

Al-Jinn [The Jinn]

Makkan Period

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[1] Say (O Prophet), it was revealed to me that a band of *jinn* attentively listened to (the recitation of the Qur'an)¹ and then (went back to their people) and said:

[2] "We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'an which guides to the Right Way; so we have come to believe in it, and we will not associate aught with Our Lord in His Divinity";

[3] and that "He - exalted be His Majesty - has not taken to Himself either a wife or a son";

[4] and that "the foolish among us² have been wont to say outrageous things about Allah";

[5] and that "we had thought that men and *jinn* would never speak a lie about Allah",

[6] and that "some from among the humans used to seek protection of some among the *jinn*, and thus they increased the arrogance of the *jinn*";

1. This shows that the jinn on this occasion were not visible to the Prophet (peace be on him) nor did he know that they were listening to the Qur'an's recitation. Instead, he was informed of the incident later by revelation. In connection with this 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas has stated the following: "The Prophet (peace be on him) had not recited the Qur'an before the jinn nor did he see them." (See Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari.)

*2. The words "foolish among us" here could have both singular and plural meaning. If we take the word "foolish" to refer to an individual, it would denote **Iblis**. Alternatively, if it is considered to be a plural, it would denote a group of foolish **jinn** who made such statements.*

[7] and that "they thought, even as you thought, that Allah would never raise anyone (as a Messenger)";

[8] and that "we tried to pry (the secrets of) the heaven, but We found it full of terrible guards and shooting meteors",

[9] and that "we would take up stations in the heaven to try to hear but anyone who now attempts to listen finds a shooting meteor in wait for him";

[10] and that "we do not know whether evil is intended for those on the earth, or whether their Lord intends to direct them to the Right Way";³

[11] and that "some of us are upright and some of us are otherwise for we follow widely divergent paths";

[12] and that "we thought that we will neither be able to frustrate Allah on earth, nor frustrate Him by flight";⁴

[13] and that "when we heard the teaching of the Right Way we came to believe in it; he who believes in His Lord shall have no fear of suffering loss or being subjected to any injustice";

3. *This shows that these jinn noticed that strict measures had been taken in the heavens to prevent the spread of any news. They therefore tried to find out what was about to happen on earth that required such strict secrecy to be maintained. However, the arrangements they found were too stringent to allow them any opportunity to eavesdrop. For whenever anyone makes such an attempt, he finds a "shooting meteor in wait for him" (v.9).*

4. *The jinn's belief that they could neither frustrate God on earth nor flee from it, led them to be saved. They feared God and were also conscious that if they disobeyed, they would not be able to avert His chastisement. Therefore, when they heard God's Word which directed them to the Right Way, they did not have the audacity to cling to erroneous beliefs that had been spread among them by the ignorant persons of their society. They could not do so because they had come to know the Truth.*

[14] and that "among us some are Muslims [those who have submitted to Allah], and some of us are deviant. So those who became Muslims found the Right Course;

[15] but those who deviated from the Truth, will be the fuel for Hell."⁵

[16] If people were to keep firmly to the Right Way, We would have vouchsafed them abundant rain

[17] so that We might try them through this bounty. Whoso turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will cause him to suffer a grievous chastisement;

[18] and that "mosques belong to Allah, so do not invoke anyone with Him";⁶

[19] and when Allah's servant stood up to call on Him, they well-nigh swarmed him.

[20] Say, (O Prophet): "I call on my Lord alone, and I do not associate aught with Him in His Divinity."

[21] Say: "Surely neither it is in my power to hurt you nor to bring you to the Right Way."

[22] Say: "None can protect me from Allah, nor can I find a refuge apart from Him.

[23] (My task is no more than) to deliver Allah's proclamation and His messages. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, surely the Fire of Hell awaits him; therein he will abide in perpetuity."

[24] (They shall not change their ways) until they see that against which they had been warned, and then they will know whose helpers are weaker and whose supporters are fewer in number.⁷

5. This might prompt one to ask: "The jinn, according to the Qur'an itself, were created out of fire. How, then, can Hell-fire torment them?" In response, one can point to a parallel case. Man, according to the Qur'an, was created out of the earth, and yet he is hurt if a brick (which is made from earth), is hurled at him.

6. That is, one may not worship, pray to, or invoke anyone for help.

7. Those of the Quraysh who were wont to attack the Prophet (peace be on him) as soon as they heard him call people to God, entertained a false notion about the strength of their supporters. Compared to their imposing host, the force at the Prophet's command was quite feeble. They, therefore, succumbed to the illusion that they could easily prevail against the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers.

[25] Say: "I know not whether what you are promised is near or whether my Lord will prolong its term.

[26] He is the Knower of the Unseen, and He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone

[27] other than to a Messenger whom He chooses (for the bestowal of any part of the knowledge of the Unseen),⁸ whereafter He appoints guards who go before him and behind him,⁹

[28] so that He may know that they have delivered the messages of their Lord.¹⁰ He encompasses in His knowledge their surroundings and keeps a count of all things."¹¹

8. That is, Messengers do not have access to the Unseen as such; but when God decides to designate anyone as His Messenger, He bestows upon him whatever portion of the truths of the Unseen He pleases.

9. The word "guards" denotes angels. The purpose of the verse is to affirm that when God communicates any knowledge of the truths belonging to the realm of the Unseen through revelation, He appoints angels to safeguard that knowledge. This is done to ensure that it reaches the Messengers safely, untarnished by adulteration.

10. This shows that Messengers are endowed with the knowledge of only that portion of the Unseen that is needed by them to perform their mission as God's Messengers. Further, God appoints angels to see to it that this knowledge reaches them in its pristine form and also that the Messengers faithfully transmit it to His creatures.

11. God's power firmly encompasses the Messengers and the angels. Hence, if they deviate even slightly from God's directives, they will be instantly taken to task. A strict count is kept of every letter of God's Message, Hence neither the Messengers nor the Prophets can tamper with even a single letter of His Message.