

Are we Alone?

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Throughout history humankind has been attracted to the supernatural. Spirits, ghosts and many other strange creatures have filled our minds and captured our imaginations. Strange and beguiling spectres have at times lead people to commit the greatest of all sins – *Shirk*.¹ So are these spirits real? Are they more than just figments of our imagination, or shadows moulded from smoke and illusion? Well, according to Muslims they are very real. Spirits, ghosts, banshees, poltergeists and phantoms can all be explained when one understands the Islamic concept of spirits – the world of the Jinn.

Jinn, is a word not completely unheard of by English speakers. Notice the similarity between Jinn and Geni. TV and the movies have all played their part in depicting genies as playful creatures able to fulfill all of humankind’s wishes. The geni in the television series “I Dream of Jeanie” was a young woman who always managed to create playful mischief, and in Disney animated film

¹ *Shirk* – is the sin of idolatry or polytheism. Islam teaches that there is One God, Alone, without partners, offspring or intermediaries.

“Aladdin”, the genie was depicted as loveable rogue. Despite this the jinn are not part of a harmless fairy story; they are very real and can pose a very real threat to humankind.

However God, the Most Wise, has not left us defenceless. He explained the nature of the jinn very clearly. We know their methods and motives because God has revealed these things to us in the Quran and in the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him. He has given us the “weapons” to protect ourselves and the means to resist his persuasion. First however, we must be clear about just exactly what jinn are.

The Arabic word Jinn is from the verb ‘*Janna*’ and means to hide or conceal. The Jinn are so called because they conceal themselves from people’s sight. The words *janeen* (foetus) and *mijann* (shield) come from the same root.² Jinn, as the name suggests, are normally invisible to humans. The jinn are part of God’s creation. They were created from fire before the creation of Adam and humankind.

And indeed, We created man from dried (sounding) clay of altered mud. And the jinn, We created aforetime from the smokeless flame of fire (Quran 15:26-27)

According to the traditions of Prophet Muhammad the angels were created from light, the jinn from fire and humankind from “what has been described to you”. (meaning clay)³ God created the angels, jinn and humankind for no other purpose then to worship Him.

“I did not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (Quran 51:56)

Jinn exist in our world but they live on their own. Jinn have their own distinct nature and features and they generally remain

2 Ibn Aqeel Aakaam al Mirjaan fi Ahkaam al Jaan. P7.

3 *Saheeh Muslim*

hidden from humankind. Jinn and humans do have some common traits, the most important of which is free will and with it the ability to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. The jinn eat and drink, they marry, have children and die.

“And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not (the truth).” (Quran 7:179)

Islamic scholar Ibn Abd al Barr said the jinn have several names and are of various types. In general, they are called jinn; a jinn who lives among people (a haunter or dweller) is called Aamir, and if it is the type of jinn that attaches itself to a child it is called Arwaah. An evil jinn is often called Shaytaan (devil), when they are more than evil, demonic, they are called Maarid, and the most evil and strong jinn are called Ifreet (plural afaareet).⁴ In the traditions of Prophet Muhammad the jinn are divided into three classes; those who have wings and fly in the air, those who resemble snakes and dogs, and those who travel about endlessly.⁵

Among the jinn are those who believe in God and the message of all the Prophets of God and there are those who do not. There are also those who will abandon their evil ways and become true believers, faithful and patient.

“Say (O’ Muhammad): It has been revealed to me that a group of Jinn listened and said; ‘Indeed we have heard a marvelous Quran. It guides unto righteousness so we have believed in it, and we will never make partners with our Lord.’ (Quran 72: 1-2)

The jinn are accountable to God and subject to His commands and prohibitions. They will be called to account and will enter

4 Aakaam al Jaan. 8.

5 At Tabarani, Al Hakim & Al Bayhaqi.

either Paradise or Hell. The jinn will be present with humankind on the Day of Resurrection and God will address them both.

“O you assembly of jinn and humankind! “Did not there come to you Messengers from amongst you, reciting unto you My Verses and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?” They will say, “We bear witness against ourselves.” (Quran 6:130)

So far we have learned that supernatural beings do exist. We are not alone. They are creatures that live with us, yet apart from us. Their existence offers an explanation for many strange and unsettling occurrences. We know that jinn are both good and evil, although the mischief makers and evildoers far outnumber the believers.

The concept of Shaytaan being a fallen angel is from the doctrines of Christianity, but according to Islam *Shaytaan* is a jinn, not an angel. God speaks about *Shaytaan* a great deal in the Quran. In part two we will discuss more about Satan himself and what caused him to be cast out from God’s mercy.

Is Satan (Shaytaan) one of the jinn? ⁶ Satan, Shaytann, the devil, Iblees, the personification of evil, is known by many names. The Christians usually call him Satan; to Muslims he is known as Shaytaan. He is first introduced to us in the story of Adam and Eve and although the Christian and Islamic traditions have much in common there are certain glaring differences.

The story of Adam and Eve is well known and an in depth account of the Islamic version can be found on this website. ⁷ Both the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may God

6 Al Ashqar, U. (2003). The World of Jinn and Devils. Islamic Creed Series. International Islamic Publishing House: Riyadh. & Sheikh ibn Al Qayyim in Ighaathat al Lahfaan.

7 <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/1190/>

praise him, in no way indicate that Satan came to Adam and Eve in the form of a snake or serpent. Nor do they indicate that Eve was the weaker of the two who tempted Adam to disobey God. The reality was that Adam and Eve had no experience of the whispering and ploys of -Satan and their dealings with him remain a vital lesson for all of humankind.

Satan became jealous of Adam and refused to obey the command of God to prostrate before him. God tells us of this in the Quran:

“The Angels prostrated themselves all of them together. Except Satan, he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves. God said: ‘O Satan! What is your reason for not being among those who prostrate?’ Satan said: ‘I am not the one to prostrate myself to a human being, whom You created from sounding clay of altered black smooth mud.’ God said: ‘Then get out from Here for verily you are an accursed one. Verily the curse shall be upon you till the Day of Resurrection.’” (Quran 15:30-35)

Satan was arrogant then and he is arrogant now. His vow from that moment on was to misguide and deceive Adam, Eve and their descendants. When he was expelled from Paradise, Satan made a promise to God that if he would be kept alive until the Day of Judgment that he would work his utmost to mislead humankind. Satan is crafty and cunning, but ultimately understands the weaknesses of human beings; he recognises their loves and desires and employs all manner of tricks and deception to lead them away from the path of righteousness. He started to make sin attractive to humankind and tempted them with evil things and immoral actions.

“Now, indeed, Iblees (Satan) did prove that his opinion of them had been right: for [when he called them,] they followed him - all but some of the believers [among them].” (Quran 34:20)

In Arabic, the word shaytaan can refer to any arrogant or insolent creature and it is applied to this particular creature because of his insolence and rebellion towards God. Satan (Shaytaan) is a jinn, a creature who can think, reason and has free will. He is full of despair because he understands the full significance of being denied God's mercy. Satan has vowed not to inhabit the depths of Hell alone; his wish is to take as many human beings with him as he can.

“Satan said: “See this one whom You have honoured above me, if You keep me alive to the Day of Resurrection, I shall most certainly cause his descendants-all but a few-to obey me blindly (Quran17:62)

God warns us against the enmity of Satan throughout the Quran. He is able to deceive, misguide and trick people with ease. He is able to make sin look like a gateway to Paradise and unless each person is careful they can be easily misled. God, Almighty, says:

“O children of Adam. Let not Satan deceive you.” (Quran 7:27)

“Surely Satan is an enemy to you so take him as an enemy.” (Quran 35:6)

“And whoever takes Satan as a protector or helper instead of God, has surely suffered a manifest loss.” (Quran4:119)

As discussed, the ultimate aim of Satan is to lead people away from Paradise, but he also has short term goals. He tries to lead people into idolatry and polytheism. He entices them to commit sins and acts of disobedience. It is correct to say that every act of disobedience that is hated by God is loved by Satan, he loves immorality and sin. He whispers into the ears of the believers, he disrupts the prayer and remembrance of God and fills our minds with unimportant matters. Ibn ul Qayyim said, “One of his plots is

that he always bewitches people's minds until they are deceived, he makes attractive to the mind that which will harm it".

If you spend wealth in charity you will become poor he says, migrating for the sake of God will lead to loneliness, he whispers. Satan sows enmity between the people, instills doubt in people's minds and causes rifts between husband and wife. He has wide-ranging experience in the field of deception. He has tricks and temptations, his words are smooth and enticing and he has troops of helpers both mankind and jinn. Although, as we discussed in the last article, there are believers among the jinn, but the vast majority are mischief makers or evil doers. They work willingly and happily with Satan to scare, trick and ultimately destroy the true believers in God.

In the next article we will discuss where the jinn congregate, how to recognise their signs and how to protect ourselves and our families from their mischief.

We are not alone! This statement sounds a little like an ad for a science fiction movie. It could be just that, but it is not. We really are not alone here on earth. We are God's creatures but we are not God's only creatures. In the past two articles we have learned a great deal about the jinn. We established that they were created by God, before the creation of humankind, from smokeless fire. We also established that the jinn are both male and female, good and bad, believers and non believers.

Jinn exist in our world yet they are separate from it. Shaytaan is from the jinn and his followers are from both the jinn and humankind. Now that we understand that we are not alone, it becomes necessary to recognise signs indicating the presence of the jinn and know how to protect ourselves from their mischief and evil doing.

“And indeed, We created man from clay of altered mud. And the jinn, We created aforetime from the smokeless flame of fire.”
(Quran 15:26-27)

“I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”
(Quran 51:56)

Because the jinn share this world with us we should know their dwelling places. Jinn tend to gather together, sometimes in great numbers, in ruins and deserted places. They tend to gather in places of filth, garbage dumps and graveyards. Jinn at times congregate in places where it is easy for them to cause mischief and mayhem, such as market places.

In the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, we find that some of the companions advised people not to be the first to enter or the last to leave market places because they were the battle grounds for the devils and mischief makers.⁸

If a Shaytaan chooses a human dwelling as its own place of stay, we are given the “weapons” through which we can expel them from the homes. These include saying Bismillah (I begin with the name of God), remembering God frequently and reciting any words from the Quran but especially Chapters two and three. The jinn also flee whenever they hear the call to prayer.

Prophet Muhammad explained that jinn congregate in great numbers and spread out as darkness falls. He commanded us to keep our children inside at dusk for this reason.⁹ He also told us that the jinn have animals and that the food for their animals is the dung of our animals.

Sometimes, animals that belong to humankind are associated with the jinn. For instance, many of the jinn are able to take on the form of snakes and Prophet Muhammad referred to black dogs as

8 *Saheeh Muslim*

9 *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

devils. He also said, “Do not pray in camels’ pens for devils dwell therein.”¹⁰ He associated camels with jinn due to their aggressive nature.

There are many ways that we can protect ourselves and our families from the mischief caused by the jinn. The most important is to turn to God and seek his protection; we do this by adhering to the words of Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. Seeking refuge in God will protect us from the jinn and devils. We should seek His protection when we enter the bathroom¹¹, when we become angry¹², before sexual intercourse¹³, and resting on a journey or travelling into a valley¹⁴. It is also important to seek refuge with God when reading Quran.

“So when you want to recite the Quran, seek refuge with God from Shaytaan (Satan), the outcast (the cursed one). Verily! He has no power over those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord.” (Quran 16:98-99)

Understanding the nature of the jinn makes it possible to understand some of the strange phenomena that occur in our world today. People turn to fortune tellers and psychics to see into the future or the unknown. Men and women on the television and internet claim to speak to dead people and relay secrets and mysterious information. Islam teaches us that this is not possible. Soothsayers and astrologists allege that they can predict the future and read personalities by the alignment of the stars and other heavenly bodies. Islam teaches us that this too is not possible.

However, in the ancient past the jinn were able to ascend into the heavens. At that time they were able to eavesdrop and find out about events before they happened. During the time of Prophet

10 *Abu Dawood.*

11 *Ibid*

12 *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

13 *Ibid*

14 *Ibn Majah.*

Muhammad heavenly protection was increased and remains so still. The jinn are no long able to eavesdrop on conversations in the heavenly realm.

“And we have sought to reach the heaven; but found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires. And verily, we used to sit there in stations, to (steal) a hearing, but any who listens now will find a flaming fire watching him in ambush. And we know not whether evil is intended for those on earth, or whether their Lord intends for them a Right Path.” (Quran 72:8-10)

Prophet Muhammad explained the meaning of these verses. *“When God has ordained some affair in the Heaven, the angels beat with their wings in obedience to His statement, which sounds like a chain dragged over a rock. They (angels) say, ‘What was it that your Lord said? Some answer, ‘**The truth, And He is the Most High, the Most Great.**’ (Quran 34.23) Then those who gain a hearing by stealing (i.e. devils or jinn) stand one over the other. A flame may overtake and burn the eavesdropper before he conveys the news to the one below him, or it may not overtake him till he has conveyed it to the one below him, who in his turn, conveys it to the one below him, and so on till they convey the news to the earth.* ¹⁵

The jinn are able to take a grain of truth and mix it with lies to confuse and confound people. Strange phenomena though disconcerting and sometimes scary are nothing more than evil mischief making designed to tear people away from God. Sometimes the jinn and human devils will team up to trick the believers into committing the sin of shirk –associating partners with God.

Sometimes in this strange and wonderful world we are confronted with trials and tribulations that often seem to weigh us down. Dealing with the mischief making and evil intentions of the

15 Saheeh Al-Bukhari

jinn seems to be an even bigger test. However it is comforting to know that God is the source of all strength and power and that nothing happens without his permission.

Prophet Muhammad told us that the best words with which to seek God's protection from the evil of mankind and jinn are the last three chapters of the Quran. We may at times have to face the evil doing of the jinn but God is our safe haven, turning to Him is our rescue. There is no protection except the protection of God, it is Him alone that we worship and it is to Him alone that we turn to for help.