

Sacred Space and Its Meaning
Interreligious Symposium, November 14, 2006

Texts Selected by Rabbi Alan Shavit-Lonstein

Exodus 20:4 You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.

Gen. 28:10-16 Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran. He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and it stop reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. And the LORD was standing beside him and He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is present in this place, and I did not know it!"

Psalm 137:1-6

By the rivers of Babylon,
there we sat,
sat and wept,
as we thought of Zion.
There on the poplars
we hung up our lyres,
for our captors asked us there for songs,
our tormentors, for amusement,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
How can we sing a song of the LORD
on alien soil?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither;
let my tongue stick to my palate
if I cease to think of you,
if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory
even at my happiest hour.

Time and Space

Technical civilization is man's [sic] conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main

objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence.

(The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel. From the Prologue.)

Not Enough Space for Me

In his wanderings, the Baal Shem Tov entered a town, and it was time for Maariv - the evening service. So he and his disciples went to the local synagogue. As they were about to enter the doors of the sanctuary, the Baal Shem Tov stopped cold. His students were anxious, and said, "Rabbi, it's time to pray! Let's go in!" "I can't!" he replied. "For the room is full and there is no space for me." Well, his students stuck their heads in the door and, like most sanctuaries when it isn't a special occasion, there were plenty of empty seats. "What are you talking about, Rabbi? There are plenty of seats in there!" they implored the Baal Shem. "You do not understand," he responded. "In this sanctuary, the people who pray here do not open their hearts to God. They just utter the words, and the words, being empty words, have no wings with which to carry them to heaven. Therefore, they fall to the floor. And this room is filled with empty words, from wall to wall, from floor to ceiling. And because of that, there is not space left here for me."

(Not Enough Space for Me is a traditional story, taken from the sermon Judaism Beyond The Holy Days, delivered by Rabbi Henry Jay Karp)

Wandering Child

There is a wonderful Chasidic story about the child of a rabbi who used to wander in the woods. At first his father let him wander, but over time he became concerned. The woods were dangerous. The father did not know what lurked there.

He decided to discuss the matter with his child. One day he took him aside and said, "You know, I have noticed that each day you walk into the woods. I wonder, why do you go there?"

The boy said to his father, "I go there to find God." "That is a very good thing," the father replied gently. "I am glad you are searching for God. But, my child, don't you know that God is the same everywhere?" "Yes," the boy answered, "But I'm not."

Texts selected by Fr Paul Wesche

In the Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition, sacred space-time is centered in the human heart, which is the ontological or personal center of the human being. [Cf Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Fortress Press, pp. 40-44, for an excellent word study of “heart” in the Old Testament.]

Sacred Space

[Pro 4:23](#) Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it [are] the issues of life.

[Luk 6:45](#) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

[Luk 12:34](#) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

[Luk 17:21](#) Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

“Our heart, doomed after the fall to the production is thorns and thistles, (cf. Gn 3:18) is specially prone to pride.” (Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Arena. An Offering to Contemporary Monasticism*, p. 102)

In Eastern Orthodox hymnography, the heart as the sacred space in which God comes to dwell with a person is seen as the “spiritual” referent to many biblical and liturgical symbols, e.g.: the tomb, which in Christ’s Passion becomes a bridal chamber; the Upper Room, which in the coming of the risen Christ, becomes the “creation of a clean heart, a new and right spirit” [Cf. Psalms 51:10].

Jerusalem

The earthly Jerusalem is a symbol for the “old man” that serves greed, as opposed to the New or the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is the “bride of God” (Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband) and also a symbol of the new man whose heart is recreated, made clean and alive in the Spirit of the risen Christ. Cf. Jn 4:21-24, where Jesus says to the Samaritan woman (the Samaritans believed God was to be worshipped atop Mt Gerazim and not on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem): Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father... God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

There is a tight connection between the New Jerusalem, the Church and the Theotokos (the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary or the Panagia [All-holy one]). The Theotokos is the icon par excellence of the most sacred space of all, the heart of the human person: “Appearing as a Temple and a Palace and living Heaven, thou [O holy Theotokos] art dedicated today in the temple of the Law, to be kept therein, O undefiled Bride of God.” (*Festal Menaion*, p. 179, for the Feast of *The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple* (observed on Nov 21.)

Sacred Time

Genesis 1-3. The story of creation and of Adam and Eve in the Garden is foundational for Eastern Orthodox Christianity and its understanding of sacred space and time.

In Eastern Orthodoxy, Gn 1 – 3 is read theologically, regardless of one's views on its actual historicity or scientific accuracy. The theological meaning of the seven days of creation is that the movement of space-time is *religious*; the earth, creation, moves in meaning that is “good” or “beautiful” (as the Hebrew is translated in the LXX).

Christ's Passion and Resurrection manifests its theological meaning from the days of the week (Fri – Sun) on which it occurs, as interpreted according to the seven days of creation in Gn 1. “Behold the Bridegroom comes at Midnight,” a verse in a Paschal hymn, refers to the dying of the old creation that serves sin and its resurrection in the Spirit of the risen Christ and its restoration to the Seven Days of Creation when creation is no longer “good *and evil*” but “good and gracious,” good and beautiful in the Spirit of God.

The passing away of the old, fallen creation, and its resurrection in Christ into the New Day of the New Creation, the Eschaton, the return to the Garden of Eden, is the mystery that one “passes over” to through baptism in the Church. The Church is the Garden of Paradise planted in the world; the “womb” of the Theotokos that holds the Light who shines in the darkness [Cf Jn 1:4].

In the Church, one enters into sacred space-time: that of God's primordial creation now established in God Himself in the Person of His Divine Word incarnate. In the Church, the Eschaton is present in the darkness of this fallen world. This is represented on the iconostasis of an Eastern Orthodox temple. The royal doors that enter into the sanctuary are framed on the left (the north) by an icon of the Virgin and Christ Child, representing the First coming of God the Word, and on the right (the south) by an icon of Christ, which represents his Second Coming. Above the royal doors traditionally is an icon depicting some aspect of Christ's Passion or Holy Eucharist, the mystery by which one enters into the eschatological Light that has shone in the world, that has become flesh and dwelt among us. By this iconographic scheme, the iconostasis depicts the Church's experience of God as having come in the flesh and having inaugurated the Eschaton, into which we enter through the sacramental mysteries of the Church, but which also still awaits its consummation at the Second Coming of Christ on the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord spoken of by the prophets.

An Ancient Christian Sermon

Also known as 2 Clement in Lightfoot and Harmer (Greek-English) pp 120-121

If we do the will of God our Father we will belong to the first Church, the spiritual one, which was created before the sun and moon....The living Church is the body of Christ, for the Scripture says, ‘God created man male and female.’ The male is Christ, the female is the Church. Moreover, the Books and the Apostles declare that the Church not only exists now, but has been in existence from the beginning. For she was spiritual, as was also our Jesus, but was revealed in the last days in order that she might save us.

Now the Church being spiritual, was revealed in the flesh of Christ, thereby showing us that if any of us guard her in the flesh and do not corrupt her, he will receive her back again in the Holy Spirit. For this flesh is a copy [αντιτυπος] of the Spirit. No one, therefore, who corrupts the copy will share in the original. This, therefore, is what he means, brothers: guard the flesh, in order that you may receive the Spirit.

Now if we say that the flesh is the Church and the Spirit is Christ, then the one who abuses the flesh abuses the Church. Consequently such a person will not receive the Spirit, which is Christ. So great is the life and immortality which this flesh is able to receive, if the Holy Spirit is closely joined with it, that no one is able to proclaim or to tell 'what things the Lord has prepared' for his chosen ones.

Final Notes:

The world lives in darkness having partaken of the serpent's tree. Maximus the Confessor: the tree of good and evil represents this worldly life of life and pleasure (good) and pain and death (evil). This darkness is ignorance and forgetfulness of God. Space and time are under the shadow of death, of darkness, having fallen away from the Garden in the East, in ignorance and forgetfulness of God, worshipping the idol, playing the harlot, self-love.

The Church is Eden, the world renewed in Christ's resurrection, planted in the darkness of a world governed by the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the fruit of greed and self-love. The Church holds in her bosom the incarnate Light of God who shines in the darkness, the True Light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world (this is the spiritual world according to patristic texts.) The earth is returned to the Lord (The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof) in the offering of the Church, the bride of God.

"The middle wall of partition of the ancient enmity is now laid low and destroyed by thy coming in the flesh, O Christ, and the flaming sword now gives way before all who approach. And I partake in faith of the life-giving tree in Eden, becoming once again a husbandman of immortal plants." [*Festal Menaion*, p. 207, for the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas)].

"Let us celebrate, O ye people, the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ, and raising our minds on high let us go in spirit to Bethlehem (note the mystical meaning of Bethlehem); and let us look upon the great mystery in the cave (the cave here represents the soul or heart of a person). For Eden is opened once again, when from a pure Virgin God comes forth, perfect in his divinity as in his manhood." [*Festal Menaion*, p. 201, for the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ.]

"A strange and most wonderful mystery do I see: the cave is heaven; the Virgin the throne of the cherubim; the manger a room, in which Christ, the God whom nothing can contain, is laid. Him do we praise and magnify." [*Festal Menaion*, p. 193, Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos (Nov 21)].

A prayer to the Holy Spirit:

“O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere present, filling all things, Treasury of blessing and Giver of life; come and abide in us and cleanse us from impurity and save our souls, O Good One.”

St Athanasius on God the Word (somewhere in *De Incarnatione*).

Although he was incarnate in a particular space-time, he did not cease to be Lord of all who in his divinity is everywhere present, filling all things.

Texts selected by Yasir Bilgin

Sacred Spaces (Some verses and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad)

The place of worship is called Mosque or Masjid. There are three holy places of worship for the Muslims in the world. These are: Mosque of Kaaba in Makkah, Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad in Madinah, and Masjid Aqsa, adjacent to Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

A Muslim may pray anywhere in the world whether in a Mosque, a house, an office, or outside. The whole world is a place of worship. It is preferable that Muslims pray in a congregation, however, he/she may pray individually anywhere.

Madinah

Narrated Anas:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "Medina is a sanctuary from that place to that. Its trees should not be cut and no heresy should be innovated nor any sin should be committed in it, and whoever innovates in it an heresy or commits sins (bad deeds), then he will incur the curse of Allah, the angels, and all the people." (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 91)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) said, "I was ordered to migrate to a town which will swallow (conquer) other towns and is called Yathrib and that is Medina, and it turns out (bad) persons as a furnace removes the impurities of iron. (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 95)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

If I saw deers grazing in Medina, I would not chase them, for Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) said, "(Medina) is a sanctuary between its two mountains." (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 97)

Narrated Sad:

I heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h) saying, "None plots against the people of Medina but that he will be dissolved (destroyed) like the salt is dissolved in water." (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 101)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) said, "There are angels guarding the entrances (or roads) of Medina, neither plague nor Ad-Dajjal will be able to enter it." (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 104)

Narrated Anas:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "O Allah! Bestow on Medina twice the blessings You bestowed on Mecca." (Bukhari- Volume 3, Book 30, Number 109)

Makkah

And remember Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits,-such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,-for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!" (Quran 2:126)

And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. (Quran 2:127)

The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings (Quran 3:96)

In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures. (Quran 3:97)

And this is a Book which We have sent down, bringing blessings, and confirming (the revelations) which came before it: that thou mayest warn the mother of cities and all around her. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in this (Book), and they are constant in guarding their prayers. (Quran 6:92)

I am commanded only that I should serve the Lord of this city, Who has made it sacred, and His are all things; and I am commanded that I should be of these who submit; (Quran 27:91)

Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'an: that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities (Makkah) and all around her,- and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt: (when) some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire. (Quran 42:7)

Jerusalem

Islam recognizes that the Holy Land is sacred to the People of the Book. When it is said that the Holy Land is the land of the prophets, certainly the prophets of the Children of Israel are included and constitute a continuum in the line of prophecy, which began before them and continued after them. Almost every prophet lived in the Holy Land, or had a special relationship with it, including those who were born elsewhere. An example of the latter is Abraham (Peace be upon him). After he destroyed and mocked the idols of his people, they planned violence against him:

But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations. (Qur'an, 21:71)

An example of a prophet who had a special relationship with the Holy Land and Jerusalem in particular is the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). The Qur'an stated in the chapter of the Children of Israel, or Al-Isra', that he was taken in a night journey miraculously from the sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa):

Glory be to (Allah) Who did take His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Haram) to the Farthest Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa) whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One who hears and sees (all things). (Qur'an 17:1)

Also Moses say in the Quran:

“O my People! Enter the Holy Land which God has assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will you be overthrown, to your own ruin,”(Qur'an, 5:20-21)

Jerusalem, or Bayt Al-Maqdis (House of the Holy) is, by definition, a holy place. It is included in verse 17:1, either by referring to the Al-Aqsa Mosque or to its precincts about which God said: “We did bless”. The great 14th century Muslim scholar, Ibn Kathir, said that Al-aqsa Mosque and “Bayt Al-Maqdis” are used interchangeably whereby one of them is used as a metaphor of the other, as in the following Saying of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h):

Maimuna said: “O Messenger of Allah! Inform us about Bayt Al-Maqdes!” He said: “It is the land where people will be gathered and resurrected (on the Day of Judgment). Go (grammatically imperative!) and pray in it, for a prayer in it is the equivalent of a thousand prayer in other (mosques).” I said: “What if I couldn't reach it? He said: “Then you send a gift of oil to it in order to be lit in its lanterns, for the one who does so is the same like the one who has been there.”

The Saying of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) shows that it is the religious duty of Muslims all over the world to maintain Al-Aqsa Mosque both physically and spiritually. The relationship with Al-Aqsa Mosque is primarily fulfilled through acts of worship, but the physical maintenance of the Mosque is also part of the responsibility of all Muslims.

Bayt Al-Maqdis became the first Qiblah, or direction of prayer. Al-Bara' said: "We have prayed with the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) in the direction of Bayt Al-Maqdis for sixteen or seventeen months. Then we were directed to the Ka'bah (in Mecca)". Despite the change of the Qiblah, the mere fact that Muslims prayed in the direction of Jerusalem is an indication of its prominence.

The same position is confirmed in a Saying of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim:

Abu Dhar Al-Ghafari – May God be pleased with him- said: "I said: "O Messenger of Allah: Which mosque was established first on earth? He said: Al-Masjid Al-Haram (in Mecca). I said: Then which one? He said: Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem). I said: How much time was between them?" He said: Forty years, and when it is time for prayer, wherever you are, pray, for that where the merit is."

Sacred Times in Islam (Some verses and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad)

Ibn `Abd al-Razzaq narrates in his Musannaf (4:317) that Ibn `Umar said: There are five nights in which invocation (du`a) is not turned back: the night of Jum`a (Friday), the first night of Rajab, the night of mid-Sha`ban, and the two nights of `Eid.

Friday

O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew!
And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah. and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.(Quran: 62-9,10)

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Umar:

Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) said, "Anyone of you attending the Friday (prayers) should take a bath." (Bukhari-Volume 2, Book 13, Number 2:)

Narrated Salman-Al-Farsi:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "Whoever takes a bath on Friday, purifies himself as much as he can, then uses his (hair) oil or perfumes himself with the scent of his house, then proceeds (for the Jumua prayer) and does not separate two persons sitting together (in the

mosque), then prays as much as (Allah has) written for him and then remains silent while the Imam is delivering the Khutba, his sins in-between the present and the last Friday would be forgiven." (Bukhari-Volume 2, Book 13, Number 8)

The First Friday Night of Rajab (laylat ar-ragha'ib) 'The Sacred Night of Desires'

It is one of the most important nights in Islamic history for all human beings. It is the night that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was transferred from his father to his mother's womb. It falls on the first Friday of Rajab. All that you wish for on this night, God gives you for the sake of His beloved Prophet (p.b.u.h). In Islamic countries they celebrate this night with praising of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), remembrance of his life, remembrance of God in their hearts, and visits to mosques, which stay open throughout the night until dawn.

Shabaan and Laylatul Bara'a

Abu Huraira (ra) relates that Aisha (ra) narrated to them the Saying of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) that the Blessed Prophet (p.b.u.h) fasted the whole month of Shabaan. She said: I asked the Blessed Prophet (p.b.u.h): Oh Blessed Prophet (p.b.u.h) your most favorite month to fast is Shabaan? He replied: Allah assigns the year of death for each person (in the month of Shabaan), thus, I wish my death come when I am fasting.

There is particular emphasis for the 15th of Shabaan, which is called Laylatul Bara'a. Although some people deny the importance of the 15th night of Shabaan; there are authentic Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), which clearly indicate the importance of this night.

It is related by Muaz bin Jabbal (ra) that the Blessed Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: Allah looks over at his creation on the fifteenth night of Shabaan and forgives everyone but for two people: A polytheist and one who holds a grudge against people.

Eid ul-Fitr

Narrated Anas bin Malik,:

Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) never proceeded (for the prayer) on the Day of 'Id-ul-Fitr unless he had eaten some dates. Anas also narrated: The Prophet used to eat odd number of dates. (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 73)

Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) used to proceed to the Musalla on the days of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha; the first thing to begin with was the prayer and after that he would stand in front of the people and the people would keep sitting in their rows. Then he would preach to them, advise them and give them orders, (i.e. Khutba). And after that if he wished to send an army for an expedition, he would do so; or if he wanted to give an order, he would do so, and then depart. The people followed this tradition till I went out with Marwan, the

Governor of Medina, for the prayer of Id-ul-Adha or Id-ul-Fitr. (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 76)

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) offered a two Rakat prayer on the Day of Id ul Fitr and he did not pray before or after it. Then he went towards women along with Bilal and ordered them to pay alms and so they started giving their earrings and necklaces (in charity). (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 81)

Eid ul-Adha

Narrated Al-Bara':

I heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h) delivering a Khutba saying, "The first thing to be done on this day (first day of 'Id ul Adha) is to pray; and after returning from the prayer we slaughter our sacrifices (in the name of Allah) and whoever does so, he acted according to our Sunna (traditions)." (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 7)

Narrated Aisha:

Abu Bakr came to my house while two small Ansari girls were singing beside me the stories of the Ansar concerning the Day of Buath. And they were not singers. Abu Bakr said protesting, "Musical instruments of Satan in the house of Allah's Apostle !" It happened on the 'Id day and Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) said, "O Abu Bakr! There is an 'Id for every nation and this is our 'Id." (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 72)

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "No good deeds done on other days are superior to those done on these (first ten days of Dhul Hijja)." Then some companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "Not even Jihad?" He replied, "Not even Jihad, except that of a man who does it by putting himself and his property in danger (for Allah's sake) and does not return with any of those things." (Bukhari Volume 2, Book 15, Number 86)

The Night of Power (Laylatul Qadr)

'Lailat ul-Qadr' or 'Night of Power'... a very important occasion in the history of Islam and in Muslims' lives.

Allah says in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Qadr:

"We have indeed revealed this (message) in the Night of Power. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the spirit by God's permission, on every errand: Peace! This until the rise of Morn." (97:1-5)

Allah also says about this powerful night in Surah Dukhan (smoke, mist):

Ha. Mim. By the book that makes things clear. We sent it down during a blessed night.

For We (ever) wish to warn (against evil). In that (night) is made distinct every affair of wisdom, by command, from Our Presence. For We (ever) send (revelations), as a mercy from Thy Lord: for He hears and knows (all things). (44:1-6)

Allah said in the Qur'an in Surah A 1-Baqarah (the Cow):
"Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong)." (2:185)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said about Lailatul-Qadr:
It as narrated by Abu Hurayra that Prophet said, "Anyone who stays awake for the Night Of Power with belief and for the pleasure of Allah, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

It has also been reported by Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (pbuh) who said:
"I asked the Messenger of Allah if I knew which night was the Night of Power and what Prayer I should say during that night? He said to me: Say: "O Allah! You are forgiving and you love forgiveness, so you too forgive me.

The Night of Ascension (Lailat al Miraj)

Also known as Shab-e-Miraj, is the Muslim festival celebrating the Isra and Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), when it is believed he went from Mecca to Jeruslaem (also known as the Temple Mount) and was then raised to Jannah (Heaven), met with the Prophets and eventually with Allah (God). It is celebrated on the 27th day of the month Rajab in the Islamic calendar. From this journey, Muslims believe, the command for five daily prayers (Salat) was given.

The related verse is:

Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless. (Quran 17:1)