

Sura 72: Al-Jinn (The Jinn)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 28:

1. *Say, "It has been revealed to me that a company of jinn listened in. They said, 'We have really heard a wonderful Quran.*
2. *It guides to righteousness, so we believed in it and we will never associate anyone with our Lord.*
3. *And exalted is the glory of our Lord. He has taken neither a wife nor a son.*
4. *There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against God.*
5. *But we had thought that humankind and jinn would not speak a lie against God.*
6. *And indeed some of humankind used to invoke the protection of individuals of the jinn, so that they increased them in misguidance.*
7. *And indeed they thought, even as you thought, that God would not resurrect anyone.*
8. *And we probed the heaven but had found it filled with strong guards and meteors.*
9. *We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing; but any who listens now will find a flame waiting for him.*
10. *And we do not know whether ill is intended to those on earth, or whether their Lord intends guidance for them.*
11. *And among us there are righteous ones and among us there are far from that. We are sects having different ways.*
12. *But we think that we cannot escape from God in the earth, nor can we escape by flight.*
13. *And as for us, since we have listened to the guidance, we have accepted it; and any who believes in his Lord should neither fear loss nor oppression.*
14. *And there are among us some who have submitted (to God) and there are among us some who are wrongdoers. And whoso has submitted (to God), such have taken the right path purposefully.*
15. *And as for the unjust, they are firewood for Hell."*
16. *If they had remained straight on the path, We would have given them to drink of water in abundance.*
17. *That We may test them thereby, and whoso turns away from the remembrance of his Lord; He will thrust him into ever-growing torment.*
18. *And the places of worship are only for God, so do not call upon anyone along with God.*
19. *And when the servant of God stood up in prayer to Him, they crowded on him, almost stifling.*
20. *Say (unto them, Muhammad), "I pray to God only, and I do not associate partners with Him."*
21. *Say, "It is not in my power to cause you harm, nor to benefit you."*
22. *Say, "No one can protect me from God, nor can I find any refuge except with Him.*
23. *I only deliver (what I receive) from God and His messages;" and whoever disobeys God and His Messenger surely he shall have the fire of Hell to abide therein forever.*
24. *Till (the day) when they shall see that which they were promised; then they will know (for certain) who is weaker in allies and fewer in number.*
25. *Say (Muhammad, to the disbelievers), "I do not know whether that which you are promised is near, or if my Lord has set a distant term for it.*
26. *He (alone) knows the unseen, He does not make any one acquainted with His secret,*

27. *Except a messenger whom He has chosen; and then He makes a guard to go before him and a guard behind him.*
28. *That He may know that they have (truly) brought and delivered the Messages of their Lord; and He encompasses what is with them and He records the number of all things.*
(72: 1 – 28)

This Sura is a unique musical piece that has a strong rhythm and clear resonance. However, the music is overshadowed by a touch of sadness, especially towards the end of the Sura when the verses talk about the Messenger (PBUH). It evokes feelings of love and kindness towards the Messenger (PBUH) who suffered greatly in the course of delivering the message.

The Sura carries a testimony from a different world, the world of jinn. The idolaters of Mecca claimed that Muhammad (PBUH) was getting his revelations from the jinn. In this Sura, the jinn testify that the first time they heard about the Quran was when they listened to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reciting it.

The Sura also corrects many of the misunderstandings about the world of jinn. The idolaters believed in the supernatural powers of the jinn. They also believed that the jinn know the unseen. Some of the idolaters worshipped the jinn as well.

It has been narrated by Ibn Abbas (RA) that he said, *“The Messenger of God (PBUH) never recited the Quran to the jinn and he never saw them.”* The event that the first few verses of the Sura is talking about has been reported by Al-Bukhari as follows: *“The Messenger of God (PBUH) and a group of his companions were heading towards the market place of Okaz. In the meantime, some of the jinn came to their people saying that they were prevented from listening to what was happening in heaven. Their people said that this would not have happened unless some major event was happening. They decided to investigate. A group of jinn went along the same route that the Messenger (PBUH) took. They found him praying Fajr with his companions, so they listened to him reciting the Quran. They went back to their people telling them about what they heard.”*

“Say, ‘It has been revealed to me that a company of jinn listened in. They said, ‘We have really heard a wonderful Quran. It guides to righteousness, so we believed in it and we will never associate anyone with our Lord. And exalted is the glory of our Lord. He has taken neither a wife nor a son. There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against God; but we had thought that humankind and jinn would not speak a lie against God.’”

This opening indicates that the Messenger of God (PBUH) came to know about the jinn who listened to the Quran through a revelation from God. This may have been the first time that a group of jinn listened to the Quran, but it could have been one of many times. These verses also indicate that the jinn were surprised when they heard the Quran. This was something new to them. They were overwhelmed by the experience. They believed in the Quran and they returned back to their people carrying the glad tidings of this new revelation. Their first reaction was to describe the Quran as a wonderful Quran. They realized that it guides to righteousness. The word righteousness has many dimensions. These include guidance, truth, maturity, straight forwardness, and knowledge. Righteousness is a state of the self which guides to goodness and straight forwardness.

Their reaction, after the effect of the surprise was worn out, was to believe in the Quran. This is a natural reaction to those who listen to the Quran, understand its nature, and realize the truth that it embodies. They also realized that believing in the Quran means the belief in the oneness of God, *“will never associate anyone with our Lord. And exalted is the glory of our Lord. He has*

taken neither a wife nor a son.” The Arabs believed in a myth which claimed that the angels are the daughters of God. The jinn in this Sura refute this myth. The believing jinn described those who believed in this myth as foolish, *“There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against God; but we had thought that humankind and jinn would not speak a lie against God.”*

“And indeed some of humankind used to invoke the protection of individuals of the jinn, so that they increased them in misguidance.” This verse refers to the old belief that jinn have superpowers and they can benefit and harm people. Satan is ever waiting to enter into the hearts of people, except those who hold tight to the rope of God. Those who open their hearts to Satan will only go deeper in their misguidance. This misguidance brings them anxiety and insecurity.

“And indeed they thought, even as you thought, that God would not resurrect anyone.” This is continuation of the discussion between the group of jinn, who listened to the Quran, and their people. Those who sought the help of jinn, as well as the jinn themselves, thought that God will not send a messenger. The verse could also mean that they thought that there will be no resurrection and no accountability. Both assumptions are wrong. God created humankind with equal propensity to good as well as to evil. The jinn also shared these qualities with humankind. God, out of His mercy, sent messengers to guide people to the straight path. In the Hereafter both humankind and jinn will be held accountable for their deeds.

“And we probed the heaven but had found it filled with strong guards and meteors. We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing; but any who listens now will find a flame waiting for him.” These verses indicate that the jinn tried to find out what was happening in heaven to use it against humankind. The verse indicates that their ability to probe heaven has been revoked. There were guards who sent meteors on whoever attempted to approach heaven. The guards, the meteors, and the jinn are all matters of the unseen which we will not dwell on.

The jinn reiterated their inability to discover the unseen, *“And we do not know whether ill is intended to those on earth, or whether their Lord intends guidance for them.”* They also described the nature of their creation. This allows us to understand that God gave them the propensity for good as well as for evil, *“And among us there are righteous ones and among us there are far from that. We are sects having different ways.”* They believed in God and in His unlimited power, *“But we think that we cannot escape from God in the earth, nor can we escape by flight.”* And they reiterated their belief in God, *“And as for us, since we have listened to the guidance, we have accepted it; and any who believes in his Lord should neither fear loss nor oppression.”* Those who believe in God also believe in His justice and in His power. God will protect the believers and will not treat them unjustly.

Some jinn, like humankind, are righteous and some are transgressors, *“And there are among us some who have submitted (to God) and there are among us some who are wrongdoers. And whoso has submitted (to God), such have taken the right path purposefully.”* Some intentionally believed in God and chose to submit to Him. But others chose not to believe, they will get their punishment in the Hereafter, *“And as for the unjust, they are firewood for Hell.”*

The previous account quoted the jinn speaking to each other, the following verses continue to quote the dialogue of the jinn in an indirect approach, *“If they had remained straight on the path, We would have given them to drink of water in abundance. That We may test them thereby, and whoso turns away from the remembrance of his Lord; He will thrust him into ever-growing*

torment.” The jinn said to each other that had humankind remained on the straight path, God would have given them great provision. This statement indicates several facts.

The first fact is that there is a direct relationship between the behavior of a nation and the provision that God bestows on this nation. If the nation as a whole is guided and follows the straight path God will provide for its people in abundance. The verse refers to one of the essential resources which is necessary for survival: water. God will provide water in abundance for nations which follow guidance.

The second fact is the concept of trials. God may test people by subjecting them to adverse conditions and may test others by granting affluence. These tests are meant to show the reaction of people to the state they find themselves in. Will people who were tested with adversity exercise perseverance? Will people who were tested with affluence show gratitude?

The third fact is the fact that affluence may lead people to turn away from the remembrance of God. Those who take that route will be punished severely.

The following verse could be a continuation of the jinn’s words, or it may be statement made by God, *“And the places of worship are only for God, so do not call upon anyone along with God.”* Places of worship should be dedicated solely to the remembrance of God. These are places in which absolute submission to God should be expressed.

“And when the servant of God stood up in prayer to Him, they crowded on him, almost stifling.” If the verse was a continuation of the jinn’s speech, then it could be referring to the idolaters of Quraish who used to assemble around the Prophet (PBUH) while he was praying expressing their astonishment at what he was doing. However, this could be a statement made by God describing the state of the jinn when they were listening to Prophet (PBUH) reciting Quran. God knows best.

The following verses address the Prophet (PBUH), *“Say (unto them, Muhammad), ‘I pray to God only, and I do not associate partners with Him.’”* This is a statement expressing the essence of the belief in the Oneness of God. This is a belief that both jinn and humankind should subscribe to.

“Say, ‘It is not in my power to cause you harm, nor to benefit you.’” The Prophet (PBUH) is commanded to refute any doubt that he has special powers. All power belongs to God alone. He is the one who decrees whatever happens. The Prophet (PBUH) continued by saying, *“No one can protect me from God, nor can I find any refuge except with Him. I only deliver (what I receive) from God and His messages.”* The Prophet (PBUH) makes the unequivocal declaration: only God can provide protection, no one else can provide protection, not even the Prophet (PBUH) himself. The task of the Prophet (PBUH) is only to deliver the Message. Whoever disobeys God has to contend with the terrifying consequence, *“whoever disobeys God and His Messenger surely he shall have the fire of Hell to abide therein forever.”* Those who depend on their power and think that they can escape God’s punishment should wait and see, *“Till (the day) when they shall see that which they were promised; then they will know (for certain) who is weaker in allies and fewer in number.”*

Then the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to reiterate that he was only a deliverer of the Message and had no knowledge of the unseen, *“Say (Muhammad, to the disbelievers), ‘I do not know whether that which you are promised is near, or if my Lord has set a distant term for it. He (alone) knows the unseen, He does not make any one acquainted with His secret, except a messenger whom He has chosen; and then He makes a guard to go before him and a guard*

behind him. That He may know that they have (truly) brought and delivered the Messages of their Lord; and He encompasses what is with them and He records the number of all things." No one is privy to the knowledge of the unseen except by the will of God. Only, if God wishes to allow one of His Messengers to know something of the unseen, then the Messenger will acquire that knowledge. The Messengers who are given knowledge of the unseen are protected and observed until they fulfill the undertaking that they were entrusted with. God's knowledge encompassed everything and He records the number of all things.