

# The Jinn

## Associated Myths, Legends, and Traditions

### With Special Reference to *Sura Al-Jinn*

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 1 of 4]

#### Introduction

The *jinn* are one of the creations of God along the spectrum of creation which includes human beings and angels. Man is created of dust, angels are created of light, and jinn are created of fire. These are the three categories of creation which have some power of reasoning. Human beings are capable of reasoning. Man studies the alternatives and issues a decision; he thinks and reasons. The jinn, too, fall in this category, because there are among them believers and disbelievers, and they will be rewarded or punished, exactly like human beings, according to the Qur'an. The angels also have the power to reason, but theirs is a "pure reason" so that they don't make mistakes. The Qur'an says, "They are always obedient to God." They are, therefore, created with unerring reason.

If we look at the rest of the creations, like the animals and the birds, we can say that they are created with pure desire only. They are after their desires; they don't think. Then, there are the rocks and other inert materials, which do not fall in the category of beings with life, as we understand it. But, the main idea, here, is that the jinn and *ins* (إنس) = human beings share

the same condition. Islam supports, and accepts the existence of the jinn. There is a whole chapter in the Qur'an entitled *Al-Jinn*.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Qur'an mentions, in Chapter 55, *Ar-Rahman*, the word *Ath-Thaqalāmi*<sup>2</sup> meaning the world of men and the world of jinn; and, sometimes, the Qur'an jointly addresses jinn and men, as in Chapter *Ar-Rahman*: "O jinn and men! If you think that you can pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, pass beyond them!" In this respect, anyone denying the existence of the jinn will be denying the Qur'an itself.

There is something about which a lot of people ask, and someone was asking me about it only last week. He said, "Is it true, *yā'ni*,<sup>3</sup> that you can write a *ta'weez*<sup>4</sup> for a woman to

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 72

<sup>2</sup> "The two worlds"

<sup>3</sup> An Arabic expression which has no equivalent in English and means, loosely, "I mean" or, "you know" or, "in other words" depending on the context

<sup>4</sup> An amulet or a charm. More specifically, it is a piece of paper on which somebody writes a few verses of the Qur'an. It is then folded up, wrapped in leather or plastic and hung around the

love a man or to hate a man, and all that business?”<sup>5</sup> I told him that my experience does not confirm this. He asked, “What is your experience?” I said that when I was in India, I noticed that nearly every Indian man or woman had a *ta’weez* hanging around his/her neck, and they are firm believers in the notion that *ta’weez* protects them from the jinn, and from the devil, and from all other bad things. And, one day, while I was sitting in the mosque, a man brought his son and said, “O *mawlana*,<sup>6</sup> are you are from Al-Azhar?” I replied, yes. He said, “The people told me about you – that whatever paper (*ta’weez*) you write, water will not penetrate it.”<sup>7</sup> So that is why I brought that boy to you. I took him to all the doctors and not one could do anything for him, and they said there is an imam in that specific mosque and if he writes a *ta’weez* for you, *that is it!*” I said, good! Then, we’ll close all the schools of medicine, especially Khyber Medical College from where Amjad Hussain has graduated!<sup>8</sup> I tried to convince the man one way or another that this was not true, that these are just myths, and not a part of Islam, but he was not one to get convinced. I had a friend from the Consulate of Egypt sitting with me, and he said, “You know, that man will spoil our evening together; what if I write a few words and get rid of him.” I told him to go ahead if he wanted. He said to the father of the boy, “This shaykh is too big for writing *ta’weez*; he doesn’t do these little things. But I am his deputy, so I am going to write one for your son.” He wrote down on a piece of paper all types of insulting words that one can find in an Arabic dictionary. Then he folded it like a pyramid and hung it around the neck of the boy. The man tried to give us ten rupees for this service, but we said we don’t take money; we do this purely for the sake of God. “Then, when the boy gets well, I have to visit you,” he said. And, just one month later, the man returned with a *big basket* of mangoes because the boy was cured. It happened! It reminded me of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “If any of you will have a firm belief even in a stone, it may help.” This man came with the firm belief that his boy would be cured because that shaykh is “coming from the sky”. Either because of that firm belief, or by chance, the boy was cured,

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neck or tied to the arm

<sup>5</sup> Imam sighs audibly

<sup>6</sup> A title of respect

<sup>7</sup> A form of expression to indicate that it is very effective

<sup>8</sup> A cardiothoracic surgeon, president of the mosque [1985-86 and 1995-1998] graduated from Khyber Medical College, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

and, as a result, the whole idea of jinn and *ta’weez* etc. became firmly implanted in his mind; in this way they begin to believe that all those people who read the palms, or read your handkerchief, or read your hair, or whatever they do in many of our countries, that all those people truly know what the future holds.

Some people believe they can utilize the jinn to hurt other people. Belief in such powers by utilizing the *ta’weez* is well known in Muslim societies, and it is also known by many other names. And a lot of people believe that. We find that the Qur’an refutes this idea and limits the contact of the jinn with the human beings to “whisperings and leading them astray”. The last chapter of the Qur’an, Chapter An-Nās says: “We seek refuge in you, O God, from the whispering, elusive tempter who whispers in the hearts of men – from all temptations to evil by jinn as well as men.” Furthermore, the Qur’an clearly states that, on the Day of Judgment, the *Shaytan*<sup>9</sup> will say to the people who followed him: “I had no authority over you except to call you but ye listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls. I reject your former act in associating me with Allah. For wrong-doers there must be a grievous penalty.”<sup>10</sup> Chapter Al-Baqarah states: “. . . They learned from them the knowledge to sow discord between a man and his wife but *they can harm none thereby save by God’s leave* – **بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ**”<sup>11</sup> [The English translation of the entire verse is provided in order to clarify the idea and put it in proper perspective:]

“And even now, when there has come unto them a Messenger from God, confirming the truth already in their possession, some of those who were granted revelation aforetime cast the divine writ behind their backs as though it was something they did not know, and follow, instead, that which the evil ones used to practice during Solomon’s reign – for it was not Solomon who denied the truth, but those evil men denied it by teaching people sorcery – and they follow that which has come down through the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt – although these two never taught it to anyone without first declaring, “We are but a temptation to evil: do not, then, deny God’s truth! And they learn from these two how to create discord between a man and his wife;

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<sup>9</sup> Devil

<sup>10</sup> 14:22

<sup>11</sup> 2:102

but whereas they can harm none thereby *save by God's leave*, they acquire a knowledge that only harms themselves and does not benefit them – although they know, indeed, that he who acquires this knowledge shall have no share in the good of the life to come. For, vile indeed is that art for which they have sold their own selves – had they but known it” [2:101-102].

There is another idea prevalent among some Muslim people, and that is, “Is it possible that a marriage can take place between a human being and a jinn?” I have witnessed this in our village. There was a man who had a sort of a whip, and he would run around the village all night making a noise, cracking the whip. The people used to say that he was married to a female jinn. And when they used to ask his human wife about it, she would narrate stories about how he sometimes disappeared suddenly and she did not know where he was, and all that. And the people in my village used to actually believe that. When we analyze this in terms of the Qur’ān, we have to refute that, because when the Qur’ān talks about marriage, it clearly says it is a full system of kinship resulting from a marriage between two people of the *same kind* – not of the same sex. There is a verse that says, “One of His signs is that He created for you mates from *among yourselves* and that He established mercy and love between your hearts.” From the *same kind* and from *among yourselves* means both of them are human beings. The Qur’an repudiates anyone who believes there can be a marriage between a jinn *kind* and a human *kind*.

Sometimes, some people say that the jinn appear to man in different shapes, like in the form of a cat, a dog, a tree, and many other forms. But, in fact, the human being has no capacity to see other than what he is supposed to see and the jinn belong in the realm of the Unseen – الغَيْب<sup>12</sup>.

Another common belief among some people is that, sometimes, the jinn will enter the body of a human being. In the English language, it is referred to as “a man possessed”. This is known in our countries, also, but the ones possessed by the jinn are mostly women. It makes me wonder why? Are the jinn scared of men? What happens is that the ladies gather together and there is one among them beating on a drum, while the other ladies are jumping up and down like rock-and-roll musicians. And that is supposed to remove “the

possession”! The “possessed” woman will come out of that session very calm and relaxed. Psychological! It’s all a psychological matter. Yet, they have convinced the lady that she is “possessed by jinn” and that they have to get the jinn out of her. This happens. In Egypt we are specialists in that. Lately, I don’t remember if it was in Canada or the United States – I think it was in Toronto – a few months ago, a father continued to beat his daughter until she died. Why? Because she was “possessed by a jinn” and he tried to get it out. And I think the case is still in the court. That is ignorance.

There is something else that the ulama attribute to Islam, whereas Islam truly does not condone its practice. Have you ever heard of what is called *istikhāra*? That is totally un-Islamic. Many ulama and shaykhs<sup>13</sup> engage in it. If someone would like to travel to Chicago, he gets the *masbaha*<sup>14</sup> and counts *Allahu Akbar*<sup>15</sup> 33 times, *La ilaha illallah*<sup>16</sup> 33 times, and *Subhanallah*<sup>17</sup> 33 times, and then he prays: O God, if that... if that road is okay for me, then make it easy for me to travel, and if it is not, then this, this...etc. Then he counts several things to see what will be the resultant number. If it is an odd number, then it is an ill omen and, no, I’ll not go. You go to some hotels, sometimes in America, sometimes in the Muslim world, and you will never find a room numbered 13. There is no number 13 at all. There will be a room numbered 12 and the next one will be 14. Even on the elevator, you will never find a floor numbered 13. Why? Because the number 13 is considered an unlucky number and people are pessimistic in associating their life with it. Islam refutes all that.

Some other people use the Qur’an to do another type of *istikhāra*. They open the Qur’an, count from the right hand the first seven verses, read the six verses, and then read the seventh one. If the seventh verse is talking about *jahannam*<sup>18</sup> and about punishment, then your luck is bad, don’t travel that day. If it says that you are going to heaven and there are grapes and apples, and all that business, then, oh, that trip is fantastic; I’ll travel. Even today, there are some ulama and shaykhs who do this, while there is no such thing in Islam; and

<sup>12</sup> All those sectors or phases of reality which lie beyond the range of human perception and cannot, therefore, be proved or disproved by scientific observation

<sup>13</sup> Religious leaders, not necessarily educated.

<sup>14</sup> Prayer beads

<sup>15</sup> God is great

<sup>16</sup> There is no god but God

<sup>17</sup> Glory be to God

<sup>18</sup> Hell

even if a hundred people come and quote *ahadith*<sup>19</sup> to support that practice, I don't care, because if you base your actions in life upon this kind of superstition, it could be totally detrimental to your life. This practice is called *istikhāra* and it is written in many books of Islam; there is a lot of writing about it which is attributed to Islam, even though it is completely un-Islamic. These are a part of our culture and traditions, and we think that they are a part of Islam, but that is not the case.

You'll be amazed to know that, in some countries, when someone comes to ask for the hand of a girl, the parents make *istikhāra* to determine if the prospective groom is fit for her or not!<sup>20</sup> Should they agree to that marriage proposal or not? And some people will actually refuse a marriage offer, because, according to the *istikhāra*, someone says the marriage will not work.

In this regard, some people consider certain hours of the day as unlucky, while others consider certain days of the week as unlucky. Even some of the *ulama* support such ideas, and they even quote verses from the Qur'an to support them. They do this by collecting all the verses related to the people of 'Ad when God punished them by sending a windstorm against them, and from that they deduce that certain days are not good, because, on those days, God sent the punishment against the 'Ad. All this is completely un-Islamic.

In some parts of our countries, and even here in America, people exist who don't believe in doctors. When one of them gets sick, he goes to one of those who write *ta'weez*, because someone advised him that certain Qur'anic verses will cure him. And it may be that the person has a very serious disease and will end up dying if he does not go to a doctor. We have some newspapers, if you are interested, in the rack in our reception room, and you'll find some titles, such as, "Healing by Qur'an". Some sick people will go to certain *shaykhs* who recite some verses of the Qur'an over them and those people will feel as strong as horses. It seems to me that this is also a very good business. If Amjad Hussein will give me a room in his clinic, I'll open such a faith-healing business and I am sure he will go bankrupt himself!

We see similar things every week on the television, here, in America. If any of you watch the 700 Club programs, you will see how they bring a man with multiple sclerosis in a

wheel chair, and the priest reads something on him and pushes him, and the man begins running faster than a train. And the priest says, "Jesus cured him." Just this morning, I watched Mister Kenneth Copeland, one of the evangelists, who had a couple – a man and a woman – with multiple sclerosis, a disease for which they have no cure until now, and he healed those people through the Bible. He stood beside them and murmured some verses of the Bible and some *du'a'*<sup>21</sup> for Jesus and he pushed them, and they were running very fast as if they were racehorses. And the people in the audience believed that they were healed through the Bible – a conviction which, if followed, should result in closing the schools of medicine in America. We don't need any doctors. We can close all the pharmacies and the drug stores, and the healthcare system can function through men of that sort who will cure everything. I think belief in this type of a myth is shared by people from every religion. As Muslims, we have our own myths, and the problem is that we attribute them to Islam. And with these tactics, they are collecting millions of dollars. *How does this work?*

You know, when God created us, He created us different in every aspect – in color, language, race, nationality, physique – short, tall, fat, thin, and even in temperament – and among these differences is included a difference in understanding and in thinking, as well. That difference in the capacity to understand contributes to the flourishing of this business. Among the people are some very simple ones who will accept whatever is said to them, especially if it is from someone who appears to be a religious authority, which includes all the *shaykhs* and *mullahs* and *mawlanas* of our countries in whom the people believe blindly. This, in my view, is a degradation from the humanity with which God honored us when He said, "We have honored the children of Adam by giving them the power of thinking and reasoning." Therefore, not to use your brain to think is to go back to the position of those who have no capacity to think – the animals.

Islam came to find all these kinds of ideas prevalent among the people, and Islam fought all these superstitions. The method by which Islam fought all these ideas was through education: educate the people so these myths will be purged from their hearts. How does Islam fight these myths which are based upon ignorance? Islam tried to correct the situation by treating the cause. If the problem was due to ignorance then it

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<sup>19</sup> Reports or accounts of what the Prophet said

<sup>20</sup> Imam is incredulous

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<sup>21</sup> Supplications

corrected it by providing knowledge, and by mandating the acquisition of knowledge. Look at the first Qur'anic verse revealed to the Prophet: "*Iqra!*" (Read!) This indicates that knowledge is the topmost priority of Islam. And the Prophet supported this when he said to us in many of his ahadith: *Seeking knowledge is a must for every Muslim, male or female.* I remember my older sister did not complete her primary education because my parents were afraid that she would write letters to her lover! See how we are thinking, while Muhammad said that seeking knowledge is a must for every Muslim, *male or female.* Yet, until now, in many countries, the education of girls is not encouraged. In some countries, they teach them through closed-circuit television, which makes me wonder how 'Āiyshah<sup>22</sup> used to teach the people in her time. 'Āiyshah narrated nearly one third of the ahadith and was the educator of both males and females. How did she educate the males in her time? What method did she use? If we seek, and delve deeply into Islam, it becomes obvious that we have to understand Islam in new terms, according to reason and our present knowledge, not according to the old terms we find in ancient books.

Islam also advises people, whether educated or not, to seek knowledge by observing nature. The Qur'ān directs

Muslims to look around them at the universe and see the miracles which will make one a believer in God. A verse says: Didn't they look at the sky above them to see how We created it; how We decorated it, how there is no flaw in it?<sup>23</sup> And, since the Qur'ān initially was revealed in the Arabian Desert, and addressed to Arab Bedouins who had nothing else except cattle and sheep and camels, it talks to them in their language and says, "Do they not look at the camels, how they are made?" This is an invitation to seek knowledge. Knowledge will overcome ignorance and mythical beliefs associated with ignorance.

So what does the Qur'an say about the nature of the relationship between the human beings and the jinn? The sura, which I recited today, is called Surat al-Jinn. And we are going to analyze that sura in the coming two, three weeks to see where we stand in relationship with the jinn. What are jinn, where do they stand in the classification of God's creation, where do they exist, are they Muslim or not, do they believe in the revelations or not, are they going to be resurrected, questioned, punished or rewarded or not? And we'll get all this information from the Qur'an – there will be no addition from our own – so we know exactly what the facts are regarding that creation.

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<sup>22</sup> The wife of the Prophet

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<sup>23</sup> Chapter 67

## The Jinn

### Associated Myths, Legends, and Traditions

#### With Special Reference to *Sura Al-Jinn*

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 2 of 4]

Verses 1-5

Chapter 72 of the Qur'an is called *Al-Jinn*. It starts by *Qul* – “Say”: that is the word of God directed to Muhammad. It is a form of order from God to His messenger, to tell his followers, or the people to whom he is preaching. [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

“Say: It has been revealed – **أُوْحِيَ** – to me that some (*nafar*) of the jinn listened to the Qur'an and thereupon said to their fellow beings: Verily, we have heard a wonderful Qur'an” [72:1].

Let us analyze the word **أُوْحِيَ** – “it has been revealed”. It is in the passive voice, from the Arabic verb *awha*. *Awha* is a sort of communication between God and His messengers. There are three types of calls by which the message of God reaches His prophets and messengers on earth. [Imam quotes Arabic:] These are the three methods: 1. *Wahy*. 2. From behind a *hijab*. 3. Send a messenger [an angel] to report the *wahy* to the prophets.

[The English translation of the verse quoted above by Imam is:]

“And it is not given to mortal man that God should

speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration (*wahy*), or by a voice as it were, from behind a veil (*hijab*), or by sending a messenger (an angel) to reveal, by His leave, whatever He wills to reveal: for, verily He is exalted, wise” [42:51].

The ulama of Islam say *wahy* means “inspiration”: it will be instilled in him (the messenger), or he is guided by God to act in a certain way. That is called, in Arabic terminology, *ilham*. From “behind a *hijab*” means that a prophet hears something spoken, but he doesn't know where the speech is coming from. And that is exactly what had happened to Sayyidna Musa.<sup>24</sup> When God talked to Moses, He did not talk to him face-to-face, but “from behind a *hijab*”. The *hijab*, in this context, is not a scarf, it is not a door, it is not a wall, but it is the universe – the horizon. Moses heard the call from somewhere up above, but he did not know where it was coming from. And, as a result, the expression in the Qur'an is in the *passive* voice: “*nudiya ya Musa...* A voice was heard: I am your God. Take your shoes off. You are in the sacred valley of

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<sup>24</sup> The Prophet Moses

Tuwa.”

Moses was commanded by God to take off his shoes because he was in the sacred valley. The Jews and the Christians are believers in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, and this story is a part of the Old Testament, but still, when non-Muslim people come to tour this mosque, they ask why we take off our shoes before going into this room.<sup>25</sup> The reason is because it is a sacred place. God ordered Moses to take off his shoes because “you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa”. It is a symbol of respect. However, you can pray<sup>26</sup> with your shoes on, if you are praying on the grass outside, as long as they are clean. But when we take off our shoes to enter the prayer room, it is a matter of cleanliness, and a matter of respect for the place.

The third method by which God communicates with His messengers is something we are familiar with – the Angel Jibreel.<sup>27</sup> The Angel Jibreel is known to the Christians, also. They refer to him as the Holy Spirit. The role of the Angel Jibreel is that he is the messenger of God to His messengers on earth. He is the one who came to Maryam.<sup>28</sup> The Qur’an said: “We have sent to her Our *Ruh* – Spirit. He appeared before her as a young man in his full strength.” He is the one who came to Jesus with the revelation of the Bible or *Al-Injeel*. He is the one who came to Moses with the revelation of *At-Torah*. He is the one who came to Muhammad with the revelation of the *Qur’an*. These are the three calls, or forms of revelations.

*Nafar*: what is the meaning of نَفَرٌ in Arabic language? [Someone from the audience says “group”. Imam accedes:] Group. How many persons? [Someone from the audience speaks again, then, Imam resumes:] You know, in our little village,<sup>29</sup> when we had a death, they would say, “Contact *al-anfār* to be present tomorrow in the field.” *Anfār* is the plural of *nafar*. So, it is *jam ‘al jam*.<sup>30</sup> The word “nafar” means “from three to nine persons”. If the number of persons is such that it is divisible by any one of the numbers from 3 to 9, then it is called “anfār”, which means “several groups” or “several

nafar”. So, when the Qur’an says “nafar jinn” came to the Prophet and listened to the Qur’an, it means between three and nine.

*Nafar* is also taken from the verb *infirū*. When the Qur’an advises the people to go for *Jihad fī Sabīlillah*, it says:

انْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ  
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“Infirū” means, “go in groups”, or, according to our modern terminology, in the form of guerrilla warfare. *Khifāfan* means carrying light arms, such as, according to our present terminology, submachine guns, or just a sword, or something light. *Thiqālan* means, what they call nowadays, heavy armor such as tanks and armored cars, etc.

According to the people who explained the Qur’an, the jinn came to the Prophet while he was reading the Qur’an in *Salat al-Fajr*.<sup>31</sup> When you look into this verse,<sup>32</sup> it indicates that even Muhammad himself, ‘*alayhi-s-salato wa-s-salaam*,<sup>33</sup> did not see them, and did not feel them, while they were listening to him reading the Qur’an. So how did he know? The knowledge came to the Prophet through *al-wahy* or revelation:

“Say (*qul*): It has been revealed – أُوحِيَ – to me that some (*nafar*) of the jinn listened to the Qur’an. . .” If he could see them or feel their presence, he would not need any revelation to inform him of that. So, can some people really claim that they can see the jinn appearing to them in certain forms? In fact, there are many Unseen – *Al-Ghayb* – which we believe in, although we do not see them, and the jinn are one of them. We need not go into details, nor do we have to question it further.

After they heard Muhammad reciting the Qur’an and went back to their own kind, the jinn said, “Verily, we have heard a wonderful Qur’an.” Then the next verse explains the function of the Qur’an. Why was the Qur’an revealed? [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

“Guiding towards consciousness of what is right (*yahdee ilar-rushd*); and so we have come to believe in it. And we shall never ascribe divinity to anyone beside our Sustainer” [72: 2].

<sup>25</sup> Pointing to the prayer room which is adjacent to the sermon hall

<sup>26</sup> Perform salah

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel

<sup>28</sup> Mary, mother of Jesus

<sup>29</sup> Al Balashone, Egypt

<sup>30</sup> Plural of plural

<sup>31</sup> Dawn prayer

<sup>32</sup> 72:1

<sup>33</sup> Upon him be prayers and peace

The Qur'an is described in exactly the same way in Chapter Baqarah: "*hudal-lil muttaqeen*:<sup>34</sup> it is a *guidance* for the pious people." And another verse [Imam quotes:] "Verily, this Qur'an shows the way to all that is most upright."<sup>35</sup>

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ : *Yahdee* means guides/guiding.

*Ilar-rushd* is an expression that shows us the precision of the Qur'anic language. When a child grows and reaches maturity, we say *balagha ar-rushd* meaning he/she reached the age of *rushd*. The age of *rushd* means that age, which, if he has money, we give it to him to manage himself; the age when he has become adult enough to manage his affairs; he has reached the age of marriage; the age at which he can form his own family because he is *rashid*. Every action of *'ibadaat*<sup>36</sup> in Islam is not imposed upon a person unless he reaches *ar-rushd* – his adulthood. So that verse means that the jinn have heard a wonderful Qur'an; it guides one to act as a man who has reached that *rushd* age, in the meaning that, if one follows that way one will be acting like an adult. It will straighten your behavior; it will show you the way. The jinn said they believed in it, and, as of that day, they were not going to make a partner with God.

What can we understand from that talk? It means those jinn were *mushrik*<sup>37</sup> because they said that now they had abandoned *shirk*, and believed in God after they heard the Qur'an. [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"For we know that sublimely exalted is our Sustainer's majesty (وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا): no wife (صَاحِبَةٌ) has He ever taken unto Himself nor a son (وَلَا وُلْدًا)" [72: 3].

جَدُّ : that's one word. What's the meaning of *jadd*?

[Someone from the audience says "grandfather". Imam agrees.] What's another meaning of *jadd*? Suppose one person is serious, while another is joking, the word *jadd* refers to seriousness. What's another meaning of *jadd*? *Greatness*. So وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا means, *for sure Allah is great*. And,

because He *is* great, no wife has He ever taken unto Himself, nor a son! So, *yā'ni*, the jinn would like to say, God is above that; although the people claim that He has a wife, and that he has a son, He is above that, because these relationships are limited to His creation; it would be a shortcoming if we were to attach them to the position of Divinity. It tells us that, maybe, among this *nafar* some were *mushrik*, so they said, we shall never ascribe divinity to anyone besides our Sustainer, while some among them were possibly Christian, so they said, no, we were mistaken: God has no *sahibah* (wife) and no *walad* (son).

[Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"And now we know that there were some unwise (*safee*) among us who were wont to say outrageous lies about God" [72:4].

The word *safee* in this verse means "unwise". It could also mean "spendthrift" which is the meaning of *safee* in the verse in Chapter An-Nisa: [Imam quotes:]

"And do not entrust to those who are *safee* the possessions which God has placed in your charge for their support; but let them have their sustenance therefrom, and clothe them, and speak unto them in a kindly way. . . ." [4:5].

Therefore, if there is a man who is *safee* and you are his guardian, don't give him his money because he will spend it uselessly. So *safee* could mean "unwise" and it could mean "a spendthrift". Here it means "unwise", *yā'ni*, the unwise jinn used to speak some lies about God, such as, he has a wife or he has a son.

[Imam quotes the next verse in Arabic. The translation is:]

"And now we know that we were mistaken when we thought that neither man (إِنْسٍ) nor jinn would ever tell a lie about God" [72: 5].

This verse will show you that there is a parallel situation between *إِنْسٍ* and jinn: both worlds have believers and unbelievers. When you read certain books of *tafseer*,<sup>38</sup> you will find written there that the food of the jinn consists of bones. There are some books where you will find that information. I don't take what is written in them as right or wrong, because the Qur'an did not talk about that. In fact, we don't know too much about jinn except what the Qur'an tells

<sup>34</sup> 2:1

<sup>35</sup> 17:9

<sup>36</sup> Worshipping

<sup>37</sup> One who ascribes partners to God

<sup>38</sup> Qur'anic exegesis



us: that the jinn are a distinct creation; they share with us life on this planet, but they are not like us and we don't see them. There are among them males and females, and they beget children. There are among them believers and unbelievers, and they are responsible and accountable for their deeds; they are going to be rewarded on the Day of Judgment or punished, exactly like human beings. That is what the Qur'an tells us about the jinn.

Who, or what is *Iblees*? And who is the *Shaytān*? These are questions that sometimes come to mind. Iblees was one of the jinn, but he was one of the disobedient ones, because he refused to prostrate to Adam as ordered by God. When God questioned him as to why he did not prostrate, what did he say? "I am better than him. You created me from fire and you created him from mud." So, he felt he was better than Adam. In Chapter Ar-Rahman, we read that God created man from *salsal* – clay/mud – while He created the jinn from

fire. And the third Qur'anic verse, which will *clearly* indicate that Iblees was one of the jinn, and not one of the angels, is in Chapter Al-Kahf: "And remember when We told the angels 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam' they all prostrated themselves, save Iblees: he was one of the jinn, but he turned away from his Sustainer's command. Will you, then, take him and his cohorts for your masters instead of Me, although they are your foes?..."[18:50].

This shows us where the word "Iblees" comes from. *Shaytān* is different from Iblees. We commonly think that Iblees and the *Shaytān* are the same. They are not, because the Qur'an says to us "*shayāteen*<sup>39</sup> *al-ins wal jinn* – shayāteen of the human beings (*ins*) and shayāteen of the jinn". So shaytān is a symbol of evil. If a human being commits evil, he is a shaytān, and if a jinn commits evil, he too is a shaytān: thus, a shaytān of *ins*, and a shaytān of jinn.

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<sup>39</sup> Plural of *shaytān*

## The Jinn

### Associated Myths, Legends, and Traditions

#### With Special Reference to *Sura Al-Jinn*

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 3 of 4]

Verses 6-16

Two nights ago, I received a telephone call from Barbados. It was about eleven o'clock at night. And the person who phoned is the president of the Muslim Association on the island. He informed me that I was on a speaker telephone, so there were a lot of people listening in on the conversation. The president began by saying that they had a group of the *Tablighi Jama'at*<sup>40</sup> visiting, and they were preaching Islam in the mosque, and their Amir,<sup>41</sup> as they called him, told a story which surprised, or rather, confused them. Unsure if what they heard was correct or not, they decided to call me, at least, to have another opinion.

That Amir, in his speech in the mosque, talked about Abu Hudhayfa Al-Hadrami, a *sahaba*<sup>42</sup> of the Prophet, peace be upon him. This *sahaba* had memorized three verses of the Qur'an. *Only* three verses. The Prophet appointed him as chief of staff of the Muslim army of 10,000 soldiers, and when

they went to the battlefield, they had to cross a river. So Abu Hudhayfa, with just three Qur'anic verses committed to memory, crossed the river by walking on the surface of the water with his army. They wanted to know if this story was correct or not. I said that if Abu Hudhayfa, with just three verses was able to cross a river, then Khattab, who has memorized *all* the Qur'an, should be able to cross the Atlantic Ocean!

These are some of the myths which, sometimes, people attribute to Islam. And I am not denying that you will even find these things written in books. People write books and write these stories in them. And the simple people, who read these books, think that everything in them is correct, especially if it is preceded by "the Prophet said".

The advantage of Islam is that it appeals to commonsense. The Qur'an itself urges every Muslim to use his ears, his eyes, and his brain. And if he will not use them, then the Qur'an gives him another title. The Qur'anic verse says: you have ears to listen with, and when you hear something you have to weigh it by your brain to see if it makes sense or not, whether it is acceptable or not; you have eyes to

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<sup>40</sup> A self-appointed group of men who travel all over the world preaching Islam

<sup>41</sup> Leader

<sup>42</sup> Companion

see with, and you have to weigh what you see, also, by thinking about it. If you don't utilize these faculties, then what is the difference between human beings and the animals? That's what the Qur'an says. [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"Many are the jinn and men We have destined for hell for they have hearts with which they fail to grasp the truth,<sup>43</sup> and eyes with which they fail to see, and ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle – nay, they are even less conscious of the right way: it is they, they who are truly heedless" [7:179].

So, we have to use our brain to see if what we have read makes sense or not, whether it is acceptable or not. We have a whole science, taught in Al-Azhar, known as *Ilm al-Isra'iliyat*<sup>44</sup> – lies, falsehoods attributed to the Prophet; statements that the Prophet never made. And we find lots of these very "hadith" being quoted by some of the *mofasssireen*<sup>45</sup> and the *ulama*<sup>46</sup> of Islam in their books. So it is the responsibility of the reader to utilize his brains. See if what you read makes sense or not. Would the Prophet have said this? Or is that hadith in conflict with a higher source such as the Qur'an?

The next Qur'anic verse indicates to us the attitude of the human beings towards the jinn. [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"Yet it has always happened that certain kinds of human beings would *seek refuge* (يَعُوذُونَ) with certain kinds of jinn: but these only increased their arrogance/confusion – فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا" [72:6].

You know, even when we were young children, we were scared of jinn. If we were in a room by ourselves we were scared, and if we went out into the fields we were scared. I remember a man in my village, who, even though he had a gun with him, thought that the trunk of a palm tree was a jinn and he started to shoot at it. And the jinn did not die. In the morning, he found that the trunk of the tree was full of bullet holes. But, psychologically speaking, if you are scared of something you will see it and you will imagine it lurking in everything and everywhere. So, some people, when they go to

an area where they imagine the jinn are residing, are scared, and they say, "*na 'udhu* (I seek refuge) in the amir or the leader of the jinn in this area to protect me from his kind." In other words, they pray: "O shaykh of the jinn, here, please protect us from your people" – that is the meaning of this verse "Yet it has always happened that certain kinds of human beings would *seek refuge* with certain kinds of jinn..." The Qur'an states فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا – increased their arrogance. This increased their arrogance because the jinn felt that they are in control of both the jinn and the *ins*.

[Imam quotes Arabic, then explains:] Among the jinn there are some who deny the resurrection in the same manner as the human beings. The Qur'an, in numerous places, describes this dubious attitude of certain human beings who say, if they die and become dust, are they going to be revived again? That is what some human beings say. This verse [72:7] is telling us that among the jinn, also, there are some who say the same thing; they deny the life of the Hereafter and they deny that there will be a resurrection and questioning.

[Imam quotes 72:8-10. The translation is:]

"And we pried into the secrets of heaven but we found it filled with mighty guards and flames. Notwithstanding that we were established in positions, which we had thought well suited to listening to whatever secrets might be in it but anyone who now, or ever, tries to listen will likewise find a flame (*shehab*) lying in wait for him. And now we have become aware that we created beings may not know whether evil fortune is intended for any of those who live on earth, or whether it is their Sustainer's will to endow them with consciousness of what is right" [72:8-10].

This is the speech of the jinn. They are saying that now the situation is changed because before they used to spy on other kinds of "creations" but now, whenever they try to get close to "listen to the secrets", they are shot at by *shehab*.<sup>47</sup> And they don't know if this change in the situation is good for the people of the earth or bad for them.

Are there any other kinds of creations? It is possible. When we analyze the Arabic language, we find two words: the word "*man*" (مَنْ) and the word "*mā*" (مَا). The word "*man*" is used for one with reason – *man lil 'Aqil*: indicating that you are talking about a being with reason, but when you use the word

<sup>43</sup> In Arabic the "heart" is considered the seat of comprehension

<sup>44</sup> The Science of the Israeli Insertion of Hadith

<sup>45</sup> Qur'anic exegetes

<sup>46</sup> Scholars

<sup>47</sup> Meteor/shooting star

“*mā*”, you are talking *not only* about beings with reason but about beings that have no reason or are incapable of thinking. So, when we read Qur’anic verses like *سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ*,<sup>48</sup> it means that there are other creations in the heavens and on earth that possess the faculty of reason. What are they? This is not our business. They are part of the Unseen. We believe there is a heaven although we have never seen it. We believe there is a hell, but no one has ever seen it. We believe in Muhammad and we have never seen him. Therefore, when we discuss the topic of “the other creations” in the above verse, and we pry into its details, then we are attempting to go beyond our thinking and beyond the capacity of our brains.

The most common reference to al-jinn in our daily lives is that some people are “using them to discover what is hidden and unknown”. For example, you hear some people saying they can tell you about your stolen cow or your lost money by utilizing the jinn. Some people read some old books, which they claim will enable them to bring the jinn and put them to their service so they can hurt other people through them. And, there are, supposedly, some people who can call the jinn and command them to supply them with secrets, and even secrets from the *sky*, and a lot of people believe that. According to them, the jinn go up and listen to the talk of the angels, and to the orders of God given to the angels, then come back to earth and tell them about all that talk. *And there are people who believe in that.* You will find some people who have read the Qur’an superficially, without having studied it deeply, telling you that this is true because it is mentioned in the Qur’an in Sura Al -Jinn. Such people’s interpretation of these three verses<sup>49</sup> from Chapter Al-Jinn is that, before the advent of Islam, the jinn used to go up to the sky and listen to secrets, but after Prophet Muhammad came, whenever they tried to go there and listen, they would be pursued by a flaming star or *shehab* to burn them.

So, if it is true that the jinn can supply you with secrets, then George Bush will not have to tire himself with the Coalition to fight Saddam Hussein; instead, he can enlist only *one* person who has read these old, old books and let him engage the jinn to tell us where Saddam Hussein is hiding his

scud missiles, rather than have the inspectors going back and forth from the United Nations looking for them. But look at the Qur’an and what it has to say in this respect. One of the miracles given to Sayyidna Sulaymān<sup>50</sup> was that the wind, the *shayāteen*,<sup>51</sup> the jinn, and the birds were all at his service. The Qur’an says, in Chapter Sād,<sup>52</sup> that the jinn were employed by Sulaymān in hard labor; they were manufacturing, for Sulaymān, a variety of articles. One day Sulaymān was sitting and leaning on his stick, supervising his workers – the jinn and other soldiers – while they were engaged in that hard labor. Sulaymān died while he was sitting that way and the jinn didn’t know it. When did they know? They knew only when his stick, on which he was leaning, was eaten by termites and he fell. Look at what the jinn said: “If we knew that Sulaymān is dead we would not continue doing this humiliating hard labor.” *The man is in front of them and they don’t detect his death!* So how can we say that the jinn can know the Unseen, or they are able to bring us the secrets of the sky, if the Qur’an is explicitly telling us that they don’t even know what is going on *in the earth in front of them.*

The type of knowledge known as astrology, which deals with fortune telling, based on a person’s birth and all that, is based on this myth,<sup>53</sup> and people occupy themselves reading about their luck in the newspapers. The astrology business, nowadays, is propagated on television, and, at one time, according to the American news, even the decisions of the United States of America were based, in part, upon astrology. President Ronald Reagan of the United States would not travel anywhere without asking Nancy Reagan’s astrologist if anything was going to happen to him or not. This is their way – the people believe this. It is all a complete myth; the Qur’an and Islam refute all that.

[Imam quotes 72:11, then explains:] The jinn are talking about themselves and saying that there are, among them, some pious ones and, also, the less pious ones; they have different groupings, each one having its own inclination, its own ideology, and its own way of life – *طَرَائِقَ*. They are following several widely divergent paths. [Imam quotes:]

<sup>48</sup> All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extols God’s limitless glory

<sup>49</sup> Verses 8-10, quoted above

<sup>50</sup> The Prophet Solomon

<sup>51</sup> Plural of *shaytān* (devil)

<sup>52</sup> Chapter 38

<sup>53</sup> That man can utilize the jinn

“وَأَنَا ظَنَّا” And, withal we have come to know that we can never elude God **اللَّهِ** أَنْ لَنْ نَعْجِزَ **اللَّهَ** while we live on earth, and that we can never elude Him by escaping from life” [72:12].

**ظَنَّا** or *ad-dhan* could mean that one is “not sure”. The

Qur’ānic verse **إِنْ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّكُمْ**<sup>54</sup> is of that kind of *dhan* suggesting “maybe, maybe not”. In some other instances, *ad-dhan* could mean that you “are sure”. When it comes to the *dhan* here, in this verse, **وَأَنَا ظَنَّا أَنْ لَنْ نَعْجِزَ اللَّهَ**

it means: we *are sure* we are under the authority of Allah, we cannot escape it. There is no place to escape from destiny; from what God destined for us.

[Imam quotes Arabic. The English translation is:]

“Hence, as soon as we heard *this Qur’an* (الْهُدَى), we came to believe in it: and he who believes in his Sustainer need never have fear of loss or injustice” [72:13].

The jinn are saying that when they heard the Qur’an, they believed in it. They described the Qur’an as *al huda* – The Guidance. The Qur’an describes itself as:

**ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ** – *huda*. The jinn are saying that when they heard *The Guidance*, in the form of the Qur’an, they believed in it, and anyone who believes in God will receive justice in full – his accountability will be on the basis of his deeds, the *hasanaath*,<sup>55</sup> and the *sayyi’aat*.<sup>56</sup> So this kind of accountability is not limited to human beings, but extends to the jinn, also.

[Imam quotes 72:14-15, then explains:] This is another case of exceptional Arabic language. *Qasatha* is a verb in the past tense meaning “established tyranny”. If you add *alif* to it, it becomes *’aqasata* which changes the meaning to the opposite – it is still past tense – but it means “he established justice”. The past participle of *qasatha* is *qaasit*, and the past participle of *’aqasata* is *muqsit*. You will find Qur’anic verses such as **إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ** – God likes the *muqsit*,

the ones who establish justice. So the jinn are talking about themselves saying that among us are *Muslims* –

**وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ** – as well as **وَأَنَا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ** tyrants, the ones who swerve from justice who don’t do justice to themselves or to others (قَاسِطُونَ). The jinn continue saying: those of us who utilized our thinking (*tashada*) issued our decision to accept Islam, and such as these are in that category of *muslim* **مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ**; those who did not think, who did not establish justice (*qaasitūn*) will be the fuel for *jahannam*.<sup>57</sup> That brings us to the word “muslim”.

The terms “muslim” and “Islam”, and all the modified words of that infinitive, are applicable not only to human beings, but to the jinn, as well. You remember I told you before, that *mistakenly*; we, the Muslims, take “Islam” and “Muslim” to refer specifically to us, because we claim to be Muslims. But, actually we are the followers of Muhammad, and the terms “Muslim” and “Islam” are applicable to all who submit themselves to the Will of God; everyone who believes in God, everyone who honors the commandments of God could be called Muslim. And I have mentioned before the Qur’anic verses about the prophet Nuh,<sup>58</sup> and Ibrahim,<sup>59</sup> and Musa,<sup>60</sup> and Maseeh,<sup>61</sup> and the Queen of Sheba<sup>62</sup> – all of whom stated that they were Muslims. That gives us the idea that the heavenly message, as revealed to Adam, and completed by Muhammad, is called Islam. All these other names are invented names. *Yā’ni*, if you take *al yahūdiyyah*<sup>63</sup> as an example: that is not a religion; it is a race, because the Jews are the descendants of Judah. Judah – Yahūd – was one of the children of the Prophet Yaqoob<sup>64</sup> and they claim to be his descendants, so they call themselves Yahūd (Jews) in relationship to Judah. So truly *Yahūdiyyah* (Arabic for Judaism) has nothing to do with religion. It is a race. According to Muslim terminology, *yahūd* is one who believes in the oneness of God and believes that Moses is His prophet: such a one will

<sup>57</sup> Hell

<sup>58</sup> Noah. 11:41

<sup>59</sup> Abraham. 2:132-133

<sup>60</sup> Moses. 10:90

<sup>61</sup> Jesus. 3:52, 5:111

<sup>62</sup> 27:44.

<sup>63</sup> Judaism

<sup>64</sup> Jacob

<sup>54</sup> 49:12

<sup>55</sup> Good deeds

<sup>56</sup> Bad deeds

be a Muslim and a follower of Moses.

The “religion” of Jesus is called *nasrāniyyah*, but if you translate it into English, it means “the supporters of Jesus”. *Nasrāniyyah* means supporters of Jesus. The word Christianity is a new term and is not even mentioned in the Bible. In Muslim terminology, *nasrāniyyah* is the one who believes in the oneness of God, and believes that Jesus is His prophet: such a one will be a Muslim and a follower of Jesus. The definition of the religion of Jesus is one who says, *La ilaha Illallah al Maseeh Rasoolullah* (There is no god but One God and Maseeh – Jesus – is His prophet). And that is a very big topic.

How many people come to this mosque and say they want halal<sup>65</sup> meat? Lots! We want halal meat! Where can we buy it? But, some of these very same people go and marry American girls. It’s the same – mentioned in the same verse – [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“Today, all the good things of life have been made lawful to you. And the food of those who have been vouchsafed revelation (*Ahlay Kitab*<sup>66</sup>) aforetime is lawful to you, and your food is lawful to them. And lawful to you, in wedlock, are women from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time....”

Why are you asking about halal meat here, and not asking

about “halal wife” here? That is the confusion. Sometimes, we Muslims take certain things for granted, and shape the religion the way we would like to have it, and this leads to our confusion.

The word “Islam” is applicable to the heavenly message of every messenger. Every prophet represents one link in that chain which ended with Muhammad, and, as a result, Allah says in the final verse of the Qur’an, “Today I have perfected for you your religion. . . .”<sup>67</sup> It means that this religion was not complete until that point in time: “Today I have perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of my blessings, and willed that *self-surrender*<sup>68</sup> unto Me shall be your religion –

وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Islam, therefore, is the religion of Muhammad; it is the religion of Jesus; it is the religion of Moses; it is the religion of Ibrahim; it is the religion of Isaac, Solomon, David, up to Adam. Here, in Chapter Al-Jinn, it is stated that it is the religion of the jinn, also, and that if “they” – the jinn and the ins – will follow the right way, the next verse [72:16] states: “We shall certainly shower them with blessings abundant”, not only in this life, but in the Hereafter.

<sup>65</sup> Slaughtered according to Islamic ritual

<sup>66</sup> Jews and Christians

<sup>67</sup> 5:3

<sup>68</sup> “Self-surrender” is the English translation of *إِسْلَامٌ*

## The Jinn

### Associated Myths, Legends, and Traditions

#### With Special Reference to *Sura Al-Jinn*

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 4 of 4]

Verses 18-28

**T**he Qur'anic verse [Imam quotes 72:18] starts by “*wa*” (and). In the Arabic language, we call that word “*wa*” *haf'atf* (a joining letter). It means that it relates or ties up that verse and a preceding verse. In this case, there is a jump here: it ties verse number 18 with verse number 1, and it means “*Say: it has been revealed to me that a number of jinn listened to the Qur'an. They said we have heard a wonderful Qur'an [72:1]. And it has been revealed to me that the houses of worship are for God alone, so invoke not anyone along with God' [72:18].* This is how the two verses are linked together. And there is a reason for that.

The Christians and the Jews used to go to their houses of worship and talk about god, in addition to God: the Jews claimed Uzair (Ezra) as a son of God, while the Christians talked about Jesus as son of God, in their respective houses of worship. Since this was taking place among the Jews and the Christians, that warning came to the Muslims. The revelation came to Muhammad directing him: *AND SAY ALSO that the places of worship [masajids/mosques] are for God alone, so invoke not anyone along with God.* This brings us to a situation which is very common in our countries.

Quite often, when you enter a mosque, you'll find that there is a grave inside the mosque. Sometimes, the mosque is named after the one who is buried in that grave. We have, in Egypt, for example, *Jaami' Imam Shafi'i* (the mosque of Imam Shafi'i), *Jaami' Sayyidna Hussein* (the mosque of Imam Hussein), *Jaami' Sayyidna Zeynab* (the mosque of Sayyidna Zeynab) and in each of these mosques is a grave. They say that Imam Shafi'i is buried in this, Sayyidna Zeynab is buried in this, and Imam Hussein, because he was killed and beheaded in Karbala (Iraq), they say his head only is buried in that grave. And when you go to these mosques, you find the people, on entering the mosque for *Jum'ah*<sup>69</sup> prayer or for any prayer, before even offering their prayer, saying: Let us recite *Fatihah*<sup>70</sup> for the one who is buried here. This practice is prevalent everywhere in the Muslim world.

In Egypt, we have a grave called *Al-Shaykh al-Arba'een*. This *Shaykh al-Arba'een* is in every city in Egypt – numerous

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<sup>69</sup> Friday

<sup>70</sup> The opening chapter of the Qur'an: commonly recited as a prayer for the deceased

graves for Shaykh al-Arba'een – and some of them are enclosed within mosques. We have one in our own village, also. And when you inquire how Shaykh al-Arba'een happened to be in so many different places... no one can give you an answer for that. It is not even certain that there was a real person by that name, and if so, where he existed or where he was buried. But my main point in mentioning this is that people, before performing the *Fard*<sup>71</sup> due to God, resort to going and visiting the grave first, and reciting Fatihah for the one who is buried there. This practice falls into the context of this verse. The mosques are built and assigned for the worshipping of God only, so don't give any respect or any thanks to anyone other than God in these places. And, in this respect, 'Āiyshah, *radia-Allahu 'anhā*,<sup>72</sup> said in a hadith mentioned in Bukhari: "When the Prophet was about to die, and he was on his death-bed, he put a scarf over his face and cursed the Jews and the Christians because they had made of their houses of worship graves for the prophets and the saints" as they call them. The Prophet said this to warn the Muslims so they will not commit the same mistake, and in spite of that warning, we find that this is happening everywhere in our Muslim world. While some of the graves may actually be the burial places of someone, others may just be empty tombs, and the people who take care of such mosques have taken this responsibility solely as a means of earning their living, because of the practice of the visitors to donate money that ostensibly goes towards charity.

Sometimes, we used to hear, in our countries, that when someone died, "his casket was flying", or "his casket propelled the people who were carrying it, pushing them in this direction or in that direction." Such stories were commonly associated with the "saints" or the pure people. And the people would believe these stories. It is exactly like the jinn idea. And, if this is so, then, who is more pure than Muhammad, *'alayhi-s-salato wa-s-salaam*? Yet, there is *no single thing* in the history, the hadith, or the tafseers, to indicate that the Prophet's body or his casket flew after his death; nor did the caskets of Omar bin Khattab, or AbuBakr, or Iman Ali, or Uthman ibn Affaan, or any of those other great people. So if Muhammad's casket did not fly, and has no such sanctity in our authentic books of Islam, how can we give that sanctity to

very, very normal people like Abdul Qadar Jilani, Mohiyuddin Chisti, Sheikh al-Arba'een, and so on. The Qur'an states clearly: "The *masajids* are assigned for the worshipping of God – the One and Only – hence, do not invoke anyone side by side with God" [72:18].

[Imam quotes 72:19 and explains:] The information in this verse, again, came to Muhammad through *wahy* or revelation. "Yet, when the *slave of God* stands up in prayer to Him – وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ – they just make around him a dense crowd – كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا . It means: the jinn were crowding around Muhammad as if they were riding over the shoulders of each other, listening to the Qur'an, when he stood up in prayer.

لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ : here is a very important point.

Why didn't the Qur'an say "wa annahū lamma qāma Muhammad"? Why did the Qur'an not mention Muhammad by name? That is a lesson for us. A young man from our people, here, last week – he was a visitor – came to me after the Jum'ah prayer and said: "How come, when you mention the name of Muhammad, you don't say *sallallahu alayhi wa-sallam*?<sup>73</sup> I said, is that the only thing which attracted your attention from all what I have said? Didn't the Qur'an say

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ<sup>74</sup>

*yā'ni*, don't make such an aura around me that it may raise me up to the status of divinity? He said he didn't know. Here, in this verse the Qur'an says وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ – *the slave of God* – and that is because every one of us is *'abdullah*. It means that there is equality here. Muhammad is equal to all his followers with one difference: he received revelation. The Qur'an emphasizes the point that Muhammad is *'abdullah*. It means: O Muslims, don't raise Muhammad to such a high rank that the people will start to say "Muhammad is Son of God" or "Muhammad is God himself" as the Christians say about Jesus. And if we go back, even to Jesus, we find that there is a similar statement about him in the Qur'an, as there is about Muhammad. When Jesus talked in his cradle, the first words he uttered were: "Inni *'abdullah*" (I am the slave of God). So

<sup>71</sup> The obligatory prayer (salah) which is the primary purpose for going to the mosque

<sup>72</sup> May God be pleased with her

<sup>73</sup> Upon him be prayers and peace

<sup>74</sup> 41:6: Say to them, O Muhammad, 'I am a man like you'



that is indicative that Muhammad, as well as Jesus, as well as any other human being is *'abdullah*.

[Imam quotes 72:20-21 and stresses *darran wa la rashada*. The translation is:]

“Say: I invoke my Sustainer alone, for I do not ascribe divinity to anyone beside Him. Say: Verily, it is not in my power (*inni lā amliko*) to cause you harm or to endow you with consciousness of what is right (*darran wa la rashada*)” – a very important point for us to know!

We hear many ulama talk about *shafā'ah*. The word “*shafā'ah*” means “intercession” and they mean that “Our *shafi'* (intercessor) is Muhammad”: he is going to be our *shafi'* on the Day of Judgment – to save us from the punishment. If we are going to believe this, then there is no difference between us, Muslims, and the Christians who say Jesus is our Savior. This Qur'anic verse *inni lā amliko darran wa la rashada* is very clear. *Clear-cut!* There is no argument; there is no interpretation. [Imam quotes and explains:] Say to them, O Muhammad: Verily, it is not in my power to cause you harm, or to endow you with consciousness of what is right— not only you, but even myself, because the next two verses state: “Say to them, O Muhammad: Verily, no one could ever protect me from God, nor could I ever find a place to hide from Him if I should fail to convey the revelation from God and His messages.” Muhammad is saying that no one could ever protect him from God if he were to disobey Him, nor could he ever find a place to hide from Him. Muhammad says, I cannot help myself before God *except (illa)* if I perform my job of reporting His Message which has been entrusted to me

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ : It means that Muhammad cannot save himself, nor can he find any supporter or intercessor before God, other than God. This means that if Muhammad cannot do things for himself, he cannot do things for others. As they say in the Arabic proverb “If you don't have a thing, you cannot give a thing.” (The one who does not possess something is not in a position to give that thing or to offer it to others). So, if Muhammad cannot forgive himself, if he cannot support himself, if he cannot find any refuge from God through himself, then he cannot do that for his followers.

Muhammad is saying, I cannot help myself before God *except (illa)* if I perform my job of reporting His Message which has come to me; when I report the message, which God ordered me to report, then will I have done my job. And when I perform my job, then this will be my action and my

deed which will be my savior, and I will be sure of being rewarded; without that, no one can help me, and I cannot help myself. Another Qur'anic verse elsewhere corroborates this when it said [Imam quotes] “O Messenger! Proclaim all that has been bestowed upon thee from on high by thy Sustainer. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission.”<sup>75</sup>

The Prophet used to warn the people to be mindful, because there is a life after death, there is a resurrection, there is questioning, there is punishment, there is *jahannam*,<sup>76</sup> and there is *jannah*,<sup>77</sup> and all that. But the people used to disbelieve him and respond by asking: “When will all this take place if you are truthful?” [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“[Let them then wait] until the time when they behold that [doom] of which they were forewarned: for then they will come to understand which [kind of man] is more helpless and counts for less. Say: ‘I do not know whether that doom of which you were forewarned is near, or whether my Sustainer has set for it a distant term’ [72: 24-25].

So, here in verse 25, the answer is, I don't know if it is far or near. In Chapter Yā-Sīn a verse states that only God knows the time of the Day of Judgment; it is confined to the knowledge of God. [Imam quotes in Arabic. The translation is:]

“Verily, with God alone rests the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come; and He it is who sends down rain; and He alone knows what is in the wombs: whereas no one knows what he will reap tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Verily, God alone is all-knowing, all-aware.”<sup>78</sup>

In reference to this Qur'anic verse, a lot of people draw attention to the fact that, now, the medical procedure, known as ultrasound, can determine what is in the womb of the mother – boy or girl. But the knowledge of God is not just confined to the sex of that child in the womb; the knowledge of God is all-encompassing. From the moment of conception, God knows everything about that new human being – if he will be tall or short, if he will be male or female, if he will be fat or thin, what his psychology will be, and if he will be obedient or disobedient. He will know about all his instincts, about all his emotions – it is not just the matter of male or female.

<sup>75</sup> 5:67

<sup>76</sup> Hell

<sup>77</sup> Paradise

<sup>78</sup> 31:34

[Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“He alone knows that which is beyond the reach of a created being’s perception, and to no one does He disclose aught of the mysteries of His Own unfathomable knowledge, except (*illa* = **إِلَّا**) it be to a messenger whom He has been pleased to elect therefor (**إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ**): and then He sends forth the forces of the heavens to watch over him in whatever lies open before him and in what is beyond his ken – so as to make manifest that, it is indeed but their Sustainer’s messages that these messengers deliver: for it is He who encompasses with His knowledge all that they have to say, just as He takes count, one by one, of everything that exists” [72:26-28].

In the Arabic language, *illa* is called *harf istithnaa’*. For example: all the people came except (*illa*) Ali’. Therefore **إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ** means that no *rasūl*<sup>79</sup> will know the knowledge of God except the one to whom God wants to reveal some of the Unseen, and then He will give him that ability. Who will fall in this category? Jesus. [Imam quotes:] “...And I declare to you what ye eat in your homes and what ye store in your houses.”<sup>80</sup> God gave Jesus that capacity and ability, but Jesus related it always to God: “*bi’idhnillāh*” – “And I declare to you what ye eat in your homes and what ye store in your houses by God’s leave (*bi’idhnillāh*).” He did not claim that this was his ability, or his power to know the Unseen.

This life is based upon laws. In science, they call them

“cause and effect” – *asbāb wa musabbibāt*. And if we keep these laws in mind, no one can deceive us; we have our relationship directly with God, and that is a unique characteristic of Islam; it does not exist in any other religion. The people used to go to the Prophet Muhammad and ask him to do things for them. So the Qur’anic verse was revealed: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“Say to them, O Muhammad: It is not within my power to bring benefit to, or avert harm from, myself, if it is the will of God. If I had knowledge of the Unseen I would have multiplied all good, and abundant good fortune would have fallen to my lot, and no evil would ever have touched me. I am nothing but a Warner, and a herald of glad tidings unto people who will believe” [7:188].

If Muhammad, through the Qur’an, is saying this, then, how can you expect mediation or intercession from any other human being or jinn? In another verse, the Qur’an advised Muhammad: “And if My servants ask thee about Me – behold, I am near; I respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me [with no intercession]: let them, then, respond unto Me, and believe in Me, so that they might follow the right way” [2:186].

There is no intercession in Islam. In Catholicism, when some one commits a sin, he goes before the priest – a human being like himself, who may even be more of a sinner than himself – and confesses. In Islam, you confess to God directly; your relationship is with God directly, and not through any other human being like yourself, be he a saint, or a prophet, or a jinn. That is the simplicity of Islam.

<sup>79</sup> Messenger

<sup>80</sup> 3:49