

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Jinn*, 72.

This is a late Makkan Sūra, of which we can be tolerably certain of the date. It was two years before the Hijrat, when the Prophet, despised and rejected in his native city of Makkah went to evangelise the lordly men of Ṭāif. They maltreated him and nearly killed him; what caused him even greater pain was the maltreatment of the humble and lowly men who went with him. Ṭabari has handed down that memorable Prayer of faith and humility which he offered in the midst of his suffering. On his return journey to Makkah, jinns not known to him accepted his mission while his own people were still rejecting him. Within two months some strangers from Madinah had privately met him and laid the foundations of that Hijrat which was to change the fate of Arabia and the course of world-history.

Al-Jinn, The Jinn.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. Say: It has been
Revealed⁵⁷²⁷ to me that
A company of Jinns⁵⁷²⁸
Listened (to the Qur-ān).
They said, 'We have⁵⁷²⁹
Really heard a wonderful Recital!
2. 'It gives guidance
To the Right,
And we have believed therein:
We shall not join (in worship)
Any (gods) with our Lord,
3. 'And exalted is the Majesty
Of our Lord: He has
Taken neither a wife
Nor a son.⁵⁷³⁰
4. 'There were some foolish ones
Among us, who used
To utter extravagant lies
Against Allah;
5. 'But we do think
That no man or jinn

سُورَةُ الْجِنِّ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا
إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْءَانًا عَجَبًا ﴿١﴾

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنَقُصِّرَنَّ عَنْ رَبِّنَا أَحَدًا ﴿٢﴾

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا ﴿٣﴾

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَفِيهُنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا ﴿٤﴾

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّنْ نَقُولَ الْإِنسَ وَالْجِنِّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾

5727. Cf. xlv. 29-32, n. 4809. The Jinns had evidently heard of previous revelations, that of Moses (xlv. 30), and the error of Trinitarian Christianity (lxvii. 3). The community from which they come have all sorts of good and bad persons, but they are determined to preach the good Message of Unity which they have heard and believed in.

5728. For Jinns, see n. 929 to vi. 100.

5729. The Holy Qur-ān would be to them a wonderful Recital—both in subject-matter and in the circumstance that it had come in Arabia among a pagan and ignorant nation.

5730. They abjure paganism and also the doctrine of a son begotten by Allah, which would also imply a wife of whom he was begotten. Cf. vi. 101.

Should say aught that is
Untrue against Allah.⁵⁷³¹

6. 'True, there were persons
Among mankind who took shelter
With persons among the Jinns,
But they increased them
Into further error.⁵⁷³²

7. 'And they (came to) think
As ye thought, that Allah
Would not raise up
Any one (to Judgment).

8. 'And we pried into
The (secrets of) heaven;
But we found it filled
With stern guards
And flaming fires.⁵⁷³³

9. 'We used, indeed, to sit there
In (hidden) stations, to (steal)
A hearing; but any

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ
مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا ﴿٧﴾

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا ﴿٨﴾

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا
شَدِيدًا وَشُهَبًا ﴿٩﴾

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقْعِدًا لِّلسَّمِيعِ فَمَن يَسْمَعِ
الْآنَ يَحْدِلُهُمْ شُهَبًا بَارِصًا ﴿١٠﴾

5731. No one ought to entertain false notions about Allah. For by joining false gods in our ideas of worship, we degrade our conception of ourselves and the duty we owe to our Creator and Cherisher, to Whom we have to give a final account of life and conduct. If we worship idols or heavenly bodies, or human beings, or any creatures, or false fancies born of self or foolish abstractions, or the lusts and desires of our own hearts, we are not only doing violence to Truth, but we are causing discord in the harmony of the world.

5732. If human beings think that by a resort to some spirits they can shelter themselves from the struggles and actualities of their own lives, they are sadly mistaken. They must "dree their own weird", as the Scots would say. It is folly to try to escape from the duties which they can understand in their own natural surroundings, or to try to avoid the consequences of their own acts. Only such persons do so as do not realise that they will ultimately have to answer at the Judgment-Seat of Allah, whose first outpost is in their own conscience.

5733. See notes 1951, 1953, and 1954 to xv. 17-18. See also n. 5562 to lxvii. 5. The speakers here have repented of sin and evil; but they recognise that there are evil ones among them, who love stealth and prying, but their dark plots will be defeated by vigilant guardians of the Right, whose repulse of the attacks of evil is figured by the shafts of meteoric light in the heavens.

Who listens now⁵⁷³⁴
Will find a flaming fire
Watching him in ambush.

10. 'And we understand not
Whether ill is intended
To those on earth,⁵⁷³⁵
On whether their Lord
(Really) intends to guide
Them to right conduct.

11. 'There are among us
Some that are righteous,
And some the contrary:
We follow divergent paths.

12. 'But we think that we
Can by no means frustrate
Allah throughout the earth,
Nor can we escape Him
By flight.⁵⁷³⁶

13. 'And as for us,
Since we have listened
To the Guidance, we have

وَأَنَّا لَا تَدْرِي أَشَرُّ أَرِيدَ يَمَنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ
قِدْدًا ﴿١١﴾

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نَّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَلَن نَّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا ﴿١٢﴾

وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَىٰ ءَاْمَنَّا بِهِ ؕ فَمَن يُؤْمِن بِرَبِّهِ
فَلَا يَخَافُ يَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا ﴿١٣﴾

5734. What is the force of "now"? It refers to the early Makkan period of Revelation. It means that whatever excuse there may have been before, for people to try to seek out the hidden truths of the Unseen World through jinns, there was none now, as the perspicuous Qur-ān had restored the Message of Unity and cleared religion of all the cobwebs, mysteries, and falsehoods with which priestcraft and pious fraud had overlaid it. The result is that such seekers after false hidden knowledge will find themselves confronted now by the flaming fire, which, like the shafts of meteoric light (see note), will lie in wait for and nip such priestcraft and black magic in the bud.

5735. To these jinns this gospel is yet new, and appears like a flaming sword which destroys falsehood while it protects Truth. They frankly confess that they do not clearly understand whether on the whole it will be a mercy to mankind or a punishment for mankind forsaking the paths of Allah. But they rightly feel that it must be a blessing if all seek right Guidance.

5736. See last note. In any case, they know that Allah's Truth and Allah's Plan must prevail, and no one can frustrate Allah's purpose; or escape from it. Why not then bring their will into conformity with it, and find Peace, as they have found, by the acceptance of Faith?

Accepted it: and any
Who believes in his Lord
Has no fear, either⁵⁷³⁷
Of a short (account)
Or of any injustice.

14. 'Amongst us are some
That submit their wills
(To Allah), and some
That swerve from justice.
Now those who submit
Their wills—they have⁵⁷³⁸
Sought out (the path)
Of right conduct:

15. 'But those who swerve,—
They are (but) fuel
For Hell-fire'—⁵⁷³⁹

16. (And Allah's Message is):
"If they (the Pagans)
Had (only) remained
On the (right) Way,
We should certainly have
Bestowed on them Rain⁵⁷⁴⁰
In abundance.

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ
فَأُولَئِكَ نَحْرَوُ أَرْشَادًا ﴿١٤﴾

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ﴿١٥﴾

وَالْوَيْلُ لَكُمْ إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ السَّيْلَ فَيَقُولُوا قَدْ أَهْلَكْتُمُ
مَاءَ غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

5737. Possibly, from this world's standards, it may be that a believer suffers for his Faith. He may be laughed at, persecuted, and actually hurt, "in mind, body, or estate". But he is not perturbed. He takes it all cheerfully, because he knows that when his full account is made up—real gain against apparent loss,—he is a gainer rather than a loser. And his Faith tells him that Allah is a just God, and will never allow him to suffer any injustice, or permit the account of his merit to appear one whit shorter than it is.

5738. Any one who responds to true Guidance, and submits his will to Allah, finds that he makes rapid progress in the path of right conduct and right life. He gets more and more assurance that his destination is the Garden of Bliss.

5739. An unjust life carries its own condemnation. It does no good to itself or to any one else. It bears no fruit. It becomes merely fuel for the Fire of Punishment.

5740. *Rain*: literally, water: stands for all kinds of blessings, material, moral, and spiritual. All blessings come by way of trial: the more we have, the more is expected of us. A man of gifts, talents, or insight is expected to show a higher standard of love and unselfishness than one less gifted, just as a rich man is expected to give more in charity than a poor man.

17. "That We might try them
By that (means).
But if any turns away
From the remembrance⁵⁷⁴¹
Of his Lord, He will
Cause him to undergo
Ever-growing Chastisement.
18. "And the places of worship⁵⁷⁴²
Are for Allah (alone):
So invoke not any one
Along with Allah;
19. "Yet when the Devotee⁵⁷⁴³
Of Allah stood up
To invoke Him, they⁵⁷⁴⁴ just
Make round him a dense crowd."

لَنَقْنِيَنَّهُمْ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ
عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ﴿١٧﴾

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١٨﴾

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ
عَلَيْهِ لَيْدًا ﴿١٩﴾

5741. To remember Allah is to realise His presence, acknowledge His Goodness, and accept His guidance. If we fail to do so, by deliberately turning away, He will withdraw His Grace, and that will be a severe Penalty indeed.

5742. This is a Makkan Sūra, and *Masjid* must be understood, not in the later technical sense of a Mosque, but in the root meaning, of any place, or occasion of worship or humble prostration in the service of Allah, or any limbs or faculties or accessories used in such worship, e.g., hands and feet, lips and voice, understanding or organisation. A number of meanings therefore follow. (1) No place of worship whatever should be used for the worship of any other but Allah the true God. The Ka'ba was then full of idols, but the idols and their votaries were usurpers. (2) Worship should not be mixed up with vain objects, but should be reserved for the sincere service of Allah. (3) All our gifts are for Allah's service, which includes the service of His creatures, and not for our vainglory.

5743. *The Devotee of Allah*: the holy Prophet Muḥammad.

5744. *They*. The immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraish who were then in possession of the Ka'ba and who put all sorts of obstacles and indignities in the way of the holy Prophet for preaching the One True God and denouncing idol-worship. They used to surround him and mob him and to treat him as if he was guilty of some dreadful crime. But the wider application refers to the habit of the world to make a marked man of any who diverges from the beaten paths of their favourite sins and who pleads earnestly for the cause of Truth and righteousness. They ridicule him; they surround him with jeers and obloquy; and they try to make the physical condition of his life as difficult for him as possible.

SECTION 2.

20. Say: "I do
No more than invoke
My Lord, and I join not
With Him any (false god)."

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُوا رَبِّي وَلَا أَشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

21. Say: "It is not
In my power to cause⁵⁷⁴⁵
You harm, or to bring
You to right conduct."

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢١﴾

22. Say: "No one can
Deliver me from Allah⁵⁷⁴⁶
(If I were to disobey Him),
Nor should I find refuge
Except in Him,

قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُخْرِجَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ
مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

23. "Unless I deliver what
I receive from Allah
And His Messages:
For any that disobey Allah
And His Messenger,—for them
Is Hell: they shall dwell
Therein for ever."

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَةً. وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ
فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾

24. At length, when they
See (with their own eyes)
That which they are promised,—⁵⁷⁴⁷

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ
مَنْ أَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقْلَبُ عِدَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

5745. 'Do not suppose that I am going to harm you individually or socially; the very opposite is my wish; but I cannot force you to right conduct; that must depend upon the purification of your own faith and will'.

5746. 'My mission is from Allah. I cannot choose but obey. He has charged me to deliver the Message, and if I were to disobey him, I would myself be worthy of His punishment, and no one can save me. From every kind of trouble and difficulty my only refuge is in Him. I must proclaim His Message: otherwise I am false to the mission He has entrusted to me.'

5747. When the Hereafter arrives, and true values are restored, they will see clearly that the Promise of Allah was true, and that death on this earth was not the end of all things. Then they will see that those who were accounted weak on this earth will, in the realm of Reality, be the strong ones; those who seemed to have no following here will have, there, all the great and true ones with them, to help them and welcome them to their own ranks.

Then will they know
Who it is that is
Weakest in (his) helper
And least important
In point of numbers.

25. Say: "I know not whether
The (Punishment) which ye
Are promised is near,⁵⁷⁴⁸
Or whether my Lord
Will appoint for it
A distant term.

26. "He (alone) knows the Unseen,
Nor does He make any one
Acquainted with His Secrets."⁵⁷⁴⁹

27. "Except a messenger⁵⁷⁵⁰
Whom He has chosen:
And then He makes

قُلْ إِن أَدْرَيْتُ أَقْرَبُ مَا تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ
لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا ﴿٢٥﴾

عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ
يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

5748. The coming of Judgment is certain. But the exact time, relatively to our standards on this earth, no one can tell. Allah alone knows it. Even a Prophet of Allah, as such, does not know the Mysteries of the Unseen World, except in so far as they have been revealed to him by Allah's Revelation. Cf. vi. 50, and notes 867-68.

5749. The Unseen has two aspects. The relative Unseen is so with reference to a particular person, because of the intervention of Time, Space, or particular circumstances. For example, I cannot see to-day a house which I saw last year, because it has since been pulled down. Or I cannot in Lahore see the "Gateway of India" in Bombay, although any one in Bombay can see it. Or I cannot see the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye, though I can through a telescope. But the Absolute Unseen, the Absolute Mystery, is something which no creature can know or see, except in so far as Allah reveals it to him. And Allah reveals such things to the extent that is good for men, through His chosen messengers, among whom the greatest is Muhammad. The exact time of the Hour of Judgment has not been so shown, because we must not wait for it, but live as if it is to be at this minute. See last note and next note, and the references there.

5750. Cf. iii. 179, and n. 482. See also last note.

A band of watchers⁵⁷⁵¹

March before him

And behind him,

28. "That He may know
That they have (truly)^{5751-A}
Brought and delivered
The Messages of their Lord
And He encompasses⁵⁷⁵²
All that is
With them, and takes account
Of every single thing."⁵⁷⁵³

لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ
بِمَالَدَيْهِمْ وَأَخَصَّى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ﴿٢٨﴾

5751. Revelation is not a mechanical or material thing. It has to be safeguarded from being distorted or corrupted by ignorance, selfishness, or the powers of evil. How can its precious and subtle worth and the spiritual safeguards against its misuse by human folly or the perversity of evil be expressed in plain human words? We can imagine a very great treasure, which has to be transmitted. To guard it against evilly-disposed persons, a strong escort is required, to march in front and behind, so as to protect it from all sides. When it reaches its destination, the escort presents its credentials and an Invoice showing the Treasure being transmitted. Then the destined receiver knows that it has come intact and feels satisfied. So about spiritual Revelation. The Prophet recognises the credentials and checks the contents on the tablets of his own heart and insight. He has then no doubt that it is a true Message from Allah, and that those who bring it are the true messengers "of their Lord".

5751-A. *They*: the band of watchers. In "he may know" it is better to construe "he" to refer to the prophet who receives the Message from the "watchers".

5752. *Ahāṭa*: surrounds, encompasses, encloses, guards on all sides, keeps under his own possession and control, and does not allow to be corrupted or debased. See last note but one.

5753. In the spiritual Kingdom,—as indeed, in all things,—Allah's knowledge, wisdom, and Plan comprehend all things, great and small. There is nothing which we do, nothing which happens that is outside His account.