

Tafseer Surah Al-Jinn (الجن)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Quran

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Introduction

- I. There are three creatures given intellect: humans, angels, and *jinn*
- II. Jinn
 - A. The word linguistically means to cover/conceal
 1. The word for paradise in Arabic, *Jannah*, is from the same root
 - a) It is called such because its ground is covered with so much greenery that you cannot see any dirt. A really lush garden
 2. The word for fetus in Arabic, *Janeen*, is from the same root as well
 - a) Because it is hidden inside the mother's womb
 - B. The word *jinn* is used to describe a group of specific type of creatures created by Allah
 1. They are hidden from the eyes, their conversation is hidden from the ears, and their movements are hidden from us. This is why they are referred to as *jinn*
 - a) This is a form of test for us whether we will believe in the unseen or not. It is the same reason we cannot see angels [Sabuni]
 2. Their other features include: [Sabuni]
 - a) They are responsible for their actions just like mankind
 - b) Some among them are believers while others disbelievers
 - c) Some among them are righteous while others wicked
 - d) They are created from fire
 - e) They differ from humans and angels in appearance
- III. This *surah* discusses the incident of a few *jinn* that heard the Qur'an being recited and it moved them so much that they converted to Islam. The complete story is mentioned in Bukhari and can be [read here](#)
 - A. Another reason Allah may be telling us this information is because the Quraysh were accusing the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) of receiving revelation from the *jinn* but this *surah* clearly shows that even the *jinn* were baffled and mesmerized by it
 - B. The Prophet (pbuh) himself did not see them listening to him and this is why the *surah* begins by stating "*It has been revealed to me*"
 - C. This story is also alluded to in Surah al-Ahqaaf from verse 29 and onward. However, some consider it a separate incident

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **Say, 'O Prophet,' 'It has been revealed to me that a group of *jinn* listened 'to the Quran,' and said 'to their fellow *jinn*': 'Indeed, we have heard a wondrous recitation**
 - a. When they heard it, they considered it something unique and unparalleled
 - i. They considered it as such due to its eloquence and clarity [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - b. Some said they were around nine *jinn* while others said they were around seven *jinn* [Baghawi]
2. **It leads to Right Guidance so we believed in it, and we will never associate anyone with our Lord 'in worship'**
 - a. They inferred from its wondrous recitation that it does not resemble the speech of men, therefore, they believed in it and said they would never worship anyone other than Allah from now on. The purpose of this verse is to rebuke the idol worshipers of Mecca who were not hastening to believe in the Qur'an after hearing it like the *jinn* [Sabuni]
 - i. The *jinn* immediately believed and went to warn their nation while the idol worshipers in Mecca were denying the Qur'an and ridiculing it [Sabuni]
 - b. The 'right guidance' in terms of belief, statement, and action [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
3. **'Now, we believe that' our Lord—Exalted is His Majesty—has neither taken a mate nor offspring**
 - a. This is because Allah is free of anyone being similar or equal to Him due to the Highness of His Majesty. The *jinn* here are refuting the claim of the Christians, Jews, and the Arab idol worshipers by this statement [Sabuni]
 - i. The Christians considered Jesus as a son of God
 - ii. The Jews of that time considered Uzayr as a son of God
 - iii. The Arab idol worshipers considered angels as the daughters of Allah
 1. They also used to associate a wife to Allah [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
4. **And that the foolish of us used to utter 'outrageous' falsehoods about Allah**
 - a. The 'foolish of us' is in reference to Iblees
 - i. He used to invite them to worship other than Allah [Sabuni]
 - b. These *jinn* who heard the Qur'an are saying that the foolish among them used to say things about Allah that are neither proper, correct, or truthful [Sabuni]
5. **We certainly thought that humans and jinn would never speak lies about Allah**
 - a. Meaning they could not imagine that someone would speak lies against Allah. They are revealing their gullibility here in how they ended up blindly following others into falsehood
 - i. Iblees was more senior to them so they figured he must be telling them the truth about Allah

- ii. They viewed mankind as more knowledgeable so when they found humans saying similar things as Iblees, they thought maybe it was true that Allah did have a wife and a child
 - iii. Some people today also may fall under this who are just blindly following falsehood because they cannot imagine that their parents, priests, families, etc. are teaching them lies about Allah
 - b. When they heard the Qur'an being recited, it is then that they realized that there are those who lie against Allah by attributing to Him wives and children [Sabuni]
- 6. And some men used to seek refuge with some *jinn*—so they increased each other in wickedness**
- a. In the pre-Islamic period while traveling, the Arab men used to seek refuge with male *jinn* when they would stay to rest in a land which seemed fearful or depopulated. This increased the *jinn* in arrogance and excess [Sabuni]
 - i. They men among the humans used to say when settling down to rest in such places, "*I seek refuge in the leader of this valley from the foolish among his people.*" When the *jinn* would hear this, they would say, "*we have prevailed over mankind and jinn!*" [Sabuni]
 - b. Some ignorant people still continue to do this today
- 7. And those 'humans' thought, just like you 'jinn', that Allah would not resurrect anyone 'for judgment'**
- a. They are saying to their fellow *jinn* that the disbelievers among humans thought the same as you that there will be no resurrection after death [Sabuni]
 - i. When they denied the resurrection, they undertook [the path of] *shirk* and transgression [Sa'di]
- 8. 'Earlier' we tried to reach heaven 'for news', only to find it filled with stern guards and shooting stars**
- a. The world of the *jinn* and angels can see each other because they are both creatures of the unseen for us
 - i. They share the same dimension [Yasir Qadhi lecture]
 - b. The *jinn* used to sneak up to heaven to try to listen to the speech of the angels but now they find it being sternly guarded by strong angels. Whoever tries to get close now, meteors are hurled at them [Sabuni]
- 9. We used to take up positions there for eavesdropping, but whoever dares eavesdrop now will find a flare lying in wait for them**
- a. The 'flare' here is in reference to flames of fire that fall like shooting stars
 - i. The *jinn* do not learn their lesson so they keep trying to do it over and over again
 - ii. It is shot at them and follows them
 - b. This was before the sending of Muhammad (pbuh). After eavesdropping, they used to deliver that information to fortune tellers [Sabuni]
 - c. They are saying that now something has changed and they no longer have that type of access to heaven so they can listen in as they used to [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

- i. This was because the Qur'an started being revealed so the security was strengthened in the heavens

10. Now, we have no clue whether evil is intended for those on earth, or their Lord intends for them what is right.

- a. This is because they concluded that the changes were only done either because something really bad is about to happen on Earth or something really good
- b. Meaning due to this tight new security, we do not know whether it is because a punishment is going to descend upon those on Earth or does Allah intend something good for them [Sabuni]
- c. The *jinn* here are showing respect towards Allah in the way they are phrasing their statement. They are attributing good to Him but not evil so this is why they use a passive voice when referring to evil and an active voice when referring to good. This is done even though everything, good and evil, is decreed by Allah [Sabuni]

11. Among us are those who are righteous and those who are less so. We have been of different factions

- a. The Arabic word used for 'righteous' indicates that the righteous among them are very few. They do not use the word 'evil' to refer to those other than that because they are hopeful that this second type will accept their *da'wah* to Islam
- b. The second part of the verse means that the *jinn* are not all one way. Rather, they are following different paths and lifestyles similar to mankind
- c. This shows us that they are not all evil, rather, they have righteous among them as well [Sabuni]

12. 'Now,' we truly know that we cannot overpower Allah on earth, nor can we escape from Him 'into heaven'

- a. Meaning after hearing the Qur'an, the *jinn* are certain now that Allah's revelation and message cannot be overpowered. The revelation of Allah is here to stay and will overpower everything else
- b. The *jinn* also realize that if Allah intends to do them any harm, they cannot escape from His punishment

13. When we heard the guidance 'of the Quran', we 'readily' believed in it. For whoever believes in their Lord will have no fear of being denied 'a reward' or wronged

- a. When they heard the Qur'an being recited, they realized its guidance and it affected their hearts so they believed in it [Sa'di]
- b. They are saying that a believer does not have to worry about being short changed [in reward] for doing good nor piled on with more crimes than he/she committed. In other words, he/she will not be wronged by Allah
 - i. Not being 'wronged' means that a person will not be wronged by taking on someone else's sins onto his/her shoulders [Sabuni]

14. And among us are those who have submitted 'to Allah' and those who are deviant. So 'as for' those who submitted, it is they who have attained Right Guidance

- a. Meaning among us are those who submit themselves to Allah's obedience and among us are also the unjust wrongdoers who diverge from the true path. As for those who

accept Islam and submit themselves to Allah's obedience, then they are pursuing the correct path. They [freely] strived in making that choice so Allah guided them to it [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]

- b. Some said that the first part of this verse means that after hearing the Qur'an, there were some *jinn* who accepted Islam while others remained on disbelief [Sabuni]

15. And as for the deviant, they will be fuel for Hell"

- a. This ends the speech of the *jinn* to their nation. This is the last statement in their discussion
- b. Meaning that those unjust among the *jinn* that deviate from the intended righteous path, then they will be fuel for the Hellfire by being burned in it just like similar type of [deviant] humans [al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]
- c. This shows that the [disbelieving] *jinn* will also be punished in the Hellfire and that they are accountable for their deeds just like mankind [Sabuni]

16. Had the deniers followed the Right Way, We would have certainly granted them abundant rain to drink

- a. Allah here is reminding the disbelievers among the Quraysh [Sabuni]
 - i. They had been prevented from rain for seven years [Jalalayn]
- b. The 'right way' (*al-tareeqah*) here is in reference to Islam
- c. 'Abundant rain' means that there would be so much water that they would live really well
- d. Meaning if these disbelievers remain steadfast on the religion of Allah (i.e. Islam), which He sent down to His messenger, then He would provide them with abundant water to drink [through rain] and which would also help them to grow vegetation [Sabuni]
 - i. Others said the address here is to all disbelievers among mankind and *jinn* [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]

17. As as a test for them. And whoever turns away from the remembrance of their Lord will be admitted by Him into an overwhelming punishment

- a. Meaning the blessing of abundant rain mentioned in the previous verse would be a test for them to see whether they would be grateful for Allah's blessings or not [Sabuni]
- b. The phrase 'turns away' here means after fully acknowledging it the person works hard to ignore it and turn away from it
- c. The 'remembrance of their Lord' here is in reference to the Qur'an and the exhortations that are contained within it [al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]
 - i. Some said it is in reference to the obedience of Allah and His worship [Sabuni]
- d. The 'overwhelming punishment' is an extremely difficult punishment that cannot be bore [al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]
 - i. It is an elevating punishment that will overpower the individual. The punishment's level of intensity keeps getting higher and higher

18. The places of worship are 'only' for Allah, so do not invoke anyone besides Him

- a. The 'places' could be in reference to actual places of worship but also the particular limbs that fall down in prostration, such as, our heads, hands, feet, and knees
 - i. We are being told that we should not call out to anyone other than Allah during such cases nor use that time for anything else other than to remember Him

- ii. It also implies we should not associate partners with Allah (*shirk*) in the mosques
 - 1. This should train us to not do *shirk* outside of the mosque as well
- b. The mosques belong exclusively to Allah so nothing should be worshiped nor invoked in them besides Him, otherwise, they would become like Christian churches. Places of worship are suppose to honor Allah and be beacons of guidance and knowledge not forums of propaganda for world leaders! [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer* and Sabuni]

19. Yet when the servant of Allah stood up calling upon Him 'alone', they almost swarmed over him

- a. The 'servant of Allah stood up calling upon Him' is in reference to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) making *salah*
- b. Who swarmed over him?
 - i. Some said it is in reference to the *jinn* who heard him reciting the Qur'an in *salah* and piled on top of each other eager to listen to it
 - ii. Some said it is in reference to the Quraysh who heard him reciting the Qur'an in *salah* and piled on top of each other eager to listen to it

20. Say, 'O Prophet,' "I call only upon my Lord, associating none with Him 'in worship'"

- a. Allah is commanding him to say to the idol worshipers, "I worship my Lord alone and do not associate with Him anyone whether that deity be human or idol" [Sabuni]

21. Say, "It is not in my power to harm or benefit you"

- a. Meaning the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has no ability to provide benefit nor prevent harm, rather, Allah alone posseses this power [Sabuni]

22. Say, "No one can protect me from Allah 'if I were to disobey Him', nor can I find any refuge other than Him

- a. This came down after the idol worshipers in Mecca told the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to abandon calling them to Islam and to stop pointing out faults with their gods. They also assured him that they would help and protect him if he stops this behavior. He is being told to tell them that if he were to disobey Allah or associate others in worship with Him, then nothing would be able to protect him nor give him a place of refuge from Allah's punishment [Sabuni]

23. Except only to convey 'the truth' from Allah and 'deliver' His messages." And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger will certainly be in the Fire of Hell, to stay there forever and ever

- a. Meaning I cannot find a place of refuge nor protection from Allah's punishment unless I [continue] to convey Allah's message, advise you, and guide you as He commanded me to do so. Whoever disobeys the command of Allah, His messenger, and turns away from listening to the verses, then his/her destination is Hellfire from which he/she will never be taken out [Sabuni]
- b. Disobedience in this verse is in reference to associating partners with Allah [*shirk*] and denying His messengers. Eternity in Hellfire only occurs due to disbelief (*kufr*) or associating partners with Allah (*shirk*) [Sabuni]

24. Only when they see what they have been threatened with will they know who is weaker in helpers and inferior in manpower

- a. Some of the disbelievers used to mock the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and would take pride in their large numbers in comparison to his followers. They would say that their strength and large numbers could overpower the guards in Hellfire
- b. Meaning these disbelievers are not going to change their ways until they see the punishment of Allah in the afterlife. It is only then that they will realize the punishment that they were warned against in this life. It is only then that they will know who is more weak and inferior: Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers or the disbelievers [Sabuni and *al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

25. Say, “I do not know if what you are promised is near or my Lord has set a distant time for it

- a. Whenever the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would warn the disbelievers among the Quraysh about Allah’s punishment, they would say to him mockingly, “When is this promised punishment going to take place? When will it reach us?!” Here he is being told to tell them that it is inevitably going to happen, however, he does not know exactly when [Sabuni]

26. ‘He is the’ Knower of the unseen, disclosing none of it to anyone

- a. Allah’s knowledge is infinite and has neither a beginning nor an end. There is nothing that is hidden from Him
- b. As a general rule, Allah does not disclose His knowledge of the unseen to anyone. It remains exclusively with Him [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

27. Except messengers of His choice. Then He appoints angel-guards before and behind them

- a. Now we are being told of an exception to the rule mentioned in the previous verse. Allah may choose to reveal some of the knowledge of the unseen to a chosen messenger or prophet He is pleased with, as a form of miracle for them, so that it is made clear that their claim to prophethood is true. An example of this are the signs of the Day of Judgement that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) informed us about [Sabuni]
 - i. It is possible that Allah taught or showed the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) some secrets from the unseen which we do not know about. We should stay silent about it and not delve into things the prophet (pbuh) did not directly inform us about from the unseen
- b. Meaning when Allah chooses to give some knowledge of the unseen to a messenger, then He also sends down guardian angels to assure that it is not disclosed to anyone else
- c. Some said the second part means that Allah made angels for His messengers who guard them from the *jinn*, devils, and the evils of men [Sabuni]

28. To ensure that the messengers fully deliver the messages of their Lord—though He ‘already’ knows all about them, and keeps account of everything

- a. Meaning Allah sends down protection to the messengers so that they have no fear in delivering the messages of Allah to their people

- b. The phrase 'though He 'already' knows all about them' means that Allah has complete knowledge of what He revealed to His messengers and nothing from their affairs is hidden from him
- c. The phrase 'keeps account of everything' means that Allah precisely keeps account of everything in His creation even if it be sand, rain, trees, fruits, etc. There is nothing in existence that is hidden from Allah [Sabuni]