

Surah al-Jinn (72)

'The Jinn'

سورة الجن

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *jinn*, and an account about them. Like the other Makkan surahs, it deals with matters of faith, in a narrative manner novel and lovely. As Surah Nuh} concluded with a prayer for the believers and destruction for the disbelievers, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning by the name of Allah, the Creator, the Sovereign of all things. To begin in His name is more proper than beginning by the name of any other. The disbelievers used to begin by the name of the idols, and the Christians would begin by the name of the father, the son and the Holy Ghost, while democrats today begin in the name of the people, while the monarchists begin in the name of his majesty. Allah is more worthy than all of beginning in His name.

... The Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on the servants in the world and in the hereafter.

Say: It is revealed unto me that a company of the jinn has listened and said, "we have heard an amazing Recital; (1)

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا
قُرْءَانًا عَجَبًا ﴿١﴾

Say: ... That is, the Messenger was to tell the people.

... It is revealed unto me ... 'Revealed', *uwḥiya* from *wahy*, means the inspiration received by the Messenger from Allah via the angels, or through direct transmission to his heart with no intermediary. Sometimes the word is used in a general sense, as in His word 'And thy Lord revealed unto the bee...' [16: 68], '... and revealed unto each sky its affair ...' [41:12] and 'And We revealed unto the mother of Moses ...' [28: 7].

... that a body of the jinn have listened ... A party from amongst the jinn had listened to the Qur'an. The jinn are a creation from fire, insubstantial like the air. They are able to take form in solid bodies, like human bodies.

... and said, 'We have heard an amazing Recital; Amongst these jinn some said that what they had heard from the Messenger was an amazing, astonishing recital, for it was wondrous both verbally and in content. 'Recital' is given for *qur'an*. Their account has been dealt with in *Surah al-Aḥqāf* [# 46; verses 29-31].

It guides to integrity, so we have believed in it and we will never partner a one unto our Lord; (2)

يَهْدِي إِلَى الْرُشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ ۗ وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا ﴿٢﴾

It demonstrates the guidance from which comes morality and rectitude. Those jinn believed in the Qur'an, and after hearing it determined never to ascribe a partner for their Lord.

And indeed He – exalted be the majesty of our Lord – takes no consort and no son. (3)

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَىٰ جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا ﴿٣﴾

His grandeur and magnificence are far above there being a partner for Him, a wife or a son. Allah, glory be to Him, has not taken a wife, nor a son. Some of the disbelievers maintained that He, glory be to Him, had taken a wife from amongst the jinn; as He says, 'And they maintain a kinship between Him and the jinn...' [37: 158]. Therefore the jinn denied this claim.

And indeed the foolish among us has spoken extravagances about Allah. (4)

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَفُولُ سَفِيهًا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا ﴿٤﴾

Those who are meant are the ignorant type from among themselves. 'Extravagances' is given for *shatāt* lies distant from the truth. It seems that what is meant is the nonsense that was current

among them that He had married a jinn. Or it may be that meant by 'the foolish among' them is the person of Satan – Iblis – who is of the jinn, and by the 'extravagances' what the devil says about Allah, glory be to Him, and his assigning partners to Him and suchlike.

And indeed we had supposed that no humans or jinns would ever say of Allah a lie. (5)

وَأَنَا ظَنَّنَا أَنْ لَنْ تَقُولَ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾

The lie of that fool had become clear for them, after they had been supposing that what was being said about Allah, glory be to Him, having a partner, a wife and a son, was true. But it had become clear for them that it was all lies.

And indeed men from the humans used to take shelter with men from the jinn, so they increased them in rebellion. (6)

وَأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا رِجَالًا مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعْوِذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا ﴿٦﴾

And indeed men from the humans used to take shelter with men from the jinn, ... There were those Arabs who, on setting down at a riverbed for the night, would say 'I shelter with the Grand One of this river bed from the evil of the fool of his people.' From Imam al-Baqir, *peace be upon him*, it is narrated that a man would rush to a witch who was inspired by the devil, and would say to him, 'Tell your devil that so and so has sought shelter with you.' [End of narration.]

... so they increased them in rebellion ... The humans who took refuge with the jinn were increased by them in 'being overtaken' (*rahaq*) by sin and rebellion, in that they considered the jinn as their helpers. The pronoun 'them' could be referring to the jinn and therefore it could be that the jinn were increased by the humans in rebelliousness, when the humans took refuge with the jinn, on the suspicion that the latter have influence in the creation.

And indeed they supposed as ye supposed, that Allah would never send anyone. (7)

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا ﴿٧﴾

That is, the humans supposed as that group of jinn used to suppose, that Allah would not send anyone as a messenger. These words were spoken by the jinn who believed in the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family*.

And indeed we have touched the sky and we found it filled with severe guards and meteoroids, (8)

وَأَنَا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَا فِيهَا مَلِئَةً حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهَبًا ﴿٨﴾

And indeed we have touched the sky ... That is, they touched the sky by attempting to ascend through the various levels of space.

... and we found it filled with severe guards and meteoroids, They found it guarded by strong guardians from amongst the angels, and by meteoroids and bolides, kept in readiness to fire upon any devil who seeks to eavesdropping.

And indeed we used to sit thereof on seats to hear, but whoever listens now finds for himself a meteoroid in ambush. (9)

وَأَنَا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقْعِدًا لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شُهَابًا رَّصَدًا ﴿٩﴾

The jinn used to sit in places in the heavens, and occupy stations close to the meeting places of the angels, so as to listen to whatever was passing between them about the earth, and this news they would bring to a witch. This lasted until the birth of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*, or until the start of his mission. After that, any of them who would listen to the conversations of the angels would find himself ambushed by a shooting star that had been lying in wait. For among the stars are stations given over to the protection of the skies from the devils of the jinn, so whenever one of them approaches to steal information, shooting stars are hurled at him, hitting or forcing him to flee.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, *peace be upon him*, in a narration that mentions the reason for the soothsayers' knowledge:

'As for the news from the sky – indeed the devils used to sit in stations for the stealing of information, they were not rebuffed and not shot at with stars. They were only prohibited from stealing information so that there should not occur in the earth anything from the skies to resemble the revelation, with which to confuse mankind about the clear proofs and denials of ambiguity. For the devil would steal a single piece of the information in the sky about what Allah had decreed for His creatures, and grasp it and bring it down to the earth, and cast it to a witch. But he would add to it some words of his own and mix the true with the false, so that what the witch accurately predicted was the information given to him by his devil from what he had heard, while his mistakes were what the devil had added. Since the devils have been prevented from stealing information, witchcraft and soothsaying has terminated.'

And we comprehend not whether evil is intended for whosoever is in the earth, or whether their Lord wants for them integrity.

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرُّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ

رَشْدًا ﴿١٠﴾

(10)

They did not know whether their being stoned away and the cessation of their information about the punishments of the people of the world, meant that they were due for an unexpected chastisement, or whether it meant their integrity in that a Prophet was to be sent amongst them. In other words, stoning the devils was either for the harm or the benefit of mankind, but the jinn at that time did not know which. This supports the view that the stoning of the jinn began at the time of the birth of the Messenger, and that the jinn are speaking in the past tense. For they become aware of the announcement after a while, especially after they had visited the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and his family.

And indeed amongst us are the virtuous, and amongst us are lower than that; we were diverse avenues. (11)

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قَدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

And indeed amongst us are the virtuous, ... Some of that company of jinn believed and performed the virtuous deeds.

... and among us are lower than that; ... Others among them were not so virtuous. The matter is put in this way to encompass their various sects.

... We were diverse avenues. They were on different 'avenues' (*tħra>iq*, plural of *tħriqa*). 'Diverse' is put for *qidat*, meaning fragments, as if each sect had a different colour, and each was a fragment differing from other fragments. It seems this citing of the words of the jinn is to explain the truth about them, and to clarify their position and condition.

And indeed we supposed that we cannot frustrate Allah in the earth, nor frustrate Him by escaping. (12)

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا

﴿١٢﴾

'And indeed we supposed that we cannot frustrate Allah in the earth, ... They supposed that they could not gather in sufficient numbers nor prepare force to the extent that He, glory be to Him, would be unable to dispose of them as He likes. The word suppose (*dhann*) is used either on account of them only supposing and not having certainty, or so as to explain that the supposition is sufficient in the absence of contrary evidence about Him, glory be to Him.

... nor frustrate Him by escaping. They realised they could not frustrate Him by escaping from His power, for His power is all-encompassing from which escape is impossible.

And indeed, when we heard the guidance we believed in it; so whoever believes in his Lord fears neither diminishment nor being overtaken. (13)

وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا آهْدَىٰءَ آمَنَّا بِهِمْ فَمَن يُؤْمِنُ بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا

يَخَافُ يُخَسِّمًا وَلَا رَهَقًا ﴿١٣﴾

And indeed, when we heard the guidance ... It means the Qur'an recited by the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and his family.

... **we believed in it** ... They believed in this guidance, which is Islam.

... **so whoever believes in his Lord fears neither diminishment nor being overtaken.** Whoever believes in Allah with a correct belief, has no fear of his right being not fully delivered in the world and in the hereafter. Nor does he fear being overcome by injustice or rebellion, for Allah, glory be to Him, is just and treats none unjustly. This is not true for other than the believer, for he fears loss, in that his good deeds are annulled by his evil deeds, and he fears being overcome by sin.

And indeed, among us are the muslims and among us are the diverted; so whoever entered Islam, they have sought integrity. (14)

وَأَنَا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا ﴿١٤﴾

muslims means those who have surrendered (to the will of Allah). Some of them entered the religion of Allah brought by the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family*. Others deviated and turned aside from the path of the truth. Those who submitted to the will of Allah entered Islam and have sought rectitude, that is to say the guidance in which there is certainly rectitude and reason.

As for the diverted, they are firewood for Hell.” (15)

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ﴿١٥﴾

Those who have turned away from the true path are for the fire; they shall be thrust into it and shall fuel it just as firewood fuels a fire; as He says in His word, ‘...whose fuel is the people and the stones.’ [2: 25]

– **And would they be steadfast on the path, We would certainly give them to drink of water copious; (16)**

وَأَلُو اسْتَقِيمُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقِيَنَّهُمْ مَّاءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

Had they not deviated but remained on the path of the truth and not strayed from it, they would have been given plentiful water to drink, a term that indicates the grace they would have received. This phrase is the beginning of the speech of Allah, glory be to Him, interposed within His report of the speech of the jinn.

That we might try them therein; and whoever turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will thrust him into chastisement ascending. (17)

لَنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ﴿١٧﴾

That we might try them therein, ... That is, Allah would give them water copious so as to try them with that abundance, for such favours are a trial, just as adversities are a test. The purpose of such trials is the disclosure of secrets, so as to clarify what a person deserves in the hereafter. Or it explains the sending of the guidance, in that the Messenger was sent and the guidance was descended as a trial.

... **and whoever turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, ...** And takes instead the path of disbelief and disobedience.

... **He will thrust him into chastisement ascending.** Allah will enter him into the chastisement ascending (*‘adhab shā‘ad*), a chastisement that rises over him and encompasses him from head to toe. Or it may mean a chastisement that is heavy and severe.

Having clarified that the guidance is for a trial, the thread turns to explain that it is not proper for anyone to be subservient to any but Allah:

And the places of prostration are for Allah, so call not with Allah anyone – (18)

وَأَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١٨﴾

‘places of prostration’ is given for *masajid*, the plural of *masjid*. Here what is meant are the [seven] points of prostration on the body – the forehead, the palms and [the knees, and the feet].

These are for Allah: created by Him, and in the possession of His sacred essence. So do not call on anyone alongside Him; how could you call on other than Him with a bodily part that is His? It is also likely that here the *masajid* or 'places of prostration' is general and includes what has been stated as well as the constructed places of prostration, mosques, meaning that we should not call on other than him, glory be to Him, within them – given that the polytheists prayed to their idols within the house of Allah, the Most High, in Makkah.

'And indeed, when the servant of Allah stood to call Him they were well-nigh upon him in swarms.' (19)

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا

﴿١٩﴾

When the Messenger of Allah called to Allah, the One, glory be to Him, the disbelievers were almost upon him in swarms, to prevent him from his call. It would appear that this concludes the speech of the jinn, and that the previous three *ayaat* are an interjection.

Say: 'I only call my Lord, and I do not associate with Him anyone.' (20)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُوا رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

Say, O Messenger, to those disbelievers: I call on my Lord, the One and Alone, and I associate none with my Lord. That is not some innovation, to cause you to gather against me and seek to prevent me.

Say: 'Indeed I possess neither your adversity nor your integrity – (21)

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ صَرًا وَلَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢١﴾

Again the address is to the Messenger. He was to tell the disbelievers he had no power to harm them, nor to set them aright; for harm and rectitude are in the hand of Allah. He it is who ordered the Messenger to guide them; if they failed to accept, then He would send harm down upon them. This was to explain that he was merely the Messenger of Allah, with no power save that of guidance.

And the same was true of himself; his own harm and benefit was not in his own hand:

Say: 'None can ever harbour me from Allah, and I find besides Him no sanctuary!' (22)

قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ

مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

None could save the Messenger himself from the decree of Allah, had He, glory be to Him, intended him harm. Nor could he have found a refuge with which to take shelter from Allah, glory be to Him. A frightened person continually seeks a refuge at the difficulties of the path.

Indeed the Messenger possessed nothing–

'Save conveyance from Allah, and His messages.' And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger – indeed for him is the fire of Hell; they are in it eternal, forever. (23)

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَتِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ

لَهُ نَارٌ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾

'Save conveyance from Allah, and His messages ... The Messenger's role was to convey the *ayaat* he received from Allah, and His messages.

... And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger ... That is, disobeys Allah by not obeying His commands, and disobeys the Messenger by not following his orders and prohibitions,

... indeed for him is the fire of Hell; ... His disobedience will be recompensed by the fire of hell.

... they are in it eternal, forever They will be eternal there (*khalidin fiha*), forever (*abada*). The change in pronoun from the singular to the plural is because the former is in agreement with the singular 'whosoever' (*man*), while the plural is in agreement with the implicit content.

But the disbelievers are presently not bothered about the fire–

Until, when they see what they were promised, then they shall know who is feeble in

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضَعُفٌ نَّاصِرًا

succourers and smaller in numbers. (24)

وَأَقْلُ عَدَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

When the disbelievers see the chastisement of which they were warned while in the world, they shall then know whether those fighting for the Messenger are weaker or their own succourers, and whether the Messenger's troops and companions were few in numbers or their own troops and companions. The disbelievers used to boast to the Messenger about their large numbers and the weakness of his helpers. And so the revelation turns to explain how on the day of resurrection things are totally reversed, and that their numbers will be scattered and their helpers helpless, unable to save them from the chastisement of Allah, glory be to Him.

And the disbelievers used to pressure the Messenger to hasten the chastisement upon them, in a sense of mockery. This the discussion now deals with, in His word.

Say: I comprehend not whether what ye are promised is near, or whether my Lord will set for it an interval. (25)

قُلْ إِن أَدْرِي أَقْرِبُ مَا تُوْعَدُونَ أَمْ تَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا ﴿٢٥﴾

﴿٢٥﴾

The Messenger was to tell those disbelievers who would hasten their chastisement that he did not know whether the chastisement they were promised on account of their disbelief and disobedience was near, or whether his Lord would delay what they were promised for a while. The knowledge of when the chastisement of the resurrection will take place is unknown except to Him, glory be to Him. He alone knows the timing of the Hour.

Yes, He alone is:

Knower of the unseen; He reveals not His unseen to anyone. (26)

عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

He alone knows what is hidden from the senses. He discloses the unseen that He knows to none of His servants. Knowledge of the unseen is particularly His.

Save for whomsoever He is content with as a Messenger, then He dispatches a watcher before him and after him. (27)

إِلَّا مَنْ أَرْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ

خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

Save for whomsoever He is content with as a Messenger ... It means that the exception is a Messenger whom He selects to inform about the unseen. Or the meaning is that the exception is for a message from among the Messengers.

Allah the Most High discloses something of the unseen, in accordance to His wisdom and what is beneficial, and the Prophet informs the Imam or the rest of the people as far as he is allowed to.

... then He dispatches a watcher ... When Allah, glory be to Him, has informed him of the unseen He surrounds him with a number of guarding angels who observe him in his conveying of it, even though he himself is reliable and trustworthy, and Allah is aware of all he says and does. It is a matter of the Divine etiquette, just as He assigns observing angels to each of His creatures though He is Himself aware of all they say and do.

... before him and after him. Allah, glory be to Him, dispatches, or sends forth, before the Messenger and behind him, observers from among the angels to observe what he does, as a protocol of the unseen and of the revelation that He has taught to His Messenger, . . .

That He may know they have conveyed the messages of their Lord, while He encompasses all that is in their presence, and He counts all things by number. (28)

لَيَعْلَمَنَّ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ

وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ﴿٢٨﴾

That He may know ... it means for Allah to confirm that His knowledge is implemented in the manifest world. To make His knowledge known in the sense that all will occur in the manifest world according to His knowledge . . . like His word, 'That We might know those amongst you who strive their utmost...' [47: 31]. [That He may know is a figure of speech, as used by man to

confirm something, and it does not mean that He lacks any knowledge – seen or unseen – in any sense, as reiterated in the remainder of the verse.]

... they have conveyed the messages of their Lord ... That is, for Him to know that His Messengers, whom He has informed with the knowledge of the unseen, have delivered the ‘messages’ (*risakāt*) of their Lord. Everything that is revealed to a Prophet is a ‘message’ (*risakah*), while the ‘messages’ (*risakāt*) are the sum of the revelation. This is not because Allah would otherwise not know, but as a matter of protocol, as has been mentioned, because:

The knowledge of everything and every event is with the Almighty, but hidden from others including the angels. However, when a certain event takes place, then that event is reported or ‘documented’, say by the angels.

... while He encompasses all that is in their presence, ... The knowledge of Allah, glory be to Him, encompasses all that the Messengers do in delivering the message.

... and He counts all things by number. That is, He counts everything with precision, and knows the numbers of all things. So His encompassing what is with the Messengers is an instance of His counting the numbers of all things: all creatures and all their deeds and all their circumstances and conditions.