

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 72
SURAH AL-JINN

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

072

SURAH AL-JINN

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Introduction and Summary

This is a late Makkan Surah, of which we can be tolerably certain of the date. It was two years before Hijrah, when the Prophet, despised and rejected in his native city of Makkah, went to evangelize the lordly men of Taif. They maltreated him and nearly killed him; what caused him even greater pain was the maltreatment of the humble and lowly men who went with him. Tabari has handed down that memorable Prayer of faith and humility which he offered in the midst of his suffering. On his return journey to Makkah, a glorious vision was revealed to him---hidden spiritual forces working for him---people not

known to him accepting his mission while his own people were still rejecting him. Within two months some strangers from Madinah had privately met him and laid the foundation of Hijrah which was to change the fate of Arabia and the course of world history.

C.252 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Spiritual Truth finds its lodgment
In all sorts of unexpected places, and in all sorts
Of unexpected ways. The man of God
When most depressed by the buffets of a world
Steeped in selfishness, sees a glorious vision
Hidden spiritual forces work for him,
Make known the truth in marvelous ways,
And proclaim the Goodness and Judgement of Allah.
The reject all Error and lead others to purify
Their wills and come to Allah. Behold!
Every place and time, every gift
It meet for the service of Allah, the One,
The True, Whose Word the righteous one
Proclaims and must proclaim at all cost.
Man's Duty is plain, but in the Kingdom
Of Allah, through Allah's chosen ones,
We rise to higher and higher Mysteries,
As may be expedient for us. Yet when
Or how our End may be, is not given
To man to know: let him but take
The Treasures well-guarded, that come to him,
And praise the Lord of all Knowledge and Wisdom!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

فَلْ أَوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ ...

1. Say:

It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinns listened (to the Quran).

C5727. Cf. 46:29-32, n. 4809.

The Jinns had evidently heard of previous revelations, that of Moses (46:30), and the error of Trinitarian Christianity (72:3).

The community from which they come have all sorts of good and bad persons but they are determined to preach the good Message of Unity which they have heard and believed in.

C5728. For **Jinns**, see n. 929 to 6:100.

... فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا (١)

They say,

'We have really heard a wonderful Recital!

C5729. The Holy Quran would be to them a wonderful Recital-both in subject-matter and in the circumstance that it had come in Arabia among a pagan and ignorant nation.

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا (٢)

2. It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein:

We shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with our Lord.

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا (٣)

3. 'And exalted is the Majesty of our Lord: He has taken neither a wife nor a son.

C5730. They abjure paganism and also the doctrine of a son begotten by Allah, which would also imply a wife of whom he was begotten. Cf. 6:101.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَفِيهُنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا (٤)

4. 'There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against Allah;

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نَقُولَ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (٥)

5. 'But we do think that no man or spirit should say aught that is untrue against Allah.

C5731. No one ought to entertain false notions about Allah. For by joining false gods in our ideas of worship, we degrade our conception of ourselves and the duty we owe to our Creator and Cherisher, to Whom we have to give a final account of life and conduct.

If we worship idols or heavenly bodies, or human beings, or any creatures, or false fancies born of self or foolish abstractions, or the lusts and desires of our own hearts, we are not only doing violence to Truth, but we are causing discord in the harmony of the world.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ

رَهَقًا (٦)

6. 'True, there were persons among mankind who took shelter with persons among the Jinns, but they increased them in folly.

C5732. If human beings think that by a resort to some spirits they can shelter themselves from the struggles and actualities of their own lives, they are sadly mistaken. They must "dree their own weird", as the Scots would say.

It is folly to try to escape from the duties which they can understand in their own natural surroundings, or to try to avoid the consequences of their own acts. Only such persons do so as do not realise that they will ultimately have to answer at the Judgment-Seat of Allah, whose first outpost is in their own conscience.

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا (٧)

7. 'And they (came to) think as ye thought, that Allah would not raise up anyone (to Judgment).

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مَلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهَبًا (٨)

8. 'And we pried into the secrets of heaven;
but we found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires.

C5733. See notes 1951, 1953, and 1954 to 15:17-18.

See also n. 5562 to 67:5.

The speakers here have repented of sin and evil; but they recognize that there are evil ones among them, who have stealth and prying, but their dark plots will be defeated by vigilant guardians of the Right, whose repulse of the attacks of evil is figured by the shafts of meteoric light in the heavens.

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ...

9. 'We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing;

... فَمَن يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا (٩)

but any who listens **now** will find a flaming fire watching him in ambush.

C5734. What is the force of "**now**"?

It refers to the early Makkan period of Revelation. It means that whatever excuse there may have been before, for people to try to seek out the hidden truths of the Unseen World through Jinns, there was none now, as the perspicuous Quran had restored the Message of Unity and cleared religion of all the cobwebs, mysteries, and falsehoods with which priestcraft and pious fraud had overlaid it.

The result is that such seekers after false hidden knowledge will find themselves confronted now by the flaming fire, which, like the shafts of meteoric light (see last note), will lie in wait for and nip such priestcraft and black magic in the bud.

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

10. 'And we understand not whether ill is intended to those on earth,

C5735. To these Jinns this gospel is yet new, and appears like a flaming sword which destroys falsehood while it protects Truth. They frankly confess that they do not clearly understand whether on the whole it will be a mercy to mankind or a punishment for mankind forsaking the paths of Allah. But they rightly feel that it must be a blessing if all seek right Guidance.

... أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا (١٠)

or whether their Lord (really) intends to guide them to right conduct.

وَأَنَا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِمَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قِدَدًا (١١)

11. 'There are among us some that are righteous, and some the contrary: we follow divergent paths.

وَأَنَا ظَنَنَّا أَنْ لَنْ نُعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَنْ نُعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا (١٢)

12. 'But we think that we can by no means frustrate Allah throughout the earth, nor can we frustrate Him by flight.

C5736. See last note.

In any case, they know that Allah's Truth and Allah's Plan must prevail, and no one can frustrate Allah's purpose; or escape from it. Why not then bring their will into conformity with it, and find Peace, as they have found, by the acceptance of Faith?

وَأَنَا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَى آمَنَّا بِهِ ...

13. 'And as for us, since we have listened to the Guidance, we have accepted it:

... فَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا (١٣)

and any who believes in his Lord has no fear, either of a short (account) or of any injustice.

C5737. Possibly, from this world's standards, it may be that a believer suffers for his Faith. He may be laughed at, persecuted, and actually hurt, "in mind, body, or

estate". But he is not perturbed. He takes it all cheerfully, because he knows that when his full account is made up-real gain against apparent loss,-he is a gainer rather than a loser. And his Faith tells him that Allah is a just God, and will never allow him to suffer any injustice, or permit the account of his merit to appear one whit shorter than it is,

وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ ...

14. 'Amongst us are some that submit their wills (to Allah), and some that swerve from justice.

... فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا (١٤)

Now those who submit their wills -- they have sought out (the path) of right conduct:

C5738. Any one who responds to true Guidance, and submits his will to Allah, finds that he makes rapid progress in the path of right conduct and right life. He gets more and more assurance that his destination is the Garden of Bliss.

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا (١٥)

15. 'But those who swerve, they are (but) fuel for Hell Fire -- '

C5739. An unjust life carries its own condemnation. It does no good to itself or to any one else. It bears no fruit. It becomes merely fuel for the Fire of Punishment.

وَأَلُو اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقِيَنَّهُمْ مَاءً غَدَقًا (١٦)

16. (And Allah's Message is):

"If they (the pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) Way, We should certainly have bestowed on them Rain in abundance.

C5740. Rain: literally, water: stands for all kinds of blessings, material, moral, and spiritual. All blessings come by way of trial: the more we have, the more is expected of us. A man of gifts, talents, or insight is expected to show a higher standard of love and unselfishness than one less gifted, just as a rich man is expected to give more in charity than a poor man.

لِنَقُتِبَهُمْ فِيهِ ...

17. "That We might try them by that (means),

... وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا (١٧)

but if any turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty.

C5741. To remember Allah is to realise His presence, acknowledge His Goodness, and accept His guidance. If we fail to do so, by deliberately turning away, He will withdraw His Grace, and that will be a severe Penalty indeed.

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ ...

18. "And the places of worship are for Allah (alone):

C5742. This is a Makkan Surah, and Masjid must be understood, not in the later technical sense of a Mosque, but in the root meaning, of any place, or occasion of worship or humble prostration in the service of Allah, or any limbs or faculties or accessories used in such worship, e.g., hands and feet, lips and voice, understanding or organisation.

A number of meanings therefore follow.

- No place of worship whatever should be used for the worship of any other but Allah the true God. The Kaba was then full of idols, but the idols and their votaries were usurpers.
- Worship should not be mixed up with vain objects, but should be reserved for the sincere service of Allah.
- All our gifts are for Allah's service, which includes the service of His creatures, and not for our vainglory. (R).

... فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا (١٨)

so invoke not anyone along with Allah;

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِيَدًّا (١٩)

19. "Yet when the **Devotee of Allah** stands forth to invoke Him, **they** just make round him a dense crowd."

C5743. The **Devotee of Allah:** the holy Prophet Muhammad.

C5744. They. The immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraish who were then in possession of the Ka'bah and who put all sorts of obstacles and indignities in the way of the holy Prophet for preaching the One True God and denouncing idol-worship. They used to surround him and mob him and to treat him as if he was guilty of some dreadful crime. But the wider application refers to the habit of the world to make a marked man of any who diverges from the beaten paths of their favourite sins and who pleads earnestly for the cause of Truth and righteousness. They ridicule him; they surround him with jeers and obloquy; and they try to make the physical condition of his life as difficult for him as possible.

Section 2

فَلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٠)

20. Say:

"I do no more than invoke my Lord, and I join not with Him any (false god)."

فَلْ إِنِّي لَأَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا ...

21. Say:

"It is not in my power to cause you harm,

C5745. 'Do not suppose that I am going to harm you individually or socially; the very opposite is my wish; but I cannot force you to right conduct; that must depend upon the purification of your own faith and will'.

... وَلَا رَشَدًا (٢١)

or to bring you to right conduct."

قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ ...

22. Say:

"No one can deliver me from Allah (if I were to disobey Him),

C5746. 'My mission is from Allah. I cannot choose but obey. He has charged me to deliver the Message, and if I were to disobey him, I would myself be worthy of His punishment, and no one can save me. From every kind of trouble and difficulty my only refuge is in Him. I must proclaim His Message: otherwise I am false to the mission He has entrusted to me.'

... وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا (٢٢)

nor should I find refuge except in Him.

إِنَّمَا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ...

23. "Unless I proclaim what I receive from Allah and His Messages:

... وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا (٢٣)

for any that disobey Allah and His Messenger -- for them is Hell: they shall dwell therein forever."

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ ...

24. At length, when they see (with their own eyes) that which they are promised --

C5747. When the Hereafter arrives, and true values are restored, they will see clearly that the Promise of Allah was true, and that death on this earth was not the end of all things. Then they will see that those who were accounted weak on this earth will, in the realm of Reality, be the strong ones; those who seemed to have no following here will have, there, all the great and true ones with them, to help them and welcome them to their own ranks.

... فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أضعفُ ناصِرًا وأقلُّ عددًا (٢٤)

then will they know who it is that is weakest in (his) helper and least important in point of numbers.

قُلْ إِنَّ أَدْرِي أَقْرَبُ مَا تُوعَدُونَ ...

25. Say:

"I know not whether the (punishment) which ye are promised is near,

C5748. The coming of Judgment is certain. But the exact time, relatively to our standards on this earth, no one can tell. Allah alone knows it. Even a Prophet of Allah, as such, does not know the Mysteries of the Unseen World, except in so far as they have been revealed to him by Allah's Revelation.

Cf. 6:50, and notes 867-68.

... أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا (٢٥)

or whether my Lord will appoint for it a distant term.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٦)

26. "He (alone) knows the Unseen,

nor does He make any one acquainted with His Mysteries --

C5749. The Unseen has two aspects. The relative Unseen is so with reference to a particular person, because of the intervention of Time, Space, or particular circumstances. For example, I cannot see to-day a house which I saw last year, because it has since been pulled down. Or I cannot in Lahore see the "Gateway of India" in Bombay, although any one in Bombay can see it. Or I cannot see the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye, though I can through a telescope. But the Absolute Unseen, the Absolute Mystery, is something which no creature can know or see, except in so far as Allah reveals it to him. And Allah reveals such things to the extent that is good for men, through His chosen messengers, among whom the greatest is Muhammad. The exact time of the Hour of Judgment has not been so shown, because we must not wait for it, but five as if it is to be at this minute.

See last note and next note, and the references there.

إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ ...

27. "Except a messenger whom He has chosen:

C5750. Cf. 3:179, and n. 482. See also last note.

... فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا (٢٧)

and then He makes a band of watchers march before him and behind him,

C5751. Revelation is not a mechanical or material thing. It has to be safeguarded from being distorted or corrupted by ignorance, selfishness, or the powers of evil. How can its precious and subtle worth and the spiritual safeguards against its misuse by human folly or the perversity of evil be expressed in plain human words?

We can imagine a very great treasure, which has to be transmitted. To guard it against evilly-disposed persons, a strong escort is required, to march in front and behind, so as to protect it from all sides. When it reaches its destination, the escort presents its credentials and an Invoice showing the Treasure being transmitted. Then the destined receiver knows that it has come intact and feels satisfied. So about spiritual Revelation. The Prophet recognises the credentials and checks the contents on the tablets of his own heart and insight. He has then no doubt that it is a true Message from Allah, and that those who bring it are the true messengers "of their Lord". (R).

لِيَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رَسُولَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ ...

28. "That he may know that they have (truly) brought and delivered the Messages of their Lord:

C5751 a. They: the band of watchers.

In "**he may know**" it is better to construe "**he**" to refer to the prophet who receives the Message from the "**watchers**".

... وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ ...

and He surrounds (all the mysteries) that are with them,

C5752. Ahata: surrounds, encompasses, encloses, guards on all sides, keeps under his own possession and control, and does not allow to be corrupted or debased. See last note but one.

... وَأَحْصَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (٢٨)

and takes account of every single thing."

C5753. In the spiritual Kingdom,-as indeed, in all things,-Allah's knowledge, wisdom, and Plan comprehend all things, great and small. There is nothing which we do, nothing which happens that is outside His account.