

ISLAMIC EXEGESIS ON THE JINN: THEIR ORIGIN, KINDS AND SUBSTANCE AND THEIR RELATION TO OTHER BEINGS

Egdunas Raciū

Wa-al-jānna khalaqāhū min qablu min nāri al-samūmi (15:27)

Wa-khalaqa al-jānna min mārijin min nār (55:15)

Though all three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) share basic similarities in their cosmology, Islam stands out with respect to the number of distinct classes of creatures. Judaeo-Christian cosmology consists of the following hierarchical elements: God (the Creator) – angels – human beings – animals – plants – non-living nature. In Islamic cosmology, at least one more class,¹ that of the *jinn*,² is added. Jinn are situated between angels and human beings.

Belief in the jinn is firmly established, first of all, in the Quran itself, where the word or its related forms (by meaning) are mentioned some 40 times (Hentschel 1997: 21). Secondly, all major hadith collections contain stories on the jinn, their nature, their structure, encounters with human beings (the prophet Muḥammad himself, among them). Therefore, for sincere Muslims there is no ground for doubting the existence of the class of these creatures. Popular beliefs have further strengthened the position of the jinn in Islamic cosmology. However, Quranic passages alone do not provide much detail on the jinn. And what there is, is usually puzzling and contradictory. Certain hadiths clarify the picture but still leave much ambivalence.

This ambivalence seems not to have been resolved by Muslim commentators on the Quran either: most of them merely list possible views, backing them by hadiths or cross-references, and their efforts are usually somewhat circular and

¹ As will be shown, some Muslim commentators tend to believe that devils are a separate class also.

² Throughout this paper the form *jinn* will refer to the plural, whereas for the singular the form *jinnī* will be used.

tautological. Nevertheless, it is most engaging to follow what the *mufassirs* have to report on the jinn. It is also intriguing to explore, what made dealings with the jinn in the Quranic commentaries as uncertain as they are.

In this paper two verses (15:27, 55:15), directly dealing with the creation of the jinn, and verse 18:50, identifying Iblīs as one of the jinn, will be explored through the commentaries of a number of *mufassirs*, ranging from the early period of *tafsīr* evolution (al-Ṭabari, d. 923) to the late classical age (Ibn Kathīr, d. 1373) to modern period (Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan, d. 1890; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, d. 1914), and contemporary living *mufassirs* (Wahba al-Zuhaylī).

In English translations, these verses are rendered as follows:

15:27:

And the djinn had We before created of subtle fire (The Koran, p. 113).

And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind (The Holy Qur'an, p. 625).

55:15:

And He created the djinn of pure fire (The Koran, p. 74).

And He created Jinns from fire free of smoke (The Holy Qur'an, p. 1398).

18:50:

When we said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam', they all prostrated themselves save Eblis, who was of the Djinn, and revolted from his Lord's behest (The Koran, p. 185).

Behold! We said to the angels, 'Bow down to Adam': they bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord. (The Holy Qur'an, p. 722.)

Though there are no significant differences between these two translations, the substance from which the jinn are created, is rendered differently. This difference is not accidental in the translations, for the *mufassirs* themselves have interpreted the words *min nāri al-samūmi* (15:27) and *min mārijin min nār* (55:15) in various ways. However, before arguing about the substance of which the jinn are composed their identity has first to be established. Thus we now turn to the *mufassirs*.

ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF THE WORD *JINN*

The words *jānn* and *jinn* are related in most of the *tafsīrs* to the verb *janna*, 'to cover, hide, conceal, veil'. Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan reports that the 'name' *jānn*, used in both 15:27 and 55:15, refers to the characteristic of being hidden from the eyes. A *jānn* hides itself from the eyes of humans, hence its name. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī confirms Ḥasan's definition but adds new arguments: the case of the *jānn* is the same as with a foetus, *janīn*, which also hides in its mother's womb. On the other hand, al-Rāzī provides another meaning for *janna* 'to possess'. It is used in *janna al-rajul*, 'a man is possessed', meaning *jannahu al-jānnu fahuwa majnūn*, 'jānn possessed him and he is *majnūn*, the possessed (man)'. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Durra provides yet another saying: *janna al-laylu idhā sutira biẓulmatihi kullu shay'un*, meaning 'The night descended when everything is concealed by its darkness'.

There seems to be no disagreement or extended discussion among the *mufasssirs* regarding the etymology of *jinn* (and *jānn*, for that matter): the name of this class of creatures directly relates to and is derived from their characteristic of being unseen by ordinary human beings.

TYPES OF JINN

Jānn

The word which is used in verses 15:27 and 55:15 is actually *jānn*, not *jinn*, as it is provided in the translations cited above. This at once calls for clarification of the relation between *jānn* and *jinn*. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī presents two versions: *jānn* refers either to *jinn* or *abū al-jinn*, the forefather of the *jinn*. al-Durra subscribes to the opinion that *jānn* is *abū al-jinn*, though he also relates that Qatāda, a *ṣāhib*, held *jānn* to be Iblīs, the chief Satan. On no authority (*qīla*) he provides the distinction: *jānn* is *abū al-jinn*, and Iblīs is *abū al-shayāṭīn*, the forefather of devils.³ Wahbab al-Zuhaylī partially repeats al-Qāsimī and al-Durra in his statement that *jānn* is *abū al-jinn* or the basis (*aṣl*) of the *jinn*, but he also maintains that he is possibly Iblīs. On the other hand, al-Zuhaylī allows that *jānn* is a type (*jins*). al-Ṭabarī is convinced that *jānn* is Iblīs and bases his position on Qatāda. Ḥasan also relates that Qatāda and some others held *jānn* to be *Iblīs abū al-shayāṭīn*, though he admits that most agree upon *jānn abū al-jinn*. Ḥasan also reports on the authority of Ibn

³ There is a problem with the word *shayṭān*, plural *shayṭūn*, *shayāṭīn*. The singular form of this word seems to be best translated into English as 'Satan', while the plural is best translated as 'devils', for Satan is the leader and lord of the devils. The *mufasssirs*, however, do not address this problem in their comments on either 15:27 or 55:15.

‘Abbās that the jānn is a transformed jinn (*masīkh al-jinn*). As al-Rāzī sums up, the majority of the *mufassirs* hold that the jānn is indeed *abū al-jinn*, however, there are a minority who maintain that the jānn is Iblīs, basing this stance on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (Qatāda is often substituted for Ibn ‘Abbās). al-Rāzī seems not to subscribe to the opinion that the jānn is Iblīs: he places himself between the jānn as *abū al-jinn* and the jānn as being himself a jinn. However, no *mufassirs* raise the question of jānn being a type-name or a personal name of angels, though, at least theoretically, such a possibility exists.

This very variety of opinions reveals the difficulty of determining who the jānn is and what is his relation to either the jinn or Iblīs. Despite the multiplicity of suggested views, the *mufassirs* do not enter into any deeper considerations. Only al-Ṭabarī indirectly incorporates into the discussion the verse 18:50, where Iblīs is referred to as one of the jinn (*kāna min al-jinn*), while Sayyid ‘Abdullāh Ḥusayn (1978) in his book *al-Jinn al-‘Ālam al-Thānī* bases his entire argument on this verse. For him, jānn is Iblīs (and Iblīs is one of the jinn) without any doubt.

From the *mufassirs*' interpretations there can hardly be determined a fixed identity of the jānn. However, it can be concluded that 1) jānn is a personal name and not a type (*jins*), 2) the jānn is the forefather of the race of the jinn, 3) this making him one of the jinn. Since elsewhere in the Quran (18:50) Iblīs is referred to as from among the jinn, 4) the possibility that jānn = Iblīs cannot be ruled out, though there is no indication that the unruly jinnī Iblīs is the jānn himself. The open question is: could Iblīs be one of the descendants of the jānn? Lane (1882: 44), in his notes on the *Arabian Nights*, suggests that Iblīs was one of the jinn of the younger generation, not the jānn himself.

Iblīs

The origin of Iblīs, however, is not absolutely clear: if God ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, why is it a serious matter that Iblīs, a jinnī, did not obey? Could it not be that he himself was an angel, as some of the *mufassirs* reported that such an opinion was held by some? In fact, Lane (1882: 45) cites Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as having interpreted verse 18:50 as follows: ‘the most noble and honourable among the Angels are called the Jinn, because they are *veiled* from the eyes of the other Angels on account of their superiority’. If this version is too far away from mainstream Islamic tradition (though in Judaeo-Christian tradition Satan is a fallen angel), it is at least quite logical in solving the double meaning in verse 18:50. Otherwise, as Lane (1882: 45) suggests, ‘it might be inferred that the command given to the Angels was also (*and a fortiori*) to be obeyed by the Jinn’.

The *mufassirs*, commenting on 18:50, maintain that Iblīs was one of the jinn, though they provide two opposing opinions and a third, ‘reconciliatory’ one. al-

Durra reports that Ibn ‘Abbās held Iblīs to be a kind of angel, while Ḥasan held him to be one of the jinn and their basis (*aṣl*), and not one of the angels. The third opinion is reported by al-Durra on the authority of al-Quraysh: since angels are veiled from human sight, they all are jinn. However, not all jinn are angels. The basic difference between angels and jinn is, al-Durra concludes, in that the jinn have progeny and angels do not. Therefore, Iblīs could not have been an angel – he has progeny (devils). Ḥasan, however, in a couple of instances in his *tafsīr* reports the version of Iblīs as being one of a kind of angel called jinn, for their creation was from *nāri al-samūm* (Ibn ‘Abbās’ version). He repeats al-Quraysh’s version given by al-Durra: angels are all jinn, whereas not all jinn are angels. Ḥasan, though, also favours the position which holds Iblīs to have been a *jinnī*, not an angel. al-Ṭabarī too subscribes to this position. al-Zuhaylī has no doubts about Iblīs’ *jinnī* nature and does not become involved in consideration of this matter. al-Rāzī, on the other hand, provides the whole variety of opinions, none of them, however, original or new. He confirms the position that Iblīs was not an angel, but a *jinnī*.

As seen from the commentaries, the *mufasssirs* underscore, or in fact discard, the possibility of Iblīs having been one of the angels. They vote for the equation Iblīs = a *jinnī*, basically repeating, if in a slightly altered wording, the Quranic passage (18:50) itself. Yet, they do not solve the problem of why God’s command to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam affected a non-angelic creature, a *jinnī*, named Iblīs. The viewpoint that all angels are jinn but not all jinn are angels does not serve to provide a solution to the problem, for the command was clearly given to the angels, thus excluding (?) any non-angelic jinn. All in all, the result seems to be that 1) Iblīs was a *jinnī*, and 2) it is not certain why he became involved in the matter when the command was given only to the angels.

Shayāṭūn (devils)

Related to the problem of the *jānn* = Iblīs (and Iblīs = jinn) is the whole issue of where to place the devils (*shayāṭūn, shayāṭīn*), the servants of Iblīs, Satan. al-Durra maintains that devils should be considered a sort of jinn, for they share in their concealment from human sight. Ḥasan fully agrees with al-Durra and repeats his description of them word for word. al-Ṭabarī provides the *isnād* for the story, where Wahhāb ibn Munbah is related to have answered the question, Who are the jinn? in the following way: that they consist of types (*ajnās*): a true type of jinn is the wind (*rīḥ*) and they do not eat or drink, nor do they die or beget. Other types are *si‘lā, ghūl*, and the like. al-Ṭabarī’s version partially substitutes that of al-Durra and Ḥasan: here the eternal and self-sufficient are the true jinn, not the devils. However, the *mufasssirs* point to two major differences between the ‘regular’ jinn and the devils: 1) while among the former there are Muslims, Christians, Jews, polytheists,

and heretics, the devils are exclusively atheists; 2) the jinn, though generally living longer than humans, eventually die, while devils do not die unless Iblīs dies (this will happen only with the first blow of the trumpet at the end of the world). Can one, then, assume that the two are in fact one? Or that they are merely two extremes of the same class of creatures?

The issue of devils is extensively analyzed by Sayyid ‘Abdullāh Ḥusayn, who insists that devils and jinn are of the same stock. Only those among them who have any religion (*dīn*) are called jinn, and those who are atheists are *shayāṭīn*, devils. Actually, it is quite strange that the *mufassirs* do not pause over this issue for longer, for the devils are probably even more actively involved with human affairs than the jinn are. Their nature should interest commentators. If the nature of Satan, Iblīs, is limited to two known choices, those of jinn and angel (the first preferred by the *mufassirs*), the case of the devils implies a distinct nature of its own. Following from al-Durra’s (and Ḥasan’s) interpretations, the only common feature of jinn and devils is their hidden appearance, and nothing more. Jinn, on the other hand, seem to have an overwhelming number of features in common with humans, yet they are regarded as a distinct race. Still, the *mufassirs* do not reflect this ambivalence and do not attempt to clarify it.

Most of the commentators identify the devils with Iblīs’ progeny. Exegetes provide the hadith where Iblīs is given a wife and they have progeny of both sexes, who hatch from eggs (al-Durra on the authority of al-Sha‘bī). Thus it could be assumed that devils are jinn by virtue of being progeny of a (former?) jinnī, Iblīs-turned-Satan. Devils are all jinn, though not all jinn are devils. However, devils are very different from the jinn who are not progeny of Iblīs.

Jinn are believed to consist of a number of kinds (Ḥusayn 1978: 15-16; Hentschel 1997: 27-38). The *mufassirs*, however, do not usually mention them. The only exception is ‘Ifrīt – he is also mentioned in 27:39 with the clear identification as being one of the jinn (*min al-jinn*). Virtually, only al-Ṭabarī mentions some kinds of jinn, but even he is not specific. Lane, in turn, reviews five major kinds of the jinn: ‘Jann, Sheytans (or Devils), ‘Efreets, Marids’ (Lane 1882: 41) and half a dozen (7) kinds of jinn-like or related creatures (Lane 1882: 51-54). Hypothetically it can be assumed that belief in divisions of jinn was on the popular level, and the *mufassirs*, having no formal theological motive, did not engage in descriptions of possible kinds of jinn. However, these divisions must have been known to the *mufassirs* studied in this paper, for al-Ṭabarī was the earliest among them and yet was already aware of them.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE JINN

The most elaborate discussion among the *mufasssirs* has evolved around the issue of the substance (*māda*) from which the jinn were created. Though the material is named in the Quran in at least two instances, 15:27 and 55:15, the very wording in the Quran opens up room for different interpretations. So, what were the jinn created from?

It has been established that humans (Adam) were created from clay, *ṣalṣāl*, (15:26, 55:14), or *īn*, (6:2), while angels are believed to have been created from light, *nūr*. The jinn, in their turn, were created *min nāri al-samūmi* (15:27) and/or *min mārij min nār* (55:15). The three main words describing the material of which the jinn are made, are *nār*, fire, *samūm*, hot wind, and *mārij*, pure flame, or smokeless fire. Therefore, there is no confusion in Islamic exegesis regarding the distinct origins of the three classes of creatures. But the precise definition of the material from which the jinn were created, is a wide field of commentary and interpretation.

Nār al-samūm

In one instance (15:27), the material of which the jinn are made, is rendered as *nār al-samūm*, 'fire of the hot wind'. al-Ṭabarī is enthusiastic about reporting as many interpretations of this term as he could find. One of the interpretations provided by him is that *samūm* is 'hot wind which kills'. Another interpretation reads: 'flame of the fire', *lahab al-nār*. An expanded version provided by al-Ṭabarī is *lahab min nār al-samūm*, 'flame of the fire of the hot wind'. al-Ṭabarī also reports that 'this *samūm* is one part of 70 *samūm(s)*, from which jānn emerged', *hādhihi al-samūm juz' min saba'in juz'an min al-samūm allatī kharaja minhā al-jānn*. He provides folk sayings, where *samūm* is held to be night-wind, whereas *ḥarur* is day-wind. However, he mentions that some Arabs consider *samūm* to be both night- and day-wind. al-Ṭabarī indirectly indicates that the root of *samūm* is the same as *samm*, 'poison'.

For Ḥasan (on the authority of Abū 'Ubayda), *nār al-samūm* is 'hot wind (*al-rīh al-ḥārra*) which penetrates the pores due to its fineness and the power of its heat, and which is in the day-time as well as at night'. Ḥasan reports Abū Sāliḥ as saying that *samūm* is smokeless fire, *nār lā dukhāna lahā*, and this fire is located between the heavens (*al-samā'*) and the veil (*hijāb*). Ḥasan also extends al-Ṭabarī's report on the 70 parts of *samūm*, adding that some hold (*qīla*) *samūm* to be the hell-fire, *nār jahannama*. Ḥasan also adds a value judgement when he reports that Ibn 'Abbās said that *nār al-samūm* is the worst (*akhaṣṣ*) hot fire which kills.

Other *mufassirs* either repeat the above opinions or are more brief. al-Zuhaylī is laconic but he also underlines that *nār al-samūm* is smokeless fire of intense heat which penetrates the pores and kills. al-Zuhaylī, too, reports that *samūm* has 70 parts, though this does not seem to be of any relevance to the argument about the nature of either *samūm* or *nār al-samūm*. Ibn Kathīr is somewhat more interesting, for he does not repeat all the previously mentioned interpretations but provides a new one or at least one with a new angle: he injects a value judgement by reporting on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that *nār al-samūm* is the flame of the fire (*lahab al-nār*) which is the best fire (*ahsan al-nār*). Ibn Kathīr, on the authority of ‘Amr ibn Dīnār, also supplies an extraordinary variant: *nār al-samūm* is the sun-fire (*nār al-shams*).

It can be seen that commentators have quite varying opinions as to what *nār al-samūm*, and *samūm* itself, is. Their differences are rarely radical if there are any at all, but at the same time none of them dissolves the ambiguity and allows polyvalent meanings to flourish.

Mārij min nār

In the second instance (55:15),⁴ where the creation of the jinn is mentioned, their material is presented as *mārij min nār*, roughly ‘pure (or smokeless) flame of the fire’. It is once again al-Ṭabarī who supplies an exhaustive variety of interpretations. One of them is that *mārij* means ‘the middle and best part of fire’. The other interpretation holds it to be ‘the flame and the best part of the fire’. Yet another assumes it to be ‘the pure fire’. The more elaborate among the interpretations suggests that *mārij* is ‘yellow and green flame which elevates the fire when it is ignited’. In one of the *isnāds*, red is added to yellow and green colours. One interpretation is that *mārij* is ‘red disrupted blaze’. It is amazing to find that many of the *isnāds* to these differing interpretations go back to one and the same person, Ibn ‘Abbās. al-Ṭabarī also presents an overwhelming number of traditions that hold *mārij* to be simply ‘the flame’.

Ḥasan, in addition to the interpretations provided by al-Ṭabarī, presents some new ones: one where *mārij* is understood as the ‘tongue of the fire which is on its tip when it inflames’. Another is that *mārij* is ‘the sent fire which does not cease’ (*al-nār al-mursila allatyi lā tamna*).

al-Zuhaylī, though brief, presents a somewhat confusing interpretation: ‘*mārij* is the rising blaze (*shu‘la*) with intense bright light (?) (*lahab*), which has no flame (*lā lahaba*), and is of mixed colours, yellow, red, green, and others, and (is) dis-

⁴ It is difficult to assess which verse was revealed earlier. The two cited English translations disagree: in J. M. Rodwell’s translation Sura 55 precedes Sura 15, both held to be Meccan, whereas in ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Alī’s translation Sura 15 is Meccan and Sura 55 is Medinan, making the latter the later one.

turbed'. In other place he rephrases it: the material from which the jinn were created is 'the radiant blaze with intense flame (*lahab*) which is mixed of red, yellow and green (colours)'.

Commentators vary on *mārij min nār* as much as they vary on *nār al-samūm*. The proliferation of interpretations has not been stopped and flourishes up till the present. However, from all these interpretations a general definition of the material from which the jinn were created, can be derived. Since in both 15:27 and 55:15 fire, *nār*, is mentioned as a constituent from which the jinn were created, none of the *mufassirs* contested the view that it is fire, ordinary or special, or a part of it (flame), which is the substance of the jinn. Furthermore, it seems to be 'smokeless fire'.

However, something that none of the *mufassirs* dealt with in the present study have done should be taken into consideration: in the Quran, it is the *jānn* and not the jinn who is created from the fire or flame. The English translations provided miss the point by rendering *jānn* as Jinns and djinn. The commentators, too, jump to the conclusion that the jinn are created of the same material as the *jānn*. If the *jānn* is taken to be the forefather of the race of jinn, it could be logically deduced that since the *jānn* was created of fire (flame), the jinn are too. However, this syllogism does not work with the human race – people are created from a clot of congealed blood ('*alaq*') (96:2), while Adam, their forefather, was created from clay (*tīn*) (15:26). This logical issue has not been addressed by the *mufassirs*.

THE RELATION OF THE JINN TO OTHER CREATURES

In the Quran, the jinn are paralleled to humans and sometimes to angels. The *mufassirs*, too, compare all three classes of creatures. First of all, they see a sharp distinction, already made in the Quran, between the nature of all these three classes – the material of which they are made is the decisive factor not only of their physical state but of their mental state also. al-Zuhaylī reports that the jinn are hot-natured, while humans are cold-natured. The major differences between the classes notwithstanding, the three worlds are intertwined: jinn (including devils) reside in the proximity of humans, they interfere in human affairs.

Jinn are reported by almost all *mufassirs* to lead a life very similar to human life: they perform all the physiological functions that humans do. Jinn eat and drink, are born and die, have sexual intercourse. Socially, they too are very similar to humans: they marry and live in societies. They have free will and can reason. There are believers among them as well as non-believers. Some of the commentators point out that God's words in the Quran are addressed to both races, and that Muḥammad was sent as the Prophet to both of them. Sura 72 is given as proof of this.

However, exegetes do not spend much time analyzing the relation between the believing jinn (Muslim as well as other monotheists) and humans. It is the evil jinn

and their forefather Iblīs, Satan, who interest the *mufassirs*. Since in the Quran Satan and his progeny are declared enemies of the human race (35:6, 36:60) (and all of them are held to be from the jinn), the *mufassirs* elaborate on warnings against following Satan or devils, who by virtue of their evil nature are prone to lead humans astray.

It is maintained in Islamic tradition that the jinn were created before the human race. It is literally taken by all *mufassirs* from 15:27 that *min qablu*, 'before', refers to the jānn (and subsequently, the jinn) having been created before Adam (and thus, the whole human race). The *mufassirs*, however, do not raise the question for what purpose God created the jinn (jānn) and why He later created the human race. In the Quran, the creation of man is related to God's willingness to place His vice-regent (*khalīfa*) on the Earth (2:30). This would suggest that the jinn were not intended to be vice-regents of God on the Earth, but this also does not answer the question of their purpose.

The differences between the angels and the jinn are taken for granted by the commentators, and they do not follow up the relations between these two classes. The Quran also does not allocate much space to the question of the jinn versus the angels, save the issue of Iblīs, who could be suspected to have been an angel of some sort, called jinn. The latter issue has been dealt with earlier in this paper.

CONCLUSIONS

Though none of the Quranic commentators studied fails to touch upon the issue of the creation of the jinn, few of them go into any depth in their interpretations. Most of them merely enumerate the traditions and opinions related to the matter, not themselves even stating their own position. Their commentaries only partially answer the questions related to the creation of the jinn. The substance of the jinn is the best explored side of the matter. The *mufassirs* also elaborate on the relations between the jānn and jinn, between Iblīs and the jinn, between the jinn and devils, and between the jānn and Iblīs. However, none of the exegetes attempts any comprehensive analysis which would shed more light on the nature and character of the jinn. Cross-references are also minimal and tend to be circular.

It is rather amazing that the *mufassirs* do not even take advantage of the available prophetic traditions, not to speak of popular beliefs. Sayyid 'Abdu'llāh Ḥusayn (1978), in his study *al-Jinn al-'Ālam al-Thānī*, employs a number of hadiths from *ṣaḥīḥ* collections, which widen the image of these creatures. Lane also presents various hadiths as well as popular beliefs related to the circumstances of creation of the jinn and their character.⁵ There is no doubt that all this material was available to the *mufassirs*, yet they chose not to use it. Even such a sophisticated commentator

⁵ Lane 1882. Lane's primary source is *Mir'at al-zamān*, for which he does not provide a date.

as al-Rāzī paid mere lip service to the whole matter of the jinn. The earliest among the *mufassirs* studied in this paper, al-Ṭabarī, seems to have paid most attention to the issue.

Can it be, at least hypothetically, suggested that the *mufassirs* lost interest in exploring the jinn due to the diminished concern of Muslim scholars about this class of creatures? If in the early period of Quranic exegesis, the jinn were still a part of full belief among the educated, they seem to have been gradually relegated to the status of popular beliefs and only touched upon by Muslim scholars, the *mufassirs*, so as to cover all the Quranic verses. The *mufassirs* are quick to equate the jinn with the devils and move on to discussions about the enmity between the two races (human and jinn, the latter represented by the devils).

Or, as another hypothesis, are the commentators so cautious as not to slip into the unproven realm of dubious popular beliefs, which, though they abound, may well discredit the whole commentary? Maybe, by not incorporating hadiths and popular beliefs, the *mufassirs* chose to say less instead of promoting any possibly false opinion.

Whatever the reasons, the Muslim exegetes surveyed did not investigate the issue of the jinn in its complexity but rather addressed some of the separate questions related to it. Thus the reader does not gain a full picture, not even by putting together the interpretations of all three verses (15:27, 18:50, and 55:15). On the other hand, one should ask whether the genre of *tafsīr* enjoins the *mufassir* fully to research particular issues or whether it merely requires him to go over the verse and elaborate a little certain, probably more complicated, ideas and terms contained in it. The answer seems to lie within the latter part of the question. Therefore, no matter how unfortunate it is to discover that the *mufassirs* do not answer all possible questions related to the issue of the jinn, credit should be given to what they have to say.

In any case, the place of the jinn in Islamic cosmology is of particular interest from the comparative perspective. The absence of jinn and Satan being portrayed as a fallen angel rather than as a rebellious jinnī in Judaeo-Christian cosmology suggests either discontinuity or insertion. So, the topic of the jinn, extremely engaging and exotic in itself, is a major rift between the earlier Jewish and the later Arab-Muslim tradition, and a vast field for comparative studies of religions.

REFERENCES

- al-Durra* = Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṭāhā al-Durra, *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm wa l‘rābuhu wa Bayānuh*, VII: 309; VIII: 263-265; XIV: 169-174. Dimashq & Bayrūt: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1982.
- Hasan* = Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan, *Fath al-Bayān fī Muqāṣid al-Qur‘ān: Tafsīr Salafī Āthārī Khāl min al-Isrā‘īliyyāt wa al-Jadalīyyāt wa al-Madhhabīya wa al-Kalamīya Yughnī ‘an Jāmi‘ al-Tafsīr wa lā Tughnī Jamī‘hā ‘anh*, VII: 164-165; VIII: 65-66; XIII: 321. Ṣaydā: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣrīya, 1992.
- HENTSCHEL, Kornelius 1997. *Geister, Magier und Muslime: Deamonenwelt und Geisteraus-treibung im Islam*. München: Eugen Diederichs Verlag.
- The Holy Qur‘an*. Transl. by ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Alī. Brentwood, Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989.
- ḤUSAYN, Sayyid ‘Abdullāh 1978. *al-Jinn al-‘Ālam al-Thānī*. al-Qāhira: al-Maktaba al-Maḥdū-diyya al-Tijāriyya.
- Ibn Kathīr* = Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘Azīm*, II: 570; IV: 291. Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma‘rifā, 1984.
- The Koran*. Transl. by J. M. Rodwell. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1963.
- LANE, Edward William 1882. *Arabian Nights*, I. New York: The Jefferson Press.
- al-Qāsimī* = Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī, al-Musammā, Maḥāsīn al-Tawīl*, IV: 489; VI: 398. Bayrūt: Mu‘assasat al-Tarīkh al-‘Arabī, 1994.
- al-Rāzī* = Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabir*, XIX-XX: 180; XXI-XXII: 136-137; XXIX-XXX: 98. Tehrān 1980.
- al-Ṭabarī* = Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Tawīl āy al-Qur‘ān*, XII-XIV: 30-31; XVII-XVIII: 171-173; XXVI-XXVIII: 123-126. Miṣr: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954-1957.
- al-Zuhaylī* = Wahba al-Zuhaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr: fī al-‘Aqīda wa al-Sharī‘a wa al-Manhaj*, XIII-XIV: 29-37; XV-XVI: 270-273; XXVII-XXVIII: 202-208. Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir & Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr, 1991.