an existential experience where revelation, angels, and al-rūh (Jibril) function as channels of revelation (manifestation) closely related to the concepts of Nūr Muhammad, maqam walī/imām, and transcendent time (a night that “transcends” chronological linearity).*

**Keywords:** *Al-Haqiqah al-Muhammadiyah, Khumayni, Laylah al-Qadr, Ta'ayyun Auwal, Tajalli.*

**Abstrak:** Konsep tentang Malam Qadar (*lailat al-qadr*) peristiwa yang diabadikan dan disebutkan di dalam Al-Qur'an bahkan menjadi bagian dari nama surah Al-Qur'an dan menjadi dambaan orang-orang untuk bisa mendapatkan atau bertemu dengan Malam Qadar (*lailat al-qadr*) yang

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dianggap pahalanya melebihi ibadah seribu bulan. Malam Qadar (*lailat al-qadr*) ditafsirkan dan dipahami dalam pengertian yang secara eksoterik mengacu pada proses penurunan Al-Qur'an sementara penafsiran yang tidak hanya berhenti pada makna literal atau yang menorobos lebih jauh untuk mengungkap makna esoterik dari konsep tersebut jarang sekali ditemukan. Artikel ini mencoba menganalisis makna Malam Qadar dalam pandangan Ayatullah Khumayni yang merupakan seorang tokoh besar dari Iran yang menjadi pemimpin revolusi dan seorang ulama yang menjadi pemimpin agung di Iran. Dengan menggunakan kerangka hermeneutika sufistik seperti *tajalliyāt*, *qurb*, dan *maqām*, serta metode tafsir tekstual-tematik, kajian ini menelaah bagaimana Khumayni membaca Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5 bukan sekadar penjelasan ritual belaka, tetapi juga penyingkapan ontologis, suatu *tajallī* realitas *Muḥammadiyah* dan *maqām wilāyah*. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa bagi Khumayni, Malam Qadar bukan hanya sekadar moment di mana wahyu Al-Qur'an diturunkan, tetapi lebih jauh lagi malam itu merupakan sebuah pengalaman eksistensial di mana wahyu, malaikat, dan *al-rūḥ* (Jibril) berfungsi sebagai saluran penyingkapan (*manifestation*) yang berkaitan erat dengan konsep *Nūr Muḥammad*, *maqām walī/imām*, serta waktu yang bersifat transenden (malam yang “melampaui” linearitas kronologis).

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Al-Haqīqah al-Muḥammadiyah*, *Khumayni*, *Laylah al-Qadr*, *Ta'ayyun Awal*, *Tajallī*.

## Introduction

Discussions about *laylah al-qadr* (the Night of Power) occupy a central position in Qur'anic studies because they combine two domains at once: the ritual dimension—such as *ibādah*, *qiyām al-layl*, and the search for a night full of blessings—and the metaphysical dimension, namely the revelation of the Qur'an, the presence of angels, and the determination of annual cosmic destiny.<sup>1</sup> In classical exegetical tradition, the focus of study is often directed at *fadā'il* and normative aspects that emphasize the value of worship and its virtues. However, the Sufi tradition attempts to broaden the scope of its study by viewing *laylah al-qadr* as a moment of *kashf*, *tajallī*, and ontological encounter between humans and the Divine.<sup>2</sup> Among modern Muslim scholars, especially in the Shiite intellectual world, Ayatullah Khumayni emerged as a figure who interpreted the concept of *laylah al-qadr* with a different approach, namely a philosophical Sufi approach.<sup>3</sup>

As an intellectual disciple of the traditions of Ibn 'Arabī, Ṣadrā, and Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, Khumayni positioned the concept of *laylah al-qadr* not only as a historical event of the revelation of the holy book, but as an existential reality that occurs continuously in the human soul and the structure of the cosmos.<sup>4</sup> Through

1 Abi 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, vol. 20 (Beirut: Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 2016), 129.

2 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, ed. 'Afifī (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1946), 112–13.

3 Zaimul Asroor Zaim and Cemal Sahin, “Otentisitas Al-Qur'an dalam Tafsir Syiah: Penolakan Al-Tusi, Al-Tabarsi dan Al-Tabataba'i Terhadap Tahrif Al-Qur'an,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 12, no. 2 (2022): 311–31, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2022.12.2.311-331>; Mutiara Ramadhani, Kerwanto, and Putri Hafizatul Aini, “Memahami Corak dan Metode Penafsiran Tafsir Syiah: (Kajian Terhadap Tafsir Al-Qummi dan Tafsir Al-Mizan),” *El-Adabi: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.59166/el-adabi.v3i2.159>.

4 Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul, 1993), 344–46.

his works such as *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, *Sirr al-Ṣalāt*, and *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, Khumaynī formulated a mystical hermeneutics based on the metaphysical premises of *tajallī*, *Nūr Muḥammadī*, and *maqām wilāyah* as the key to understanding the verses of revelation, including Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5.<sup>5</sup>

In several recent studies on Khumaynī’s thought, there are at least three themes that have been the focus of previous research. First, research discussing the rivalry between Khumaynī and al-Ṣuyūtī, as conducted by Siti Maheran. In her article, Maheran concludes that al-Ṣuyūtī viewed the verse on *muṭ‘ah*, namely Q.S. An-Nisā’ [4]: 24, as having been abrogated by Q.S. Al-Mu’minūn [23]: 6–7, and several hadiths contained in *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Muslim*. From this, al-Ṣuyūtī claimed that *muṭ‘ah* marriage was forbidden based on the shift in law from the above verse and hadith. Meanwhile, Khumaynī held the opposite view, that *muṭ‘ah* marriage is lawful (*ḥalāl*), because according to him, there is no evidence of its prohibition in the Qur’an. Khumaynī used Q.S. An-Nisā’ [4]: 24 as the basis for the permissibility of *muṭ‘ah*, which is reinforced by the hadith narrated by the Ahlulbait.<sup>6</sup>

Second, research conducted by Rika Leli and Subi Nur Isnaini examined Khumaynī’s hermeneutic construction based on his interpretation of the terms al-Rahman and al-Rahim in the Qur’an. Borrowing Paul Ricoeur’s theory of interpretation, Rika found three main points that form the basis of Khumaynī’s interpretation, including Khumaynī’s idea of diversity of meaning as a logical consequence of the premise that the Qur’an has two meanings, namely exoteric and esoteric meanings. Khumaynī’s allegorical interpretation, which is explained discursively, describes the philosophical face of Sufism and is colored by Shi’ite ideology.<sup>7</sup>

Third, research conducted by Siswoyo Aris Munandar traced the characteristics of the interpretation and epistemology of Khumaynī’s Sufi thought. Munandar

5 Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar* (Tehran: Markaz-i Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī wa Farhangī, 1989), 52–55; Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Sirr al-Ṣalāt* (Qom: Mu’assasah Tanzīm wa Nashr Āthār Imām Khumaynī, 2006), 78–80; Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah Ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah* (Tehran: Markaz-i Intishārāt, 1984), 97–99.

6 Siti Maheran, “Exploring the Differences in Views of Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti and Ayatollah Khomeini on the Law of Mut’ah Marriage: A Comparative Study Analysis,” *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research* 4, no. 5 (2024): 6024–34. See also related research: Ahmad Amani, Omid Isanejad, and Elahe Alipour, “Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Group Therapy on Marital Distress, Marital Conflict and Optimism in Married Women Visited the Counseling Center of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation in Kermanshah,” *Shenakht Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry* 5, no. 1 (2018): 42–64, <https://doi.org/10.29252/shenakht.5.1.42>; Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, “Shi’ism as Interpreted by Khomeini: An Ideology of Revolutionary Violence,” in *Shi’ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 20, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429305993>.

7 Rika Leli Dewi Khusaila Rosalnia and Subi Nur Isnaini, “Hermeneutika Ruhullah Khomeini: Surplus Makna dan Pembacaan Alegoris Terhadap Term Al-Rahman dan Al-Rahim,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadis* 12, no. 2 (2022): 282–310, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2022.12.2.282-310>.

concluded that Khumaynī's interpretation was a form of interpretation of the Qur'an that emphasized the *'irfānī* (mystical) or *ishārī* approach. According to Munandar, Khumaynī's approach differs from conventional methods of interpretation, which prioritize a textual and rational approach. In this case, Munandar cites an example in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah about the concepts of Rahman and Rahim, which demonstrate Khumaynī's view, which is thick with spirituality.<sup>8</sup>

Fourth, research conducted by Seyyed Esa Mostarhami on the nature and mechanism of the mystical miracles of the Qur'an in Khumaynī's view. In his study, Mostarhami concluded that Khumaynī viewed the essence of the miracles of the Qur'an as lying in its profound and noble teachings on tawhid and Sufism. With its rich layers of meaning, the Qur'an, for Khumaynī, serves as a gateway to divine knowledge that can trigger significant transformations in the realm of Sufism. According to Khumaynī, the comprehensive and epic Sufism of the Qur'an forms the basis for all forms of Sufism, which may be partially understood by sensitive individuals.<sup>9</sup> Fifth, research examining Khumaynī's political movement, such as Nita Yuli Astuti's study of Khumaynī's views on the *wilāyatul faqīh* system as Iran's official state system after the 1979 revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Then there is an in-depth exploration of the history and impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, in this case conducted by Yuliana Pradani,<sup>11</sup> Burhanudien,

8 Siswoyo Aris Munandar, "Karakteristik Tafsir Sufistik Imam Khomeini: Pendekatan 'Ir-fani dan Relevansinya Terhadap Kepemimpinan dalam Islam Kontemporer," *At-Tafsir: Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Contextual Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2025): 86–112.

9 Seyyed Esa Mostarhami, "Analysis of the Natural and Mechanism of the Qur'an's Mystical Miraculousness from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini," *Academic Journal of the Qur'an and Science* 18, no. 34 (2024): 263–82.

10 Nita Yuli Astuti and Budi Sujati, "Pemikiran Ayatullah Khomeini tentang *Wilayah Al-Faqih* dan Respon Para Ulama," *Aqidah-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah* 4, no. 2 (2018): 235–51, <https://doi.org/10.24252/aqidah.ta.v4i2.6499>; Ami Pratama, Ahmad Khaerul Kholidi, and Diyani Suci Novita Dewi, "Konsep Wilayahul Faqih dalam Sistem Pemerintahan Republik Islam Iran," *Jurnal Riset Intervensi Pendidikan (JRIP)* 3, no. 2 (2021): 88–98; Misri A. Muchsin, "Membangun Masyarakat Iran Modern di Bawah Naungan Wilayah Al-Faqih: Tinjauan Historis Transformasi Politik Pasca-Safawiyah," *Al-Ukhwah: Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 4, no. 2 (2025): 196–205, <https://doi.org/10.47498/jau.v4i2.6352>.

11 Yuliana Pradani et al., "Sejarah Revolusi Islam Iran 1979: Awal Mula Revolusi Hingga Dampak Revolusi Islam Iran," *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Nusantara* 7, no. 1 (2026): 305–29. See related research: Mehdi Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam From Muhammad to Khomeini* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1–127; Rasoul Namazi, "Ayatollah Khomeini: From Islamic Government to Sovereign State," *Iranian Studies* 52, no. 1–2 (2019): 111–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2018.1551054>; Ahmad Kholil et al., "Insights Beyond the Revolution of Iran: A Review of Moral and Philosophical Values in the Political Realm of Imam Ayatollah Khomeini," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya* 9, no. 2 (2024): 313–27, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v9i2.4940>; Vika Wafa Ilmi, Imam Ghazali Said, and Zainal Fanani, "Teodemokrasi dalam Konsepsi Negara Islam (Studi Komparasi Pemikiran Abu Al-A'la Maududi dan Ayatullah Khomeini)," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir dan Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 409–23; Wisnu Fachrudin Sumarno, "Sejarah Politik Republik Islam Iran Tahun 1905-1979," *Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 3, no. 2 (2020): 145–58, <https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2>; Muhammad Rais, "Sejarah

and others.<sup>12</sup> Based on these five patterns of study, the author sees that the term ‘*Malam Qadar*’ in Khumaynī’s Sufi view has not received attention from previous researchers. Thus, this study aims to explore how Khumaynī, with his ‘*irfānī*’ approach, interprets *laylah al-qadr* in Q.S. Al-Qadr [97], while also complementing previous studies on Khumaynī’s thought.

Based on this orientation, this paper formulates three research questions: (1) how Khumaynī interpreted each verse in Sūrah Al-Qadr and how he related it to the cosmological structure of *tanazzulāt ilābiyyah*; (2) what ontological and epistemological foundations support his interpretation, especially the concepts of *tajallī*, *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*, and the authority of *wilāyah* as the medium for the descent of “all matters”; and (3) how Khumaynī’s interpretation can be placed in the continuity of the classical Sufi exegetical tradition (Ibn ‘Arabī, Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Qaṣārī) as well as contemporary exegesis such as al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī and *The Study Quran*.<sup>13</sup> The main objective of this study is to systematically describe the construction of the meaning of *laylah al-qadr* according to Khumaynī, place it within the map of mystical interpretation, and assess its epistemological contribution to the modern Sufi interpretation tradition.

Methodologically, this study uses a qualitative-hermeneutic approach by examining primary texts of Khumaynī’s works related to exegesis and ‘*irfān*’ and comparing them with Sufi literature and classical exegesis. The analysis is conducted thematically, highlighting key ideas such as *tajallī*, *tanazzul al-malā’ikah*, *qurb ilā Allāh*, and the relationship between revelation and *wilāyah*. Thus, this study attempts to present a comprehensive reconstruction of the meaning of *laylah al-qadr* in Khumaynī’s perspective as a synthesis of philosophy, theology, and Sufism.<sup>14</sup>

## The Intellectual Transmission of Ayatullāh Khumaynī

The thoughts of Ayatullāh Ruḥollāh Khumaynī cannot be understood without

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Perkembangan Islam di Iran,” *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam* 10, no. 2 (2018): 273–88, <https://doi.org/10.32489/tasamuh.37>; A. Kemal Riza, “Menakar Ideologi Republik Islam Iran: Kontestasi Antara Ideologi dan Pragmatisme dalam Politik,” *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum dan Perundangan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2018): 279–301, <https://doi.org/10.15642/ad.2017.7.2.279-301>; Richard Cottam, “Inside Revolutionary Iran,” in *Iran’s Revolution: The Search for Consensus*, ed. R.K Ramazani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 3.

12 Burhanudien et al., “Sejarah, Revolusi Berdirinya Islam Iran Tahun 1979 Serta Peran Ulama Syi’ah dalam Politik Islam Iran,” *Jurnal Transformasi Pendidikan Modern* 7, no. 1 (2026): 197–218; See also: Ahmad Sodikin, “Pemikiran Sufisme Periode Awal dan Sufisme Individu,” *Proceeding of The 2nd Conference on Strengthening Islamic Studies in the Digital Era* 2, no. 1 (2022): 464–74.

13 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, vol. 7 (Tehran: Bunyād Ḥikmat, 1981), 211–14; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 20 (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-‘Ālami li al-Maṭbū‘at, 1991), 356–59; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Study Quran* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 2096–99.

14 ‘Abd al-Ḥamid Maḥmūd, *Al-Irfān al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1991), 233–38.

placing them in the intellectual network that has shaped the tradition of Iranian philosophy and *ʿirfān* since the 17th century. Khumaynī was the direct heir to *the ḥikmah mutaʿāliyah* of Mullā Ṣadrā, *the ʿirfān nazārī* of Ibn ʿArabī, and the methodology of post-*Uṣūlī* Shiite *uṣūl fiqh*. Traces of this intellectual transmission are evident in Khumaynī’s mastery of three main disciplines—*fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ḥikmah* (theosophical philosophy), and *ʿirfān* (gnosis)—which are integrated in his works and influence his interpretation of Qur’anic concepts, including *laylah al-qadr*.<sup>15</sup>

Khumaynī began his studies in Khomein and Arak, then reached the peak of his formation at Hauzah Qom in the 1920s–1930s, where he studied under several great scholars. In *fiqh* and *uṣūl*, his most important teacher was Ayatullah ʿAbd al-Karīm Ḥāʾirī Yazdī (d. 1937), founder of the modern Hawzah Qom, who gave Khumaynī a strict *uṣūlī* methodological foundation.<sup>16</sup> From this lineage, Khumaynī inherited an *uṣūlī* orientation that combined logical rationality with the authority of tradition. This characteristic would later influence his analytical but still *wilāyah*-based style of reading the Qur’an.<sup>17</sup>

In the tradition of *wisdom* and philosophy, the key figure who shaped Khumaynī’s metaphysical horizon was Ayatullāh Mirzā Muḥammadī ʿAlī Shāhābādī (d. 1950). Shāhābādī was an important commentator on the works of Ibn ʿArabī, especially *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, as well as a teacher of *ḥikmah mutaʿāliyah* who brought the philosophical legacy of Mullā Ṣadrā to Qom.<sup>18</sup> Khumaynī referred to Shāhābādī as *ustād-i ilāhī*, “divine teacher,” because from him he learned the theory of *tajallī*, the concept of *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*, the hierarchy of existence, and cosmic *tanazzulāt*—all of which formed the basic structure of his understanding of *laylah al-qadr* as an ontological

15 U Abdurrahman, “Metodologi Tafsir Falsafi dan Tafsir Sufi,” *ADLIYA: Jurnal Hukum dan Kemanusiaan* 9, no. 2 (2019): 245–68, <https://doi.org/10.15575/adliya.v9i1.6166>; Muhammad Ulil Abshor, “Epistemologi Irfani (Sebuah Tinjauan Kajian Tafsir Sufistik),” *At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur’an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2018): 249–64, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v3i2.649>.

16 ʿAbd al-Karīm Ḥāʾirī Yazdī, *Dirāsāt fī al-Uṣūl*, ed. Ḥ. Muṣṭafawī (Qom: Muʿassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1983), 44–46; KM. Ridho El-Razy et al., “Kota Qom Sebagai Pusat Pendidikan Madzhab Syi’ah: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya,” *El-Idare: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2023): 22–33, <https://doi.org/10.19109/elidare.v9i2.19110>.

17 Fatemeh Tabatabai, “Mystical Study of the Concept of ‘Nothing’ with Emphasis on the Views of Imam Khomeini,” *Pajoobeshnameh Erfan* 13, no. 26 (2022): 161–86, <https://doi.org/10.52547/pje.13.26.161>; Hamid Algar, “Response to Browsers: Marjaʿiyyah and Wilayah Al-Faqih,” *Journal of Shi’a Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2012): 47–48, <https://doi.org/10.1353/isl.2012.0024>; Saeful Anwar and Agus Sholahudin Shidiq, “Mengembalikan Fungsi Faqih dan Ulama dalam Pemikiran Wilayah-I Faqih Khomeini Sebagai Model Ulama Syi’ah Pasca Revolusi Iran,” *At-Tubfah* 10, no. 2 (2022): 101–9, <https://doi.org/10.32665/attuhfah.v10i2.656>; Hamid Mavani, “Khomeini’s Concept of Governance of the Jurisconsult (‘Wilayah al-Faqih’) Revisited: The Aftermath of Iran’s 2009 Presidential Election,” *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (2013): 207–28.

18 M. ʿAlī Shāhābādī, *Taʿliqāt ʿalā al-Fuṣūṣ* (Tehran: Markaz-i Būstān, 1971), 21–23.

event, not merely a historical one.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to Shāhābādī, Khumaynī also studied under Ayatullāh Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan Rafī‘ī Qazwīnī and Ayatullāh Jawādī Malikī Tabrīzī, both of whom were links between the Persian ‘*irfān*’ tradition and the metaphysical systems of Ṣadrian commentators such as Sabzawārī.<sup>20</sup> Through this chain, Khumaynī inherited a philosophical hermeneutics that allowed for the integration of Qur’anic texts with the metaphysical structure of existence. For example, the concepts of *wujūd muṭlaq*, *maqām al-jam‘*, and *wilāyah takwīnīyah* were not presented as speculative theories, but rather as a hermeneutic framework that gave meaning to the descent of revelation and human identity in the cosmos.<sup>21</sup>

Khumaynī’s intellectual transmission also included the traditions of *akhlāq* and practical spirituality, especially through his ethical works such as *Sharḥ Chihil Ḥadīth* and *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*. Here we see the influence of his spiritual lineage, Ṭabāṭabā‘ī and Malikī Tabrīzī, who emphasized the importance of spiritual training (*riyādāh nafsiyyah*), *takhallī-taḥallī*, and *fanā’ fi al-tawḥīd* as prerequisites for understanding the reality of *laylah al-qadr* in an existential sense.<sup>22</sup> In Khumaynī’s view, anyone who has not undergone *tazkiyat al-nafs* cannot possibly understand “the descent of angels and the Spirit” as an inner reality, because the revelation of the essence of *laylah al-qadr* requires purity of the mirror of the soul.<sup>23</sup>

This entire intellectual transmission culminates in the integration of three major traditions: (1) *Uṣūlī* rationality, (2) Ṣadrian metaphysics, and (3) Ibn ‘Arabīan spirituality. Therefore, when Khumaynī interpreted Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5, he did not read it in a purely textual interpretive framework but saw *laylah al-qadr* as the most perfect *tajallī* of *Nūr Muḥammadī*. In the Ṣadrian tradition, *Nūr Muḥammadī* is the first form of existence, *al-ṣādir al-awwal*, and becomes the intermediary of all emanations. This explains why Khumaynī understood *tanazzul al-malā’ikah wa al-rūḥ* as an ontological process that occurs every year (and every moment at an inner level), and why ‘*al-qadr*’ is understood as the determination of the level of existence in the cosmos and in the human soul.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Khumaynī’s intellectual transmission is not merely a biographical background, but the foundation that determines the hermeneutical structure of *laylah al-qadr*. Through this path, Khumaynī’s interpretation can be

19 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah Ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 55–58.

20 Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Manzūmah*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥasan-zādah (Qom: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1996), 89–91.

21 Khoirul Imam, “Pemikiran Imam Khomeini Tentang Ayat-Ayat Wilayah Al-Faqih” (Skripsi, Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2008), 1–180, <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/2516/>; Gholam Hossein Khodagoo and Soosan Safaverd, “A Comparative Study of the Discourse of the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution with Emphasis on the Opinions of Mirza Naeini and Imam Khomeini,” *Political Sociology Research* 5, no. 7 (2022): 280–96, <https://doi.org/10.30510/PSI.2022.246841.1252>.

22 Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Chihil Ḥadīth* (Tehran: Mu’assasah Tanzīm wa Nashr Āthār, 1992), 101–4.

23 Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt* (Qom: Nashr al-Islāmī, 2007), 132–34.

24 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 7:203–7.

placed in an intellectual historical line connecting Ibn ‘Arabī, Ṣadrā, Sabzawārī, Shāhābādī, and Khumaynī, a line that makes *tajallī*, *tanazzul*, and *wilāyah* the keys to understanding the relationship between revelation and the cosmos. This transmission also enabled Khumaynī to present a new reading of Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5 as a unified mystical cosmology that is alive, continuous, and open to every spiritual seeker.

### The Hermeneutics of Ayatullāh Khumaynī

From the outset, Khumaynī realized that interpreting the Qur’an was a very difficult task. According to him, this task had essentially been carried out by early generations of scholars who, throughout Islamic history, had produced various works of interpretation. However, Khumaynī argued that each of these scholars essentially only highlighted one aspect of the Qur’an that was in line with their field of expertise. The Qur’an cannot be interpreted comprehensively by a single interpreter, because human ability is, in fact, limited to understanding only some of the dimensions of the contents of the holy book.

Thus, no interpretation is truly final and covers all aspects of the Qur’an. Every work of interpretation is always influenced by the scientific background, methodological tendencies, and epistemological framework of its interpreter. This can be seen, for example, in the interpretations of figures such as Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, Ṭaṭṭāwī Jawharī, and Sayyid Qutb.<sup>25</sup> In addition, differences in political attitudes, religious orientations, and ideologies that developed among interpreters enriched and broadened the diversity of interpretations of the Qur’anic text.<sup>26</sup>

In line with this view, when he began reading the Qur’an, Khumaynī emphasized that he was not attempting to compile a complete and systematic interpretation. He also did not claim that his interpretation was the only correct understanding of the sacred text. This open attitude was in line with the teachings of the Shia tradition, which asserted that a truly comprehensive and authoritative interpretation of the Qur’an was, in essence, only possessed by the infallible imams from among the twelve imams. Thus, Khumaynī places various interpretations of the Qur’an within an inclusive framework: each interpretation is seen as a partial contribution that complements the Qur’an’s treasury of understanding, not as a claim to singular truth that precludes other meanings.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, the assumption that the Qur’an can be understood by humans also implies that every form of understanding and interpretation of it always depends on the intellectual capacity and breadth of knowledge of the interpreter. In other words, the depth of meaning that a person can grasp is largely determined by the

25 Markaz Nūn li al-Ta’lif wa a-Tarjamah, *Al-Qur’ān fī Kalāmi Imām al-Khumaynī* (Beirut: Jam’iyyat al-Ma’arif al-Islāmiyah al-Thaqāfiyah, 2009), 29.

26 Mun’im Sirry, *Rekonstruksi Islam Historis: Pergumulan Kesarjanaan Mutakhir* (Yogyakarta: Suka Press, 2021), 138.

27 Khomeini, *Rahasia Basmalah: Lebih Dekat Dengan Allah Melalui Asma-Nya*, trans. Zulfahmi Andri (Jakarta: Hikmah, 2007), xviii.

limits of their thinking abilities. However, this effort does not necessarily guarantee a complete understanding of the fundamental meaning and purpose of the Qur'an. This is because there is a fundamental gap between human limitations and the breadth of meaning of revelation. Thus, a fundamental question arises: how can humans, with their limitations, fully grasp the essence of something unlimited, such as the Qur'an?

According to Khumaynī, the breadth and boundlessness of the Qur'an's content emphasize the limitations of humans in comprehending its essence in its entirety. The nature of the Qur'an, which transcends the limits of human understanding, shows that human ability to understand it is always limited and partial.<sup>28</sup> According to Khumaynī, human reason is fundamentally incapable of grasping the deepest truths and secrets of the Qur'an, except for those who have attained the level of gnosis. However, even the understanding gained by these Gnostics is often beyond the reach of ordinary human reason. Therefore, Khumaynī emphasized the importance of spiritual efforts to approach the deepest meaning of the Qur'an, such as through *mujāhadah*, purification of the soul and heart, and deep contemplation of the text. The process of reading the Qur'an, according to him, should not stop at the physical dimension alone, but needs to be done repeatedly and contemplatively to reveal deeper layers of meaning. He also believed that the Qur'an has various inner dimensions—often referred to as seven or even seventy layers—whose full knowledge belongs to God and can only be understood by those who have deep knowledge, namely the *rāsikhūn fi al-‘ilm*.<sup>29</sup> The paradigm of multiple layers of meaning in the text of the Qur'an implies that since the text was created, it has been open to interpretation according to the level of understanding, intellect, and even spirituality of the interpreter.

The formation of meaning that stems from efforts to uncover the depths of the Qur'an's meaning is not only achieved through a process of spiritual purification related to the attainment of a certain spiritual level—as reflected in the style of Sufi *ishārī* interpretation pioneered by al-Tustarī—but can also be obtained through a philosophical approach. This latter approach is known as Sufi *naẓarī* exegesis, which developed in the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought.<sup>30</sup> Within the framework of philosophical knowledge, the depth of meaning and content of the Qur'an is not understood as a derivative of previously developed philosophical traditions, particularly Greek philosophy. This is due to the fundamental difference between divine knowledge and human knowledge, where the former has a much higher position and transcends human intellectual achievements. Nevertheless, Khumaynī assessed that among existing philosophical works, the most profound and valuable

28 Muhammad Reza Irsyadi Nia, *Antara Filsafat dan Penafsiran Teks-teks Agama: Pengaruh dan Relasinya dalam Pemikiran Imam Khomeini*, trans. Iwan Setiawan (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2012), 40.

29 Nia, *Antara Filsafat dan Penafsiran Teks-teks Agama*, 29.

30 For further details, see: Subi Nur Isnaini and Fauzan Adim, “Dialektika Zāhir Bāṭin dan Produksi Makna Ishārī dalam Tafsir Al-Baḥr Al-Madīd,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 11, no. 1 (2021): 30–31.

ideas about divinity can be found in a work known as Plato's *Theologia*.<sup>31</sup>

However, when compared to the contents of the Qur'an, clear differences can still be found. In this context, it is necessary to emphasize the fundamental differences between Greek philosophy, Islamic philosophy, and knowledge derived from the Qur'an. Greek philosophy does not essentially contain dimensions that reflect the characteristics of Islamic philosophy. Meanwhile, Islamic philosophy—especially in the tradition of *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*—is considered to have a stronger affinity with the depth of meaning contained in the Qur'an. However, the view that equates the divine dimension in Islamic philosophy with Greek philosophy is not entirely accurate. According to Khumaynī, Muslim philosophers who rely solely on the framework of Greek philosophy do not always succeed in achieving an adequate understanding in the field of *makrifat rubūbiyyah*. Therefore, he emphasized that the pinnacle of understanding the depth of the meaning of the Qur'an can ultimately only be achieved by the holy Ahl al-Bayt, who are considered to have reached the true meaning of the revelation.<sup>32</sup>

### Methodology, Style, and Epistemological Foundations of Ayatollāh Khumaynī's Interpretation

Ayatollāh Ruḥollāh Khumaynī's methodology of interpretation lies at the intersection of three major disciplines: *fiqh uṣūlī*, *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*, and *'irfān naẓarī-‘amali*. These three disciplines do not work separately but form a unique hermeneutical framework that combines rational precision, ontological structure of existence, and spiritual experience. Thus, Khumaynī's style of interpretation cannot be classified solely as *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*, *tafsīr 'irfānī*, or *tafsīr falsafī*; rather, it is a synthesis that represents contemporary Iranian theosophy in the Shiite tradition.

Within Khumaynī's epistemological framework, there are three main sources of knowledge: revelation (the Qur'an and the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt), reason (*uṣūlī* and *falsafī* rationality), and *kashf* (spiritual revelation). However, the three have a hierarchy: revelation is the most authoritative source, while reason and *kashf* serve as ways to uncover the deeper meanings of revelation.<sup>33</sup> Khumaynī rejected the free use of *kashf* without a sharia foundation; therefore, he always emphasized that inner interpretation must be in harmony with the *ẓāhir* sharia and the principle of *tawḥīd*. In *Sharḥ Du'ā' al-Saḥar*, he asserted that “any *kashf* that contradicts the Qur'an is an illusion and a whisper of the soul.”<sup>34</sup> From this, Khumaynī's esotericism is not detached from the legal framework; he integrates spiritual experience with rational-philosophical methodology and sacred texts.

Khumaynī's interpretation is multi-layered (*marātibī*), following the structure of existence in *ḥikmah muta'āliyah* cosmology. According to him, every verse of the Qur'an has four levels of meaning, namely *ẓāhir* (literal-normative meaning);

31 Nia, *Antara Filsafat dan Penaḥsiran Teks-teks Agama*, 29.

32 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 107–8.

33 Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār* (Tehran: Intishārāt Islāmīyyah, 1945), 41–43.

34 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du'ā' al-Saḥar*, 12–15.

*bāṭin* (spiritual meaning); *bāṭin al-bāṭin* (metaphysical meaning); *ḥaqīqah* (essential meaning related to *tajallī al-Ḥaqq*).<sup>35</sup> The interpretation of Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5, for example, does not stop at the historical understanding of the revelation of the Qur'an, but enters the ontological meaning of *tanazzul* as “the descent of levels of existence” and *al-rūḥ* as the reality of Muḥammadiyah. This approach follows Ibn 'Arabī's model in *Fuṣūṣ* but is modulated by Ṣadrā's rationality regarding *tashkīk al-wujūd*.

Khumaynī's style of interpretation can be classified as *tafsīr 'irfānī-falsafī*, namely an interpretation that combines mystical hermeneutics and metaphysics of existence. Its characteristics include, first, the dominance of 'irfan concepts. In this case, *tajallī*, *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *wilāyah*, *maqām al-jam'*, *tanazzul al-malā'ikah*, and *Nūr Muḥammadī* are the main tools in interpreting Qur'anic verses.<sup>36</sup> In the context of Surūh Al-Qadr, these concepts explain how *qadar* is understood as “the determination of the level of existence”, not merely normative destiny. *Second*, Ṣadrīan ontology as Khumaynī's interpretive framework combines Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of *wujūd* with Ibn 'Arabī's structure of *tanazzul*. Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 4 (*tanazzalu al-malā'ikah wa al-rūḥ*) is interpreted as a hierarchical manifestation of existence, not the physical descent of angels.<sup>37</sup>

*Third*, the centrality of the *wilāyah*. Unlike many Sunni exegetes, Khumaynī's interpretation places *the wilāyah* as the cosmic medium through which revelation and destiny descend. He follows the Shi'ite tradition that connects Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 4 with Q.S. Ad-Dukhān [44]: 4 and the concept that “all matters” descend through the *Walī Allāh*, namely the *imām* of the age.<sup>38</sup> *Fourth*, critical of literal and historical interpretations. Khumaynī viewed literal interpretation as a valid but lowest level. In *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah*, he criticized exegetes who limited the meaning of verses to historical aspects without considering the inner cosmological structure of the Qur'an.<sup>39</sup>

### **Tawḥīd-Centered Exegesis**

Another prominent feature is that Khumaynī's entire reading revolves around tawḥīd. Any verse must be interpreted by returning it to the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), the unity of divine action, and the unity of manifestation. Therefore, *laylah al-qadr* is understood as one of the highest forms of *tajallī* of *tawḥīd*. The descent of angels and the *rūḥ* is not merely a cosmic procedure, but a tawḥīd event that brings heaven and earth together at a single existential point. This style follows the Ṣadrīan tradition, which places tawḥīd as the basis of cosmology

35 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 48–51.

36 Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 113–18.

37 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 7:201-204; Alexander Knysh, “Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy,” *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 4 (1992): 631–53.

38 Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 20:356–57.

39 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 77–79.

and epistemology.<sup>40</sup>

Like many Shiite thinkers, especially al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Khumaynī made *wilāyah* an epistemological prerequisite for understanding the inner meaning of the Qur'an. According to him, *wilāyah* is the spiritual context that enables a *sālik* to receive *bāṭin* meanings through *tazkiyat al-nafs*.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the Sufi experience is not merely an additional method, but an organic part of the revelation of the meanings of the Qur'an. This also explains why *laylah al-qadr* is understood as a cosmic reality that “descends” through the *walī* of Allah. On the practical side, Khumaynī believed that a mufassir cannot understand verses about light, *tajallī*, or the night of glory if he has not experienced *tabdhīb al-nafs*. This explanation appears repeatedly in ethical works such as *Sharḥ Chihil Ḥadīth* and *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, Khumaynī's methodology of interpretation is rooted in the purification of the soul, based on existential philosophy, and perfected through the experience of *'irfān*. From this, his style of interpretation becomes unique in the context of modern Iran: not merely textual commentary, but *spiritual hermeneutics* that combines theory and praxis.

### The Meaning of *Laylah al-Qadr* in the Perspective of Ayatullāh Khumaynī

Khumaynī's interpretation of Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5 stands out because of two complementary parallel characteristics: (a) the metaphysical-ontological dimension, which places *laylah al-qadr* as the arena of *tajallī* (revelation) of the highest reality; and (b) the practical-spiritual dimension, which requires a process of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) to experience the meaning of the night, rather than merely knowing it informatively.<sup>43</sup> Both of these characteristics distinguish Khumaynī's interpretation from traditional interpretations, which tend to emphasize the *fadā'il* ritual, while also placing it in the continuum of the *'irfān-Ṣadrian* tradition that links revelation to the hierarchical order of existence.<sup>44</sup>

Within the framework of *'irfān falsafī* inherited by Khumaynī from Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā, the term *al-qadr* is understood not merely as “destiny” in a legal-theological sense, but as the granting of a degree of existence (*taqdīr wujūdī*), that is, the process of determining *the degree of existence* of an entity in the cosmic chain. This concept lies at the heart of Ṣadrian ontology regarding *tashkīk al-wujūd*—the theory that existence is hierarchical and has varying intensities—and Khumaynī adopted it directly when interpreting Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5.<sup>45</sup>

40 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1999), 14–18.

41 Jawādī Malikī Tabrizī, *Al-Murāqibāt* (Qom: Dār al-Raḥmah, 1999), 63–65.

42 Khumaynī, *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*, 102–6.

43 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du'a' al-Saḥar*, 52–55; Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah ilā al-Khilāfab wa al-Wilāyah*, 55–59; Khumaynī, *Sirr al-Ṣalāt*, 78–82.

44 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), 14–20.

45 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*, 1:14–20

Through this perspective, *laylah al-qadr* is not only the historical moment of the revelation of the Qur'an, but also a 'cosmic axis' (*mihwar kawni*) that structures the pattern of emanation between 'alam al-amr (the realm of command, the immaterial realm) and 'alam al-khalq (the realm of creation). According to Khumaynī, "qadr" on that night is the moment of determining the degree of existential light that emanates from the essence of Muḥammad (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyah*) to all levels of existence.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, *laylah al-qadr* is the point of condensation of *tajallī*: a cosmic moment when *al-nūr al-a'zam* (the Supreme Light) 'presses' into lower levels so that the structure of the phenomenal world acquires its form, quantity, limits, and existential potential. This view is in line with Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *taqaddur al-ashyā'*, namely that everything receives its "determination of measure" in the rhythm of continuous revelation.<sup>47</sup>

In many *fiqh* and theological interpretations, *qadr* is understood as "God's decree on all things," but Khumaynī expands it to include: *qadr* as the architecture of existence (ontological *design*), *qadr* as the structure of emanation (hierarchical *flow* from origin to phenomenon), *qadr* as the intensity of light that measures how far reality can receive *tajallī*.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, according to Khumaynī, *laylah al-qadr* is closer to a metaphysical event of *wujūd* than a 'special night' in a purely *devotional* sense. It is the night when the patterns of existence are renewed, rearranged, modulated, and given new strength.<sup>49</sup> This is like Mullā Ṣadrā's view in *Tafsīr Sūrah al-Qadr*, which states that 'qadr' means *taqyīd al-wujūd*, namely the limitation/determination of a certain form of existence from the infinite Divine emanation. Khumaynī implicitly quotes this framework in *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah*, especially when he states that Muḥammadiyah reality is the 'first *tajallī*' through which all degrees are determined.<sup>50</sup>

### Interpretation of the Verse *Innā Anzalnāhu fī Laylah al-Qadr*

Khumaynī understands '*innā anzalnāhu fī laylah al-qadr*' as the descent of the ontological entity of the Qur'an from the realm of command to the realm of creation—not merely the descent of the text in Arabic. In the '*irfānī*' tradition, the Qur'an is a "written manifestation" (*tajallī kitābī*) that has its roots in *al-kitāb al-maknūn* (Q.S. Al-Wāqī'ah [56]: 78). Thus, on the Night of Power, a layered movement occurs: 1) *tanazzul dhātī*, the emanation of the essence of the Qur'an from *al-'ilm al-ilāhī*; 2) *tanazzul nūrānī*, the Qur'an as light (*nūr*) divided into levels of existence; 3) *tanazzul lafẓī*, verbal manifestation that can be captured by humans through letters and sounds.<sup>51</sup> Khumaynī emphasized that humans only

46 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 55–59.

47 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, 112–16.

48 William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 88–93.

49 Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 201–4.

50 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 7:201–7.

51 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du 'a' al-Saḥar*, 52–55.

witness the third level, but the Night of Power is when the first and second levels “approach” the world, making that night a space where cosmic boundaries thin, and the flow of existence flows more rapidly into the phenomenal realm.<sup>52</sup>

An important element of Khumaynī’s interpretation is that the essence of *Muḥammadiyah* is the ontological axis of all *tajallī*, and *laylah al-qadr* is the moment when that essence *determines the form of all things* through the relationship between *amr and khalq*. This view is consistent with two doctrines. For example, Ibn ‘Arabī proposes *al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyyah* as the “first intellect” or the first manifestation of *al-Ḥaqq*.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Mullā Ṣadrā refers to the reality of Muḥammad as *‘ta’ayyun awwal’* in the hierarchy of existence.<sup>54</sup> Khumaynī follows both of these currents when he says that *laylah al-qadr* is an ontological event of light flowing through the *Muḥammadī* path, enabling humans in its orbit to receive an abundance of light according to their capacity (*qābiliyyah*).<sup>55</sup>

Within the framework of Khumaynī’s *‘irfānī* hermeneutics, the concept of *tajallī*—the revelation of divine reality into levels of existence—becomes the main foundation for reading Sūrah al-Qadr. The verse *innā anzalnāhu fī laylah al-qadr* is understood not merely as a historical event of revelation to the Prophet, but as an ontological process that continuously occurs in the structure of the cosmos and the human soul. Khumaynī viewed the “descent” of the Qur’an as a form of *tajallī Nūr Muḥammadī*, the primordial light that is the medium for all divine manifestations in the created world.<sup>56</sup>

Khumaynī rejected the reduction of the Qur’an to merely a written text (*kalam lafẓī*). He asserted that the Qur’an in its deepest essence is an existential light (*nūr wujūdī*) that exists at the level of *‘ālam al-amr* before descending to *‘ālam al-mulk* in the form of words and letters.<sup>57</sup> This is in line with the illuminative (*ishrāqī*) philosophical tradition of Suhrawardī and the metaphysics of wujūd of Mullā Ṣadrā, both of which place ‘light’ as the basic principle of ontology. Khumaynī, following these thinkers, interprets revelation as the movement of light from the highest level of reality to the phenomenal realm through a series of *tajallīyāt*. Thus, *anzalnāhu* does not mean “to reveal the text,” but “to reveal the light.” The text is the lowest form of revelation; the ontological intention of revelation remains in the dimension of light. Therefore, only those who are spiritually prepared can receive this *tajallī*.

In Shiite *‘irfānī* cosmology, Khumaynī states that *Nūr Muḥammadī* is the first entity (*sādir awwal*) that reflects the totality of God’s names and attributes.<sup>58</sup> The

52 Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *The Secret of Prayer* (Qom: Nashr Āthār, 2000), 78–82.

53 ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, 2:45–49.

54 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 78–88.

55 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Chihil Ḥadīth*, 101–104.

56 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 112–15.

57 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba‘ab*, vol. 6 (Tehran: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1999), 48–53.

58 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 52–60.

revelation that descended on the night of *qadr* was not something disconnected from this primordial reality; it reflected that light. Thus, the structure of the night of *Qadr* cannot be separated from the ontological structure of *nūr* itself. *Nūr Muḥammadī* functions as a “cosmic lens” through which revelation flows from the levels of divinity (*lāhūt-jabarūt*) to the human spiritual level. This is why, according to Khumaynī, understanding the Qur’an requires an inner connection with this source of light, not just linguistic ability or *fiqh* analysis. Khumaynī, like al-Qāshānī, Ibn ‘Arabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, asserts that true knowledge of the Night of Power can only be obtained through *kashf*, *shubūd*, and the attainment of spiritual *maqāmāt*.<sup>59</sup> Rational reasoning (*burhān*) and the transmission of traditions (*akhbār*) can lead a person to an intellectual conception of that night, but not to the revelation of its reality. This refers to Khumaynī’s distinction between *ḥuṣūlī* knowledge (conceptual knowledge) and *ḥuḍūrī* knowledge (existential knowledge of presence).

### Interpretation of the Verse about the Angels’ Humility

The Night of Power can only be “recognized” by those who have actualized their readiness for its manifestation, and this kind of knowledge is *tajallī cilvī*, that is, a revelation that is given, not achieved through discursive effort. Khumaynī interprets *tanazzul al-malā’ikah wa al-rūḥ* as a descent of light—not merely a visit by metaphysical entities in historical space-time.<sup>60</sup> In his view, angels are forms of light (*akliā*), that is, determining forces that bring the structure of being into the phenomenal realm. The presence of the “spirit” on the night of *qadr*, which, according to some Shiite exegetes, is identical to *al-rūḥ al-a’zam*, is the peak of light intensity that arranges the entire cosmic destiny in one “night.” Therefore, the night of *qadr* is not only a historical moment, but a “cosmic axis of light” that regulates the flow of existence every year. The descent of destiny is not the writing of a list of events, but rather an ontological arrangement of the flow of events: how actual existence will correspond to the levels of light that descend.

The verse *‘tanazzalu al-malā’ikah wa al-rūḥ fihā’* (Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 4) became one of the centers of Khumaynī’s hermeneutics in understanding the cosmic structure of the Night of Power. Unlike the exoteric reading, which interprets angels as winged creatures that descend spatially to earth on a certain night, Khumaynī interprets it as *tanazzul anwār*, namely the descent of levels of existential light into the structure of nature. Angels and spirits in this context are not physical entities, but rather *modi wujūdī*, forms of light existence that carry commands (*amr*), wisdom, and ontological structuring of reality.<sup>61</sup> Khumaynī followed this tradition and interpreted angels as “ontological instruments” that regulate the flow of existence into the world of *al-khalq*.

Thus, *tanazzul* is not a spatial movement but a “gradualization of light

59 Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Ḥidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 71–74; Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 130–35.

60 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 124–28.

61 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 122–28.

intensity” from *the realm of amr* to the realm of *mulk*. Each angel has a specific cosmic function: giver of form, organizer of sustenance, regulator of inspiration, and supervisor of entities. On the night of *qadr*, all of *these quwwāt nūrāniyyah*—in Khumaynī’s words, *jami’ al-anwār*—descend and crystallize the order of the year.<sup>62</sup> In this framework, angels are structures, not figures. The descent of angels is an arrangement, not a movement. Khumaynī refers to *al-rūḥ* in Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 4 as a light entity higher than angels, in line with the Shiite interpretation that *al-rūḥ* is *al-rūḥ al-‘aẓam*, the highest principle of cosmic consciousness, which is also associated with *Nūr Muḥammadi* or Jibrīl in its inner form.<sup>63</sup>

While angels are manifestations, *al-rūḥ* is a universal manifestation—it brings the entire structure of God’s command to the phenomenal realm. Therefore, Khumaynī stated that “what descended on the night of *qadr* was the cosmic pattern of revelation itself, not just the beings who conveyed it.” This is also in line with Ṣadriān’s *irfān* expression that *al-rūḥ* is *al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*, namely *the cosmic intellectus* agents that actualize forms of knowledge and existence in the universe.<sup>64</sup> Khumaynī emphasized that a literal reading—which imagines a physical being descending every year—fails to understand the ontological structure of the Qur’an. The descent of angels and spirits cannot be separated from three conditions. *First*, the hierarchy of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), namely that every descent is a change in the intensity of existence. *Second*, *nuzūl al-amr*, namely that God’s command does not “move” but *becomes actual* at a lower level of existence. *Third*, *tajallī al-asmā’*, meaning that what descends is the manifestation of God’s names, not anthropomorphic figures. From this perspective, the verse is not a report of a physical event, but a description of the ontological dynamics between the world of *amr* (decree) and the world of *khalq* (creation).

### ***Laylah al-Qadr* as a Moment of *Tajallī* Compression (*Cosmic Compression*)**

To explain why that night is “better than a thousand months”, Khumaynī introduced the idea of *al-intibāq al-wujūdī*—the compression of existence. On the night of *Qadr*, several situations occur, such as the condensation of light intensity, the transfer of the structure of destiny into actual form, and the separation (*furqān*) between the potential for existence that will appear and that which will not. In Khumaynī’s interpretation, a thousand months is not a literal number but a symbol of the comparison between chronological time and ontological time. The Night of Power is an event in which the cosmos experiences “meaningful acceleration”, so that one night contains an existential structure that is hundreds of times greater than the usual temporal duration.<sup>65</sup> In other words: a thousand

62 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 134–38.

63 Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, 20:337–40; Shiite narration about *al-rūḥ* as an entity above angels.

64 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah*, vol. 4 (Tehran: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1999), 275–80.

65 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 131–34.

months is a quantity of time; *Qadr* is a quality of existence. The former moves linearly, the latter intentionally. Therefore, the Night of Power is *qualitative time*, not *quantitative time*.

For Khumaynī, the cosmological interpretation of *laylah al-qadr* cannot be separated from the inner structure of human beings. *‘Irfānī*’s interpretation always works with the logic of *al-insān ‘ālam ṣaghīr wa al-‘ālam insān kabīr*—human beings are small cosmoses, and the cosmos is a great human being. Thus, what happens in nature also happens in the structure of the soul: *laylah al-qadr* “outside” has an “inner counterpart” in the purified human *heart (qalb)*.<sup>66</sup> Khumaynī quotes the *‘irfān* tradition of Ibn ‘Arabī that the Qur’an has a *nūrānī* form, and it is this form that “descends” upon the saints and *sālik*.<sup>67</sup> In other words, every human being has the potential to experience *Qadr* to the extent that their heart is capable of receiving the intensity of that light.

### The Night of *Qadr* as a Moment of Existential Awareness

Khumaynī interprets the night of *Qadr* not merely as a temporal event, but as a *moment of rupture*, a moment when the veil between the realm of *malakūt* and the world of *shabādhah* is lifted. On an anthropological level, *laylah al-qadr* is the peak of inner revelation (*kashf*), or the opening of the deepest recesses of consciousness, and the entry of humans into the structure of God’s command (*‘ālam al-amr*). This is why Khumaynī emphasized that *laylah al-qadr* is a “night of existential transformation”, not just a long ritual. This transformation can occur at any time if a person’s inner structure is ready. Thus, *laylah al-qadr* is an ontological phenomenon, not merely a chronological one.<sup>68</sup>

Khumaynī emphasized that only souls that have undergone *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification from base traits) can become vessels for *tajallī* on the night of *qadr*. *Sālik* must empty *the qalb* of worldly attachments (*takhlīyah*) and adorn it with divine attributes (*taḥlīyah*). In addition to presenting inner presence (*taḥaqquq bi al-ḥudūr*). Only then can the light of the night of *qadr* “descend” into the self. According to Khumaynī, this descent is parallel to the ascending and descending pattern of angels: in the soul, angels are symbols of the power of knowledge and spiritual intuition that organize inner experiences.<sup>69</sup> Khumaynī rejected the view that limited the night of *qadr* to one night of the Hijri calendar. He emphasized that the night is *khālid* (eternal), *mustamirr* (continuous), *mutajaddid* (repeated in an inner context), *muta‘allaq bi al-maqām* (dependent on one’s spiritual level).

A *sālik* who has reached a certain maqām can experience *his own laylah al-qadr* repeatedly throughout his life, because he has entered the inner dimension of

66 Khumaynī, *Sirr al-Ṣalāt*, 212–16; See also, Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 147–50.

67 Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 288–90.

68 Khumaynī, *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, 139–42.

69 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta‘aliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah*, vol. 6 (Tehran: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1999), 75–78; Khumaynī integrates this in Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah ilā al-Kh-ilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 173–76.

reality where the light of God continues to manifest.<sup>70</sup> It is within this framework that nightly worship during Ramadan—*dhikr*, *munājat*, *tilāwah*, the *Kumayl* prayer, or *a‘māl layālī al-qadr*—is understood by Khumaynī as an existential exercise, not a mechanistic ritual. These acts of worship aim to prepare the inner vessel to receive that light, not merely to increase “quantitative rewards.” By making the soul the site of *layālī al-qadr*, Khumaynī affirms micro-macro unity, namely ‘outside’, where angels and spirits descend as cosmic forces that order the world, and ‘inside’, where angels and spirits are present as inspiration, depth of meaning, and light that orders the inner structure. The cosmos and the soul are thus not separate but rather reflect one another. The Night of Power within oneself reflects the Night of Power in the universe.

## Conclusion

Ayatullāh Ruḥollāh Khumaynī’s reading of Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 1–5 shows that *laylah al-qadr* is not merely an annual ritual phenomenon or a historical moment of the revelation of the Qur’an, but rather an ontological, cosmological, and anthropological event that reveals the deepest structure of reality. Within the framework of *‘irfān falsafī* rooted in Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā, Khumaynī understands the term *qadr* not as legalistic destiny, but as “determination of the degree of existence”—that is, the moment when the intensity of divine light flows from *‘ālam al-amr* to *‘ālam al-khalq* and structures various levels of existence. For Khumaynī, the revelation of the Qur’an, described as *anzalnāhu*, is the most perfect form of *tajallī* (divine manifestation). The Qur’an is not merely a text, but an existential manifestation of *Nūr Muḥammadī*, the source of all cosmic light. In this interpretation, revelation is read as a continuous phenomenon (*mustamirr*), not limited to a historical moment. Therefore, *laylah al-qadr* is a recurring cosmic point, where all angels and *al-rūḥ* “descend” not because they move physically, but because they transform into levels of light that reinforce the order of nature. Within the framework of Mullā Ṣadrā, this is in line with the doctrines of *tashkīk al-wujūd* and *tanazzul al-kamālāt*, in which what descends is the intensity of existence and not concrete entities.

This reading produces new hermeneutics for Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]: 4: *tanazzalu al-malā’ikah wa al-rūḥ fihā* is understood as *tanazzul anwār*—the descent of the structure of light that brings knowledge, wisdom, and the form of all things. This explains why one night can be “better than a thousand months”: because it is an existential compression, not merely a temporal duration. The most important dimension of Khumaynī’s interpretation is his spiritual anthropology. *Laylah al-qadr*, which occurs in the cosmos, has a direct counterpart in humans. The *qalb* is *maḥall al-tajallī*, the place where the light of revelation descends upon a *sālik* who has undergone *tazkiyah*. Thus, every human being who reaches a certain *maqām* can experience their own “Night of Qadr”—an inner transformation that opens a space for encounter between humans and the structure of God’s command. In

70 Khumaynī, *Miṣbah al-Hidāyah ilā al-Khilāfah wa al-Wilāyah*, 88–93.

this sense, *laylah al-qadr* is eternal (*khālid*), recurring (*mutajaddid*), and not bound by the astronomical calendar; it is an existential experience that unites the microcosm and the macrocosm.

From the overall construction of his thinking, it can be concluded that Khumaynī's interpretation of Q.S. Al-Qadr [97]:1–5 presents a strong synthesis between Qur'anic cosmology, Ṣadrian philosophy of existence, and *'irfānī* experience. His reading shows that *laylah al-qadr* not only affirms the glory of revelation but also opens the horizon for humans—through a spiritual journey—to become the locus *tajallī* of the Divine. This approach contributes significantly to the study of modern Sufi exegesis, particularly in connecting the theology of *wilāyah*, metaphysics of existence, and the ethics of purification of the soul as a hermeneutic unity. Thus, this article shows that Khumaynī's interpretation not only expands the meaning of *laylah al-qadr* but also returns these verses to the ontological and spiritual depths hidden in the Qur'anic text. This interpretation shows how the Qur'an can be read as a light that orders the universe and simultaneously orders the soul, and how *laylah al-qadr* becomes a bridge between the cosmos and humanity—between divine manifestation and the inner experience of a *sālik*.

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