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Various Points

1. An in-depth investigation regarding `Ilm al-Ghaib

By paying close attention to the various verses of the Qur'an, it is clear that there exists two groups of verses in relation to `Ilm al-Ghaib – Knowledge of the Unseen. The first group are those verses which limit this knowledge strictly to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and negate it for all others such as verse 59 of Suratul An`am:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ...

“And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasure – none knows them except He...”

Also, we have in the Qur'an, that which has been mentioned about the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) in Suratul An`am, verse 50:

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ

“Say (O' Muhammad): I do not say to you that I have with me the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen.”

In verse 188 of Suratul A`raf, we read the following:

وَلَوْ كُنْتَ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَاسْتَكْتَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ

“Had I known about the unseen, I would have gained much good.”

The last verse in this discussion is found in Surah Yunus, verse 20, we read:

فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ

“Say (O' Muhammad): Certainly the (Knowledge of the) Unseen is solely reserved for Allah.”

There are many more verses such as these in the Qur'an, however, we will suffice with these.

The second group of verses are those which clearly indicate that the Prophets and intimate friends (Awliyah) of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) have a general knowledge of the Unseen as has been mentioned in verse 179 of Surah Ale `Imran which states:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ

“And Allah does not inform you of the unseen. He chooses for such information anyone of His Messengers as He desires.”

Also, in relation to some of the miracles of Prophet `Isa al-Masih (peace be upon him), it is mentioned that:

وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدْخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ

“I (Prophet `Isa) inform you of what you eat and what you store in your house.”¹

If we look at the exception mentioned in the verse under discussion (verse 27 of Suratul Jinn), we see that Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has allowed a portion of the Knowledge of the Unseen to be known to His chosen Messenger (since in `Arabic, if there is ever an exception (in a sentence) preceded by a negation, it always refers to an affirmation):

إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا

“Except to him whom He is pleased with from among (His) Messengers so then surely He places before him and behind him a guard.”²

From another point of view, the number of verses of the Qur'an that give us information about hidden matters are not few, such as the second to fourth verses of Suratul Rum:

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بِضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“The Romans are vanquished. In a near land, and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome (within a few years) and they will be victorious. All matters of the past and future are in the hands of Allah. The believers will enjoy the help of Allah on that Day.”³

Also, in verse 85 of Suratul Qasas, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) tells us:

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ

“Certainly the One who had made the Qur'an incumbent upon you will return you to your starting point (Makkah).”

Also, in verse 27 of Suratul Fath, we read the following:

لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ

“Certainly you shall enter into the Masjid al-Haram, with the permission of Allah, in security.”

There are also many more verses of the Qur'an such as these.

In principle, the heavenly revelation (*Wahi*) that is sent down to the Prophets is also a form of Knowledge of the Unseen which is placed at their disposal – thus, how can we claim that these personalities do not have access to the Knowledge of the Unseen when we know that revelation has come down to them?

Besides all of these proofs, we have numerous ahadith that show that Prophet Muhammad (prayers of Allah be upon him and his family) and the Infallible A'imma (peace be upon all of them) had access to the Knowledge of the Unseen.

Sometimes, they were given the knowledge of what would happen in the future such as the victory of Makkah, and the event surrounding Hatib ibn Abi Balta`ah, who wrote a letter to the people of Makkah which he gave to a woman named Sarah and she was to convey the letter to the polytheists of Makkah. She was close to being attacked by the Muslim army when she hid the letter under her long hair and continued on towards Makkah.

The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) ordered `Ali (peace be upon him) and a company of troops to go after her.

The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) also informed the group of Muslims that when they reach to an area known as *Rawdha al-Khak* they will meet this woman, who has a letter from Hatib in her possession which is supposed to be given to the polytheists of Makkah.

The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) also commanded them to take the letter from her. When the Muslim army found her, she initially denied having such a letter, however after repeated requests to her, she finally handed over the writing to `Ali (peace be upon him) and the group of Muslims.⁴

There are also events such as the prediction of the Battle of Muthah, and the martyrdom of Ja`far ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and other soldiers and warriors in the Muslim army, which the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) told his followers while they were still in Madinah.⁵

Such examples in the life of the Holy Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) are not small in number.

In Nahj al-Balagha, there are many forecasts to the events that would take place in the future, which show that Imam `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) also had access to this hidden knowledge. One such example of this can be seen in the 13th Khutbah in which the people of Basrah were degraded, in which Imam `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said:

كَأَنِّي أَنْظُرُ إِلَى مَسْجِدِهَا كَجَوْجُو سَفِينَةٍ قَدْ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا الْعَذَابَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَ
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا وَ غَرَقَ مَنْ فِي ضَمْنِهَا.

“So then it is as though I see its Masjid like the upper part of a boat or a sitting ostrich which Allah had sent down punishment to from above and below and drowned all that were within her protection.”

In other ahadith which have been narrated in both the books of the Ahl as-Sunnah and Shi`a, there are many other forecasts from Imam `Ali (peace be upon him) concerning events that would happen in the future; such as one where he told Hajr ibn Qais that after his death, Hajr would be forced to curse `Ali (peace be upon him).⁶

Another example concerns Marwan in which it was mentioned that he would hold the flag of corruption and despotism in his old age.⁷

Amir al-Mu`minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) told Kumail bin Ziyad (may Allah be pleased with him) that the tyrant Hajjaj ibn Yusuf would be his killer.⁸

In regards to the Khawarij of Nahrawan, Imam `Ali (peace be upon him) mentioned that in this battle, people would not die from his side and from the opposite side, not even ten people will be saved, and just how he predicted, it came true.⁹

Concerning the burial place of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him), when Imam `Ali (peace be upon him) was passing by the land of Karbala, he spoke certain words in regards to this to his companion, Asbagh ibn Nabatah.¹⁰

In the book, Fadhail al-Khamsah, there are countless ahadith from the Ahl as-Sunnah in regards to the vast knowledge of Imam `Ali (peace be upon him) of which, to narrate them all here is not possible for us.¹¹

As well, in the ahadith from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon him), there are many traditions which point to the fact that the sinless A'immah had Knowledge of the Unseen. For those who would like to read more

about this, one can refer to al-Kafi, Volume 1, in the various sections which mention these ahadith.

Also, the Late `Allamah Majlisi in his work, Bihar al-Anwar in volume 27, has narrated quite a large number of ahadith, which fill some 22 chapters on this topic.

These ahadith which speak about the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the A'immah having Knowledge of the Unseen have actually reached to the level of *tawatur* (meaning that these ahadith have been so consecutively narrated that it is not possible to deny the text) in terms of `Ilm al-Hadith.

Now the question remains that: How can one explain some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the ahadith which deny that anyone other than Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has Knowledge of the Unseen, while other verses state some can have this knowledge?

Different answers are given to this question – including the following:

1. The most popular answer which helps us reconcile these two conflicting views is that the meaning that “Knowledge of the Unseen is confined to Allah” is that it is His Own and Personal knowledge. Therefore, no other person has the ability to know this knowledge except with His permission and whatever knowledge others have is from Him and through His Grace upon them.

The proof of this is the verse that is under discussion which states:

إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ
فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا.

“The Knower of the Unseen! So then He does not reveal His secrets to anyone. Except to him whom He is pleased with from among His Messengers so then surely He places before him and behind him a guard.”

In Nahj al-Balagha, this same point has been mentioned when `Ali (peace be upon him) informed others of events that would happen in the future (for example, the invasion of the Moguls into the Islamic Empire). One of his companions said, 'O' Amir al-Mu'minin! Do you claim to have Knowledge of the Unseen?' The Imam laughed and replied:

لَيْسَ هُوَ بِعِلْمِ غَيْبٍ وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ تَعَلَّمَ مِنْ ذِي عِلْمٍ

*“This is not Knowledge of the Unseen, rather, this is that knowledge which was taught to me by the possessor of knowledge (the Prophet).”*¹²

This explanation is one that a great number of scholars and researchers have agreed upon.

2. The Knowledge of the Unseen are of two types – the first is that which is specifically limited to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and no one except for Him knows it, such as when the Day of Judgement will take place and other such issues. The second type is that knowledge which He teaches to His Prophets (peace be upon them) and intimate friends. Again, in Nahj al-Balagha, under the same speech (as quoted above), we read the following:

وَ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَمَا عَدَدَهُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ بِقَوْلِهِ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ
السَّاعَةِ، وَ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ، وَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ، وَ مَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَاذَا تَكْسِبُ
غَدًا وَ مَا تَدْرِي بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ.

*“Verily knowledge of the Unseen is the knowledge of the Day of Judgment and what Allah has mentioned in His Saying: {Verily, Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the womb; and no soul knows what he shall earn tomorrow; nor does any soul know in what land he shall die in.}”*¹³

Then to further explain this, the Imam (peace be upon him) added:

فَيَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْثَى وَ قَبِيحٍ أَوْ جَمِيلٍ وَ سَخِيٍّ أَوْ
بَخِيلٍ وَ شَقِيٍّ أَوْ سَعِيدٍ وَ مَنْ يَكُونُ فِي النَّارِ حَطْبًا أَوْ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لِنَبِيِّنَ مُرَافِقًا
فَهَذَا عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ الَّذِي لَا يَعْلَمُهُ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَ مَا سِوَى ذَلِكَ فَعِلْمُ عِلْمِ اللَّهِ نَبِيَّهُ
(صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ) فَعَلَّمَنِيهِ وَ دَعَا لِي بِأَنْ يَعِيَهُ صَدْرِي وَ تَضَطَّمَ عَلَيْهِ
جَوَانِحِي.

“Therefore, Allah alone has knowledge in reference to that which is in the womb of the mother – whether

it is a boy or a girl; whether it is beautiful or ugly; whether it will be generous or miserly; whether it will be successful or misfortunate; whether that (which is in the womb) would be the fuel for the hell fire or relaxing in the gardens in the company of the Prophets.

This is the Knowledge of the Unseen which no one knows other than Allah. Other than this, there is knowledge which Allah taught His Messenger (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) which he has taught me and he (the Prophet) also prayed for me that my bosom may retain it and my ribs may hold it.”¹⁴

It is possible that some people are given general knowledge in relation to the state or sex of the fetus, or the falling of the rain, or other things like this, however, complete and comprehensive knowledge and the ability to inform others of those particular characteristics is only reserved to the pure Essence of Allah.

This can be seen in the knowledge of Qiyamah that we too have a general knowledge of this day; however we are not given information of the particular characteristics and all of the peculiarities of it.

Therefore, if in the ahadith we see that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) or the A'immah (peace be upon them) gave others knowledge of a baby that would be born, or when the end of the life of a person would come, then we must say that this knowledge is related to that general knowledge that they were granted by Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He).

3. Another way to combine the interpretation of these two theories by using the verses of the Qur'an and ahadith is to state that the secrets of the unseen are recorded in two separate areas: the **لوح المحفوظ** (Lawhul Mahfuz) or the Guarded Tablet (this is the special, guarded knowledge only available to Allah) in which no changes or variations can take place and of which not a single soul has information of; and the second area is the **لوح محو و إثبات** (Lawh Mahw wa Ithbat) or the Tablet of Change and Confirmation.

The knowledge contained on this tablet is changeable and alterable depending on certain conditions. It is the knowledge contained here, which is also Knowledge of the Unseen, that is not limited to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) alone, and thus, others can have access to this knowledge.

It is because of these two different areas where knowledge is stored that we have the following narration from Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him):

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عِلْمًا لَمْ يَعْلَمْهُ إِلَّا هُوَ، وَ عِلْمًا أَعْلَمَهُ مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَ رُسُلُهُ، فَمَا أَعْلَمَهُ مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَ
أَنْبِيَائُهُ وَ رُسُلُهُ فَنَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُ.

“One type of knowledge is that which only Allah has and no one else knows. Another type of knowledge is the type which He has informed Angels, Prophets and Apostles, and we (the Ahl al-Bait) also know it.”¹⁵

The following has been narrated from Imam `Ali ibn al-Husayn (peace be upon him):

لَوْ لَا آيَةٌ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لَحَدَّثْتُكُمْ بِمَا كَانَ وَ مَا يَكُونُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ! فَقُلْتُ لَهُ
آيَةٌ آيَةٌ؟ فَقَالَ: قَوْلِ اللَّهِ: يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَ يَثْبِتُ وَ عِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

“If one verse had not been in the Holy Qur'an, I also would have informed you of the past happenings and what will happen until the Day of Judgement.”

The Narrator says that he asked the Imam: “Which verse is that?” The Imam replied: “Allah says: 'Allah makes to pass away and establishes what He pleases, and with Him is the basis of the Book.'”¹⁶

In this argument, the knowledge has been divided into *definite* and *indefinite*. In the preceding argument it was part or full (how much of the knowledge). (Ponder over it).

4. Another way to explain the difference is that in practice, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has complete knowledge over all that which is hidden (to others) and it is possible that the Prophets and intimate friends of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He), in practice or on their own, do not have access to this knowledge.

However, when they intend or wish to know such things, then Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) teaches it to them. Of course this intention or wish is only with the permission and pleasure of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He).

Therefore, to summarize the verses of the Qur'an and ahadith that tell us that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), A'immah (peace be upon them) and others do not have Knowledge of the Unseen means that at that exact time, they do not possess the knowledge; and those verses or ahadith which say that they do possess Knowledge of the Unseen mean that they have the ability to gain such knowledge (from Allah, (Glorified and Exalted is He)).

This can be compared to a person who is given a letter from someone and is requested to pass the letter to a third person. In this example we can say that the person who was given the letter does not know what it contains.

However at the same time, he is able to open the letter and read its contents (as long as the person who gave him the letter gave him the permission to do so). In this event, he would have knowledge of what is contained in the letter. If he does not give him permission, then he would remain unaware of its contents.

The best example of Knowledge of the Unseen, after combining all the meanings of the ahadith that have been mentioned can be found in Al-Kafi in the section titled, '*Surely the A'immah, when they want to know something, they are taught it!*'

There is a hadith from Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) in which he stated:

اِذَا ارَادَ الْاِمَامُ اَنْ يَعْلَمَ شَيْئًا اَعْلَمَهُ اللهُ بِذَلِكَ.

“When the Imam intends to know something, Allah teaches that thing to him.”¹⁷

This interpretation clears up a lot of the difficulties and misunderstandings in relation to the knowledge of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) and the A'immah (peace be upon them all) such as: how is it possible for them to drink water or eat food that is laced with poison whereas we know that it is not permitted for a person to do an act that will lead to danger of losing his life.

Thus, we must say that in such examples, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) or the A'immah (peace be upon them all) have not been given the permission by Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) to make use of the Knowledge of the Unseen that is there and usually available to them.

Also, sometimes the betterment requires that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) and A'immah (peace be upon them all) are not made aware of a certain thing or that they are not told of it, so that the event can pass as a test for them which would result in their completeness as a human being.

For example, it has been mentioned in the event recorded in history known as *Lailatul Mabit* in which `Ali (peace be upon him) slept on the bed of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family), in which it has been narrated from `Ali (peace be upon them all) that he himself said that he did not know whether the polytheists of the Quraish would attack him on that night and he would become a martyr in the way of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) or if his life would be spared?

In this instance, the betterment requires that the Imam (peace be upon him) is not made aware of the outcome of his actions so that the Divine test of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) can take form.

Thus, if the Imam (peace be upon him) knew that he was going to be sleeping on the bed of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) and then the next morning, he would wake up safe and sound, then this would not be an act of honour or glory for the Imam (peace be upon him); and that which is mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an and the ahadith in relation to the importance of this act of self-sacrifice would not have had any meaning.

Of course, the issue of Knowledge of the Unseen being accessible if the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) or A'immah (peace be upon them all) wish clears up this and other types of confusions.

5. Another way to reconcile these differing views that are found in the ahadith in relation to Knowledge of the Unseen (however, please note that this way of reconciliation is in relation to some of the narrations as well and that the people who were being spoken to in these various ahadith were different people) is that some of the companions of the Prophet and A'immah had the ability to understand and accept the issue of Knowledge of the Unseen in relation to the A'immah (peace be upon them all) such that it could be told to these companions in its entirety. However in relation to various other companions, they were either too weak (of faith) or unable to understand and accept such concepts.

For example, we read a hadith that once Abu Basir and a large group of companions were in the house of Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) when all of a sudden the Imam entered the room upset, sat down and said the following:

إِيَّا عَجَبًا لِأَقْوَامٍ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّا نَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ! مَا يَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، لَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ بِضَرْبِ جَارِيَتِي فُلَانَةَ فَهَرَبَتْ مِنِّي فَمَا عَلِمْتُ فِي أَيِّ بُيُوتِ الدَّارِ هِيَ.

*"It is surprising that some people think that we have Knowledge of the Unseen ('Ilm al-Ghaib). No one apart from Allah has this knowledge. I wanted to reprimand my female-slave however she has disappeared from my presence and I do not know which room of my house she is in."*¹⁸

The narrator of the hadith then said, "When the Imam stood up and left the assembly, me and a group of the companions got up and went into the house of the Imam and said to him, 'May we be sacrificed for you! In regards to what you said relating to one of your female servants that you do not have the Knowledge of the Unseen, however we know that you have various types of knowledge, thus, why did you say what you did concerning your female slave?'"

The Imam (peace be upon him) then elaborated on his statement which contained an explanation about

Knowledge of the Unseen.

It was clear that in the gathering, there were people who did not have the ability or aptitude necessary to understand and comprehend the meaning, nor did they have a deep cognizance of the Imam (and this is why he said what he did).

It must be pointed out that these five points mentioned do not oppose or contradict one another and all of these points can be taken as truthful. (Ponder on this)

2. Another Way to Prove that the Prophets and A'immah have Knowledge of the Unseen

At this point, we present two other proofs that confirm the truth that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Sinless A'immah (peace be upon them all) have a general Knowledge of the Unseen.

First: The jurisdiction of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the A'immah (peace be upon them all) was universal and for all time, thus it was not limited. Rather, the Apostleship of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the leadership of the A'immah (peace be upon them all) was world-wide and eternal. Thus, how is it possible that someone can be given such a wide jurisdiction and authority, but yet at the same time are only given knowledge of that particular time and place in which they are living in?

Is it possible for a person who is for example, given the responsibility of being a governor or administrator of a large country to not be aware of that area and at the same time be able to fulfill his role of authority or control over that area?

In other words, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and A'immah (peace be upon them all) had to give guidance, instructions and lay down laws which would help people who would come in the future and in all lands and not only be limited to those who were their contemporaries. This is not possible except by possessing at least a small portion of the Knowledge of the Unseen.

Secondly: There are three verses of the Holy Qur'an which if we place them next to one another, would fully explain the Knowledge of the Unseen that had been granted to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and A'immah (peace be upon them all).

1. The first is about a person named Asif bin Barkhiya, who in the twinkling of an eye, brought the throne

of Bilqis to the court of Prophet Sulayman (peace be upon him):

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رآه مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي

“One who had some knowledge of the book said: I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye. Then when he saw it settled beside him, he said: This is by the grace of my Lord.” 19

2. The second verse states:

قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

“Say: Allah is sufficient as a Witness between me and you and whoever has knowledge of the book.”²⁰

In many narrations both in the books of the Ahl as-Sunnah and Shi`a, it is stated that when the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) was asked by Abu Sa`id Khudri about “One who had some knowledge of the book (*min al-Kitab*)?”²¹

The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) replied that it was the successor of his brother Sulayman bin Dawud. Then he asked the Prophet that who was the one who “has (complete) knowledge of the Book?”²² He replied: It is my brother `Ali ibn Abi Talib.”²³

Paying attention to the first verse that states, ‘...some knowledge of the book’ (which has been related to be in reference to Asif ibn Barkhiya) is a fraction or a share of the knowledge; whereas in the second verse, ‘knowledge of the book’ (which has been related to be in reference to `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him)) is complete knowledge.

Therefore, the difference between the station of knowledge that was granted to Asif and that which was granted to `Ali (peace be upon him) is made clear.

3. The third verse under discussion is:

...وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

“...and We have revealed the Book to you clearly explaining everything...” 24

It is clear that one who knows the secrets of this Book, must also have Knowledge of the Unseen, and this is in itself clear proof that it is possible for men from among the intimate friends of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) to have Knowledge of the Unseen, by the permission of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He).25

3. An in-Depth Study Regarding the Creation of the Jinn

The Jinn, just as the literal meaning of the word denotes, are creations which are unseen as having many characteristics. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that:

1) They are beings that have been created from fire, as opposed to man who has been created and fashioned from dirt:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ

“He created man from dry clay like Earthen vessels, and He created the Jinn from fire free of smoke.”26

2) The Jinn are creatures that have knowledge and understanding and are able to discern between truth and falsehood. They also have the power of logic and deduction. (See various Ayat of Suratul Jinn, as have already been mentioned)

3) The Jinn too have a responsibility towards their Creator. (Various Ayat of Suratul Jinn and Suratul Rahman)

4) A group of them are righteous believers, and a group of them are non-believers:

وَأَنَا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قَدَدًا

*“As for us, certainly some of us are righteous and others are not. We have all followed different paths.”*²⁷

5) They too have a day when they will be brought together and will have to account for their deeds:

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا

*“However, the deviators from the Truth will be the fuel for hell.”*²⁸

6) They used to have the ability to go to the heavens and even received knowledge from there and used to steal information, but this was later on was forbidden for them:

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَصَدًا

*“We used to sit near by and try to listen to the heavens, but shooting flames now await those who try to do that.”*²⁹

7) Some of them are able to meet and communicate with human beings, and are able to increase their limited knowledge and information, relating to some of the secrets of the world:

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا

*“Certain human beings sought refuge with certain Jinn and this increased the rebelliousness of those Jinn.”*³⁰

8) From among them, we find some that have great powers and strength, just as we find among humans beings as well:

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ

"A monstrous Jinn said, "I can bring it (the Throne of Bilqis) before you even stand up. Verily I am powerful and trustworthy."31

9) Some of them have the ability to perform tasks on behalf of human beings, as has been mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ... يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِبَ
وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانَ كَالْجَوَابِ ..

"...and of the Jinn there were those who worked before him (Sulayman) by the command of his Lord ... they made for him what he pleased of fortresses and images, and bowls (large) as watering troughs and cooking pots..."32

10) Their creation and placing on the Earth, took place before the creation of mankind:

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ

"...and We created the Jinn before (the human being) of smokeless fire."33

In addition to this, from the verses of the Qur'an, we can clearly see that contrary to that which is in the minds of the common people (who feel that they are better than the Jinn), there are truly some people who are better than them and our proof is that all of the Prophets of Allah are human beings that were chosen (for the role of Prophethood) and it was the Jinn who were commanded to believe in the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) who was a human being and were commanded to followed him.

Above all, Shaytan who, according to the Qur'an was of the Jinn (see verse 50 of Suratul Kahf), was commanded to perform Sajdah to Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) and this shows the greatness and eminence of mankind over the Jinn.

Up until this point, our discussion was centered on the facts that were mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, which is free from all sorts of corruption, in relation to this unseen creation.

However, as we know, the common people and those who are irrational have conjectured up various

adulterated ideas in relation to this creation of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) which both the intelligence and logic can not accept.

Due to this, a corrupt and unrealistic view of this creation has been made such that whenever the word Jinn is mentioned, a whole group of corrupt thoughts and beliefs pop up in the mind of the people. Some things that people mention are that the Jinn have the ability of metamorphosis, thus, they take the shape and form of various strange, wild and scary creatures. They are also thought to be creations full of anger and rage and that if they were to throw a bowl of hot water into an empty area of a house then the whole house would catch on fire; and other beliefs such as these.

However, if the issue of the Jinn was to be studied without all of these strange and wrong misconceptions, then the primary topic at hand would be completely understood and accepted, since we have no proof that living creatures that exist are limited to only those that can be seen by the naked eye. Rather, the scholars of Religion, and the Scientists and Researchers of the natural sciences have said that any creature that mankind is able to discern by using his senses, cannot be compared to those creatures that cannot be perceived by the five natural senses.

Until recently when unseen creations the size of atoms had not been discovered, nobody would have believed that in one drop of water or one drop of blood, there exists thousands and thousands of living organisms which we as humans did not have the power to see.

Also, the scientists have mentioned that our own eyes are limited in what colours it can see; also, our ears are limited to the spectrum and frequencies of sounds which it can hear. The colours which we cannot see and the sounds which we cannot hear are much more in number than we are able to see or hear!

When we see that the state of the world and our surroundings are such, then it is no place of amazement that there can be various types of living creatures in this universe which we are not able to perceive. Thus, when the true light – the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) – informs us about such creations, why is it not possible for us to accept them?

In any case, on one hand, we have the Qur'an – the true spoken word – which has informed us of the Jinn along with their special characteristics as mentioned above; and on another side, we have no logical proof that can be brought forth to deny their existence. Thus, we must accept their existence and stay away from all wrong and corrupt ideas. We must also keep away from all contaminated ideas that are in the minds of the common people while discussing the Jinn.

It is also important to mention this final point that the word Jinn sometimes carries a much wider

meaning which includes various unseen creations – both those that possess intellect and those who do not. Sometimes, even some animals that can be seen by the naked eye, but are hidden inside their nest or den are also included in this wider meaning of Jinn.

An example of this can be seen in the narrations from the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah upon him and his family) in which he said:

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْجِنَّ خَمْسَةَ أَصْنَافٍ: صِنْفٌ كَالرِّيحِ فِي الْهَوَاءِ وَ صِنْفٌ حَيَاتٌ وَ
صِنْفٌ عَقَارِبٌ وَ صِنْفٌ حَشْرَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَ صِنْفٌ كَبَنِي آدَمَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْحِسَابُ وَ
الْعِقَابِ.

“Allah has created the Jinn in five different types: One group is like the wind (unseen); another group is in the form of a snake; a third group is in the form of a scorpion; the next group is those wild animals of the land; and the last group is just like humans which have accountability for their good and bad deeds.”³⁴

By paying close attention to this hadith and its wide definition (of the Jinn), very many difficulties and problems which are mentioned in various other ahadith and stories in relation to the Jinn are solved.

For example, in some of the ahadith from Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him), we read the following:

لَا تَشْرَبُ الْمَاءَ مِنْ ثُلْمَةٍ الْأَنْاءِ وَ لَا مِنْ عَرُوتِهِ فَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَقْعُدُ عَلَى الْعُرْوَةِ
وَالثُّلْمَةِ.

“Do not drink water from a broken or defective glass, since verily Shaytan sits in the defective and broken (glasses).”³⁵

Keeping in mind that Shaytan is from the Jinn and that a broken dish and the area where it is kept is a place where all types of microbes and germs gather, it is not difficult to assume that the words Jinn and Shaytan (as used in these ahadith) carry a general meaning and would include these things (germs and microbes) too even though this hadith (and others) have a specific meaning that the Jinn or Shaytan is a being with understanding and intelligence and have a responsibility to their Creator and the ahadith in

these regards are also quite numerous.³⁶

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1. Surah Ale Imran (3), Verse 49.
 2. Suratul Jinn (72), Verse 27.
 3. Surah ar-Rum (30), Verse 2 – 4.
 4. A commentary on this event and its complete references can be found in the commentary of Surah Mumtahirah.
 5. Kamil ibn Athir, Volume 2, Page 237 in the section on the Battle of Muta.
 6. Mustadrak Al-Sahihain, Volume 2, page 358
 7. Tabaqat of ibn Sa'd, Volume 5, page 30.
 8. Al-Isabatu of ibn Al-Hajr, Volume 5, Section 3, Page 325.
 9. Haythami in the book Majma', Volume 6, Page 241.
 10. Al-Riyadh Al-Nadhirah, Volume 2, Page 222.
 11. Fadhail Al-Khamsah, volume 2, Pages 231 to 253.
 12. Nahj Al-Balagha, Speech 128.
 13. Surah Luqman (31), Verse 34.
 14. Nahj Al-Balagha, Speech 127. Bihar Al-Anwar, Volume 26, Page 160, hadith 5, there are many ahadith on this topic from the same source.
 15. Bihar Al-Anwar, Volume 26, Page 160, hadith 5, there are many ahadith on this topic from the same source.
 16. Tafsir Nur ath-Thaqalain, Volume 2, Page 512, hadith 160.
 17. Al-Kafi, Section: "Surely the A'immah, when they want to know something, they are taught it", hadith 3. There are also other ahadith in this section on this topic.
 18. Usul Al-Kafi, Volume 1, hadith 3.
 19. Surah an-Naml (27), Verse 40.
 20. Surah ar-Ra'd (13), Verse 43
 21. Surah an-Naml (27), Verse 40
 22. Surah ar-Ra'd (13), Verse 43
 23. Refer to Volume 3 of the book Ahqaaq Al-Haqq, Pages 280-281 and the Tafsir Nur ath-Thaqalain, volume 2, Page 523.
 24. Surah an-Nahl (16), Verse 89
 25. In the commentary (of Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, Tafsir-e-Namunah) in Suratul An'am, verses 50, 59 (Volume 5, Pages 245 and 268) and Suratul A'raf, verse 188 (Volume 7, Page 46), this subject has been discussed in detail.
 26. Suratul Rahman (55), Verse 15.
 27. Suratul Jinn (72), Verse 11.
 28. Suratul Jinn (72), Verse 15.
 29. Suratul Jinn (72), Verse 9.
 30. Suratul Jinn (72), Verse 6.
 31. Suratul Nahl (16), Verse 39.
 32. Surah Saba (34), Verse 13.
 33. Suratul Hijr (15), Verse 27
 34. Safinat Al-Bihar, Volume 1, Page 186 (Under جن).
 35. Al-Kafi, Volume 6, Page 385, Section on "Book of Drinking" section on "Types of Vessels", hadith 5.
 36. In the first volume of the book, The First University and the Last Prophet, there are approximately 23 Ahadith in relation to this topic.

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