

Sūrah 72: al-Jinn

Period of Revelation

According to a hadith related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas, once the Prophet was going to Visit the Fair of Ukaz with some of his Companions. On the way he led the Fajr Prayer at Nakhlah. At that time a company of the Jinn happened to pass that way. When they heard the Qur'ān being recited, they stopped and listened to it attentively. This very event has been described in this Sūrah.

Most of the commentators, on the basis of this hadith, believe that this relates to the Prophet's well known journey to Tā'if, which had taken place three years before the Hijrah in the 10th year of the Prophethood. But this is not correct for several reasons. The Jinn's hearing the Qur'ān during the journey to Tā'if has been related in al-Ahqaf 29-32. A cursory reading of those verses shows that the Jinn who had believed after hearing the Qur'ān on that occasion were already believers in the Prophet Moses and the previous scriptures. On the contrary, v. 2-7 of this Sūrah clearly show that the Jinn who heard the Qur'ān on this occasion were polytheists and deniers of the Hereafter and Prophethood. Then, it is confirmed historically that in his journey to Tā'if none accompanied the Prophet except Zayd bin Harithah. On the contrary, concerning this journey Ibn Abbas says that the Prophet was accompanied by some of his Companions. Furthermore, the hadith also agree that in that journey the Jinn heard the Qur'ān when the Prophet had stopped at Nakhlah on his return journey from Tā'if to Makkah, and in this journey, according to the hadith of Ibn Abbas, the event of the Jinn's hearing the Qur'ān occurred when the Prophet was going to Ukaz from Makkah. Therefore, in view of these reasons what seems to be correct is that in Sūrah al-Ahqaf and Sūrah al-Jinn, one and the same event has not been narrated, but these were two separate events, which took place during two separate journeys.

As far as Sūrah al-Ahqaf is concerned, it is agreed that the event mentioned in it occurred on the return journey from Tā'if in the 10th year of Prophethood. As for the question, when this second event took place, its answer is not given by the tradition of Ibn Abbas, nor any other historical tradition shows as to when the Prophet had gone to the Fair of Ukaz along with some of his Companions. However, a little consideration of v 8-10 of this Sūrah shows that this could only be an event of the earliest stage of Prophethood. In these verses it has been stated that before the appointment of the Prophet to Divine Mission the Jinn used to have one or another opportunity to eavesdrop in the heavens in order to hear news of the unseen, but after it they suddenly found that angels had been set as guards and meteorites were being shot on every side so that they could find no place of safety from where they could hear the secret news. Thereupon they had set about searching for the unusual thing that had occurred on the earth, or was going to occur, because of which the security measures had been tightened up. Probably since then many companies of the Jinn must have been moving about in search of the unusual occurrence and one of them after having heard the Qur'ān from the Prophet must have formed the opinion that that was the very thing for the sake of which all the gates of the heavens had been shut against the Jinn.

Reality of Jinn

Before one starts the study of this Sūrah one must clearly know what is the reality of the Jinn so as to avoid any possible mental confusion. Many people of the modern times are involved in the misunderstanding that the Jinn are not real, but only a figment of the ancient superstition and myths. They have not formed this opinion on the basis that they have known all the realities and truths about the universe and have thus discovered that the Jinn do not exist. They cannot claim to possess any such knowledge either. But they have assumed without reason and proof that nothing exists in the universe except what they can see, whereas the sphere of human perceptions as against the vastness of this great universe is not even comparable to a drop of water as against the ocean. Here, the person who thinks that what he does not perceive, does not exist, and what exists must necessarily be perceived, in fact, provides a proof of the narrowness of his own mind. With this mode of thought, not to speak of the Jinn, man cannot even accept and acknowledge any reality,

which he cannot directly experience and observe, and he cannot even admit the existence of God, to say nothing of admitting any other unseen reality.

Those of the Muslims who have been influenced by modernism, but cannot deny the Qur'ān either, have given strange interpretations of the clear statements of the Qur'ān about the Jinn, Iblis and Satan. They say that this does not refer to any hidden creation, which may have its own independent existence, but it sometimes implies man's own animal forces, which have been called Satan, and sometimes it implies savage and wild mountain tribes, and sometimes the people who used to listen to the Qur'ān secretly. But the statements of the Qur'ān in this regard are so clear and explicit that these interpretations bear no relevance to them whatever.

The Qur'ān frequently mentions the Jinn and the men in a manner as to indicate that they are two separate creations. For this, see al-A'raf: 38, Hud: 119, Ha-Mim As-Sajdah: 25,29, Ahqaf: 18, Adh-Dhariyat: 56, and the entire Sūrah ar-Rahman, which bears such clear evidence as to leave no room to regard the Jinn as a human species.

In Sūrah al-A'raf: 12, al-Hijr: 26-27 and ar-Rahman: 14-19, it has been expressly stated that man was created out of clay and Jinn out of fire. In Sūrah al-Hijr: 27, it has been said that the Jinn had been created before man. The same thing is testified by the story of Adam and Iblis, which has been told at seven different places in the Qur'ān, and at every place it confirms that Iblis was already there at the creation of man. Moreover, in Sūrah al-Kahf: 50, it has been stated that Iblis belonged to the Jinn. In Sūrah al-A'raf: 27, it has been stated in clear words that the Jinn see the human beings but the human beings do not see them. In Sūrah al-Hijr: 16-18, Sūrah as-Saffat: 6-10 and Sūrah al-Mulk: 5, it has been said that although the Jinn can ascend to the heavens, they cannot exceed a certain limit; if they try to ascend beyond that limit and try to hear what goes on in the heavens, they are not allowed to do so, and if they try to eavesdrop they are driven away by meteorites. By this the belief of the polytheistic Arabs that the Jinn possess the knowledge of the unseen, or have access to Divine secrets, has been refuted. The same error has also been refuted in Saba: 14, al-Baqarah: 30-34 and al-Kahf: 50 show that God has entrusted man with the vicegerency of the earth and the men are superior to the Jinn. Although the Jinn also have been given certain extraordinary powers and abilities an example of which is found in an-Naml 39, yet the animals likewise have been given some powers greater than man, but these are no argument that the animals are superior to man.

The Qur'ān also explains that the Jinn, like men, are a creation possessed of power and authority, and they, just like them, can choose between obedience and disobedience, faith and disbelief. This is confirmed by the story of Satan and the event of the Jinn affirming the faith as found in Sūrahs al-Ahqaf and al-Jinn.

At scores of places in the Qur'ān, it has also been stated that Iblis at the very creation of Adam had resolved to misguide mankind, and since then the Satanic Jinn have been persistently trying to mislead man, but they do not have the power to overwhelm him and make him do something forcibly. However, they inspire him with evil suggestions, beguile him and make evil seem good to him. For this, see an-Nisa 117-120, al-A'raf: 11-17, Ibrahim 22, al-Hijr 30-42, an-Nahl 98-100, al-Isra 61-65. The Qur'ān also tells us that in the pre-Islāmic ignorance the polytheistic Arabs regarded the Jinn as associates of God, worshipped them and thought they were descended from God. For this, see al-An'am: 100, Saba: 40-41, as-Saffat: 158.

From these details, it becomes abundantly clear that the Jinn have their own objective existence and are a concealed creation of an entirely different species from man. Because of their mysterious qualities, ignorant people have formed exaggerated notions and concepts about them and their powers, and have even worshipped them, but the Qur'ān has explained the whole truth about them, which shows what they are and what they are not.

Theme and Topics

In this Sūrah in v. 1-15, it has been told what was the impact of the Qur'ān on the company of the Jinn when they heard it and what they said to their fellow Jinn when they returned to them. God, in this connection, has not cited their whole conversation but only those particular things which were worthy of mention. That is why the style is not that of a continuous speech but sentences have been cited so as to indicate that they said this and this. If one studies these sentences spoken by the Jinn carefully, one can easily understand the real object of the narration of this event of their affirming the faith and or mentioning this conversation of theirs with their people in the Qur'ān.

After this, in v. 16-18, the people have been admonished to the effect: "If you refrain from polytheism and follow the way of righteousness firmly, you will be blessed; otherwise if you turn away from the admonition sent down by God, you will meet with a severe punishment." Then, in v. 19-23, the disbelievers of Makkah have been reproached, as if to say: When the Messenger of God calls you towards God, you surround and mob him from every side, whereas the only duty of the Messenger is to convey the messages of God. He does not claim to have any power to bring any gain or cause any harm to the people." Then, in v. 24-25 the disbelievers have been warned to the effect: "Today you are trying to overpower and suppress the Messenger seeing that he is helpless and friendless, but a time will come when you will know who in actual fact is helpless and friendless. Whether that time is yet far off, or near at hand, the Messenger has no knowledge thereof, but it will come to pass in any case." In conclusion, the people have been told: The Knower of the unseen is God alone. The Messenger receives only that knowledge which God is pleased to give him. This knowledge pertains to matters connected with the performance of the duties of Prophethood and it is delivered to him in such security which does not admit of any external interference whatever.

Sūrah 72: al-Jinn¹⁶³⁷

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. Say, [O Muhammad], "It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened and said, 'Indeed, we have heard an amazing Qur'ān [i.e., recitation]."
2. It guides to the right course, and we have believed in it. And we will never associate with our Lord anyone.
3. And [it teaches] that exalted is the nobleness of our Lord; He has not taken a wife or a son
4. And that our foolish one [i.e., Iblees]¹⁶³⁸ has been saying about God an excessive transgression.
5. And we had thought that mankind and the jinn would never speak about God a lie.
6. And there were men from mankind who sought refuge in men from the jinn, so they [only] increased them in burden [i.e., sin].
7. And they had thought, as you thought, that God would never send anyone [as a messenger].
8. And we have sought [to reach] the heaven but found it filled with powerful guards and burning flames.
9. And we used to sit therein in positions for hearing,¹⁶³⁹ but whoever listens now

will find a burning flame lying in wait for him.

10. And we do not know [therefore] whether evil is intended for those on earth or whether their Lord intends for them a right course.
11. And among us are the righteous, and among us are [others] not so; we were [of] divided ways.¹⁶⁴⁰
12. And we have become certain that we will never cause failure to God upon earth, nor can we escape Him by flight.
13. And when we heard the guidance [i.e., the Qur'ān], we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord will not fear deprivation or burden.¹⁶⁴¹
14. And among us are Muslims [in submission to God], and among us are the unjust.¹⁶⁴² And whoever has become Muslim - those have sought out the right course.
15. But as for the unjust, they will be, for Hell, firewood.'
16. And [God revealed] that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant rain [i.e., provision]
17. So We might test them therein. And whoever turns away from the remem-

¹⁶³⁷ *Al-Jinn*: The Jinn, a species of beings created by God from fire.

¹⁶³⁸ A plural form may also be understood, i.e., "the foolish ones among us."

¹⁶³⁹ Before the prophethood of Muhammad the *jinn* used to collect information by eavesdropping on the angels and then pass it on to fortunetellers and soothsayers.

¹⁶⁴⁰ In opinion, belief and religious practice.

¹⁶⁴¹ In regard to his account in the Hereafter. Nothing of his good will be diminished, nor will the evil of another be placed upon him.

¹⁶⁴² i.e., those who deviate from truth and act tyrannically.

- brance of his Lord¹⁶⁴³ He will put into arduous punishment.
18. And [He revealed] that the masjids¹⁶⁴⁴ are for God, so do not invoke with God anyone.
19. And that when the Servant [i.e., Prophet] of God stood up supplicating Him, they almost became about him a compacted mass.”¹⁶⁴⁵
20. Say, [O Muhammad], “I only invoke my Lord and do not associate with Him anyone.”
21. Say, “Indeed, I do not possess for you [the power of] harm or right direction.”
22. Say, “Indeed, there will never protect me from God anyone [if I should disobey], nor will I find in other than Him a refuge.
23. But [I have for you] only notification from God, and His messages.” And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger - then indeed, for him is the fire of Hell; they will abide therein forever.
24. [The disbelievers continue] until, when they see that which they are promised, then they will know who is weaker in helpers and less in number.
25. Say, “I do not know if what you are promised is near or if my Lord will grant for it a [long] period.”
26. [He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone
27. Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before him [i.e., each messenger] and behind him observers¹⁶⁴⁶
28. That he [i.e., Muhammad] may know¹⁶⁴⁷ that they have conveyed the messages of their Lord; and He has encompassed whatever is with them and has enumerated all things in number.

¹⁶⁴³ i.e., refuses obedience to Him.

¹⁶⁴⁴ The term “*masjid*” here includes every place of worship or the earth in general.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Crowding on top of each other in the manner of locusts in order to hear him. “They” may refer to the *jinn* or to the disbelievers among the Arabs.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Guardian angels to protect the messenger and the message.

¹⁶⁴⁷ This phrase may also read: “So He [i.e., God] may make evident.”