

# Visions of the Jinn: A Scholarly Analysis of Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on Demons

**Visions of the Jinn** is central to this article, which delves into the supernatural phenomenon of jinn and demonic visions as explored by classical scholars like Ibn Taymeeyah. This study examines historical accounts, incantations, and the interplay between human perception and unseen forces within Islamic tradition.

Based on “Eedah ad-Dalaalah fee ‘Umoom ar-Risaalah”, from volume 19 of “Majmoo’ Al-Fataawaa” (A Collection of Religious Rulings); volume 35 of “Majmoo’ Al-Fataawaa” and Ibn Taymeeyah’s classic, [“Al-Furqaan Bayna Awliyaa ar-Rahmaan wa Awliyaa ash-Shaytaan.”](#)

Note: All remarks that are bracketed in the text are made by Bilal Phillips

## THE AUTHOR

Ahmad ibn ‘Abdul-Haleem ibn Taymeeyah was born in the town of Harran [near Edessa, in what was once Northern Iraq, but is now called Orfa and is a part of Turkey.], in the year 1263 CE. His father was a leading scholar of the Hanbalite school of Islamic law and so was his grandfather, who authored Muntaqaa al-Akhbaar, the text of ash-Shawkaanee’s Hadeeth classic Nayl al-Awtaar.

Ibn Taymeeyah mastered the various disciplines of Islamic study at an early age and read extensively the books of the various sects and religions in existence at that time. Much of his time and effort was spent defending the orthodox Islamic position against a tidal wave of deviation which had swept over the Muslim nation. Consequently, he faced many difficulties from both the prominent sectarian scholars of his time and from the authorities who supported them. His clashes with them led to his imprisonment on numerous occasions. Ibn Taymeeyah also fought, not only against internal enemies of Islaam, but also against its external enemies by both his Fatwaas (Islamic legal rulings) and his physical participation in battles. His ruling allowing the taking up arms against groups which recognized the Shahaadataan (declaration of faith) but refused to uphold some aspects of the fundamental principles of Islaam, greatly affected the resistance movement against the Tartars who had declared their acceptance of Islaam but did not rule according to divine law.

During these struggles he wrote countless books and treatises demonstrating his extensive reading and knowledge, not only of the positions of the early scholars, but also those of the legal and theological schools which had subsequently evolved. Ibn Taymeeyah also had a major effect on the open-minded scholars of his day, most of whom were from the Shaafi'ite school of law. Among the most famous of his students were IBN KATHEER, ADH-DHAHABEE and IBN AL-QAYYIM. The author died in 1328 while in prison in Damascus for his Fatwaa against undertaking journeys to visit the graves of saints [Ibn Taymeeyah's ruling was based on the authentic statement reported by Abu Hurayrah wherein the Prophet Muhammad (saws) said, "Do not undertake a journey except to three masjids; this masjid of mine, Masjid al-Haraam (Makkah) and Masjid al-Aqsaa (Bayt al-Maqdis)." Collected by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim]. His Fatwaa had been distorted by his enemies to say that he forbade visiting the Prophet Muhammad's (saws) grave.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DEMONIC VISIONS**

### **Incantations, Oaths, and the Power of the Jinn**

Those involved in incantations and oaths often swear by some devils to help them against others. Sometimes the evil **JINN** fulfill their request but frequently they do not, especially when the JINN against whom help is sought is honored among them. Neither the one chanting incantations nor his incantations have any power to force the devils to help them. The reciter of incantations earnestly entreats a being whom he considered great—which may or may not be the case—to harm others who may conceivably be greater. In the case where someone entreats the JINN to harm someone whom the JINN hold in high esteem, they will ignore him. In fact, it may prevent them from even responding at all. Their situation is quite similar to that of humans except that human beings are generally more intelligent, truthful, just, and trustworthy while the JINN tend to be ignorant, untruthful, oppressive, and treacherous.

### **Ineffectiveness of Incantations and the Communication of the Jinn**

The point is that though the oaths and incantations of devil-worshippers may contain statements of idolatry and disbelief, they are frequently ineffective against the JINN. When requested to kill or apprehend another JINN who has possessed a human, the JINN will often mock those who make the request by falsely giving them the impression that they killed or detained the offending JINN. This is especially so in cases where humans believe in the illusions created by the JINN.

The JINN usually communicate by either visions or voices

[“The gleaning of hidden information by way of visions and voices has been well documented among clairvoyants and mediums. ‘A medium’ may be defined as a person through whose agency or through whose organism there are received communications ostensibly from deceased human beings or other discarnate or remote entities. In what is called ‘clairvoyant mediumship’—now popularly known as channelling—the medium ‘sees’ or ‘hears’ the deceased friends and relatives of persons present and relays messages from them. Generally speaking, the experiences concerned seem not to have the distinctness of ordinary perception but are rather a seeing or hearing ‘in the mind’s eye’ or ear. Sometimes, however, the figures seen or voices heard may attain as hallucinatory vividness; the medium’s experience then resembles that of one who witnesses an apparition.” (Benjamin B. Wolman, ed., *Handbook of Parapsychology*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1977, pp. 579-580)]

with those seeking information among the idol-worshippers, Christians, Jews, and heretical Muslims driven astray by the devils.

## **Illusions, Incantations, and Deceptive Appearances**

JINNS may take the form of a live picture portraying whatever the sorcerers and fortunetellers wish to know about. When these deviants see the image of what they sought, they then inform other humans about it. Some of them may know that the image is actually an illusion, while others may be deluded into believing that they are actually witnessing the real scene. JINNS may also make humans hear the voice of those whom they call upon who are far away. Such cases are frequent among idolaters, Christians, Jews, and ignorant Muslims who seek refuge in those whom they consider holy. When some devotees call on their spiritual masters for help saying, “Oh my Lord so and so!” the JINN will address them in the voice of their masters. When the masters answer their request, the JINN, in turn, answer the devotees in the masters’ voice. This has happened to many people, some of whom are known to me. The devils will often respond while taking the form of the one besought, whether dead or alive, even if he is unaware of those who call on him. Those committing Shirk in this fashion believe that the person beseeched has actually replied when in fact it is the JINN replying. This frequently happens to Christians who call on those whom they edify, whether dead or alive, like George or other holy figures

[ROME, Feb 24 1989 (AFP) – A retired Italian roadman Renato Baron claims that he has been seeing and talking to the Virgin Mary for nearly three years now. Visions by Baron and about THIRTY others have attracted tens of thousands of people from Italy, France, Belgium, and West Germany to a hill near Venice, causing huge traffic jams.

Ambridge, Pennsylvania – A small Roman Catholic Church in a western Pennsylvania mill town is preparing for a deluge of pilgrims after a reported Good Friday miracle in which the eyes of a statue of Christ suddenly closed. The Rev. Vincent Cvitkovic, a Franciscan friar, and many of his parishioners reported that the eyes of a life-size statue which depicts the crucified Christ, which have been open for 60 years, closed during a prayer meeting. (The Times, Monday, April 10th 1989, no. 63, 364, p.8)

In 1981 a group of five children were playing on a hill just outside of a village in the Yugoslavian Republic of Bosnia – Herzegovina called Medugorje when a vision of a beautiful woman claiming to be the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared before them. Since 1981 some seven to eight million pilgrims from different countries, cultures, and Christian traditions have climbed up the holy hill of Medugorje. At 7:30 every evening, pilgrims and tourists anxiously crowd around the dark rectory of a nearby church staring at the stream of light which will signify that once more the children, who still gather there daily, are having their private audience with the Blessed Mother. (IRF, Newsletter of the International Religious Foundation, Inc., Vol II, No. 6, Nov-Dec 1987, pp. 1-2).]

### **Misguidance in Sacred Rituals and Practices**

Divine grace (salvation) is felt to be especially potent in places visited by Jesus Christ or Saints or by Mary; where they have appeared in visions. Major [pilgrimage](#) centers include Lourdes where visions of the Virgin Mary were first seen in 1858 and where healing has been occurring since that time. (John R. Hinnells, ed., *Dictionary of Religions*, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984, p. 284)]. It also occurs to heretical Muslims who call on the dead or those not present, and the devils take the form of the one called upon even without him realizing it. I know of many cases where this has occurred and the people called upon have told me that they did not know that they were called upon, though those beseeching them for help saw their images and were convinced that it was the actual person.

### **Spiritual Misguidance and the Problem of Shirk**

More than one person has mentioned that they called on me in times of distress, each telling a different story about how I have responded. When I told them that I never answered any of them nor did I know that they were calling on me, some said that it must have been an angel. I told them that [angels](#) do not benefit those committing SHIRK and that it was actually a devil trying to further misguide them.

Sometimes the Jinn will take the form of those admired and stand at 'Arafat, and those who believe well of him will think that he actually stood in 'Arafat. Many others have also been actually carried by the devils to 'Arafat and other sacred places. In such cases they pass the Meeqaat (boundaries that may not be crossed while on Hajj, around Makkah) without formally entering the state of Ihraam, or performing many of the obligatory rites of Hajj like making the Talbeeyah (chant of response to God's call) or circulating [the Ka'bah](#), and walking between the mounts of Safaa and Marwah.

### **Satanic Deceptions and the Perils of Innovation**

Among them are some who do not even pass through Makkah, others who stand at 'Arafat without performing the pre-requisite rite of casting stones at the Jamaraat etc. It is by these and other similar feats that Satan leads seemingly pious people in misguidance. Sincere devotees among heretics are in this way enticed to do acts which are prohibited (Haraam) or despised (Makrooh) in the religion. Satan is able to make such misdeeds appealing to them by convincing them that they are among the Karaamaat (supernatural or quasi-miraculous feats) of the righteous. However they are, without a doubt, Satanic deceptions because Allaah cannot be worshipped by any religious injunction which is neither compulsory (Waajib) nor recommended (Mustahabb). Whoever performs an act of worship which is neither Waajib nor Mustahabb believing that it is so, has been deceived by Satan. Even if it is decreed that such a person will be forgiven due to his good intention and striving, the act itself is still unacceptable to Allaah

[An example may be seen in the mistaken belief held by some that a man's head must be covered while he is in formal prayer—Salaah—as is the case among Jews or that a woman's hair must be covered while reading the Qur'aan. However, the Prophet saws did not order that it be done nor recommended it but merely followed the customs of his people during that time.]. Such acts are not among the things with which Allaah honors His pious servants who are close to Him, as there is no honor in performing prohibited (Haraam) or despised (Makrooh) acts. For, heaping praise on prohibited and despised acts, and honoring the one who does them is definitely a form of deviation from the path of Allaah. The more and more a man innovates in the religion as a result of independent judgement (Ijtihaad), the further he becomes from Allaah, because innovation (Bid'ah) removes him from Allaah's path; the divine path of "those who Allaah has blessed from among the prophets, the sincerely truthful, martyrs and righteous" [An-Nisaa 4:69] unto the path of "those with whom Allaah is angry and those who have gone astray" [Al-Faatihah 1:7].

## Historical Incidents and Scholarly Testimonies

Ibn Taymeeyah mentioned the following [This begins a segment from vol.35 of Ibn Taymeeyah's compendium, *Majmoo' al-Fataawaa*.] historical incident concerning al-Hallaaj [Al-Husain ibn Mansoor al-Hallaj (858-922 CE) studied under the eminent Sufi teachers of his time (Tustaree, 'Amr Makee and Junaid) then broke with them and went out into this world to preach asceticism and mysticism in Khurasan, Ahwaz, Fars, India and Turkistan. On his return to Baghdad from Makkah in 908, many were attracted by his teachings, and disciples rapidly gathered around him. He taught that the five pillars of Islaam may be replaced by other works. He also taught about the existence of an uncreated Divine spirit (Rooh Naatiqah) which becomes united with the created spirit of the ascetic through desire of and submission to suffering. In his teachings the Saint (Walee) became the living and personal witness of God (H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1st ed., 1953, pp. 127-80).

Consequently he stated in his book: “If you do not recognize God, at least recognise His sign, I am the creative truth – Ana al-Haqq -, because through the truth, I am eternal truth. My friends and teachers are Iblees (Satan) and Pharaoh. Iblees was threatened with Hellfire, yet, he did not recant. Pharaoh was drowned in the sea, yet he did not recant, for he would not acknowledge anything between him and God (i.e. Hallaaj felt that Iblees’ refusal to prostrate to Aadam and Pharaoh’s statement ‘I am your Lord, most High’ were correct!). And, I, though, I am killed and crucified and though my hands and feet are cut off; I do not recant.” – *Kitaab al-Tawaaseen*, Massignon Press, Paris, 1913, vi, 32.] and a group of his followers, “Some of them requested some sweets from al-Hallaaj, so he got up and went to a spot a short distance away, then returned with a plateful of sweets. It was later discovered that it had been stolen from a candy shop in Yemen and carried by a devil to that area.” Ibn Taymeeyah went on to say, “Incidents similar to this have happened to others who, like al-Hallaaj, also achieved the pinnacle of satanic states, and we know of quite a few such people in our time as well as other times. For instance, there is a person presently residing in Damascus whom the devil used to carry from the Saaliheeyah mountain to villages around Damascus. He would appear out of the air and enter the windows of houses in which people were gathered to witness his ‘miraculous entrance.’”

## **Additional Mystical Incidents and Concluding Observations**

Ibn Taymeeyah also quoted another mystic master who admitted that he used to fornicate with women and sodomise young boys. The former mystic master said, “A black dog [“Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allaah said: ‘When any one of you stands for prayer it should be towards something that shields him equivalent (in height) to the back of a saddle, otherwise his prayer will be broken by passing of a donkey, a woman or a black dog.’ I asked ‘O Abu Dharr, what is the difference between a black dog, a red dog and tan-colored dog?’ He replied, ‘O son of my brother, I also asked Allaah’s Messenger as you are asking me, and he said: ‘The black dog is a devil.’” (Saheeh Muslim and all others in the six Saheeh books with the exception of Saheeh al-Bukhaaree)] with two white spots between his eyes would come to me and say, “Verily such and such a person has made an oath by you and he will come to you tomorrow to inform you about it. I have already fulfilled his need for your sake.”

[When questioned during his trial, the infamous New York City mass murderer of the seventies, “Son of Sam”, claimed that a dog used to come in the backyard of his house and tell him to kill his victims. It was assumed by the court and his psychiatrists that he was mentally deranged and the dog a figment of his imagination.] The person would then come to him the next day and the Sufi master would reveal the details of his oath to him and how it was fulfilled. The Sufi master went on to say, “I used to walk about the city and a black pole with a light on top of it would lead the way.” ” Ibn Taymeeyah said, “When the Sufi master repented and began to pray, fast, and avoid the forbidden, the black dog went away.” He also narrated the following about another mystic master who had the aid of devils whom he would dispatch to possess people: “When the family of the possessed would come to him seeking a cure, he would send a message to his demon companion and they would leave the possessed persons, as a result, the Shaykh would be given many dirhams for his services. Sometimes the Jinn would bring him dirhams and food which they stole from people, so much so that the Shaykh would request dates from his devils and they would take them from beehives in which some people had hidden their dates. When the beehive owners would look for their dates they would find them gone.”

About yet another mystic, Ibn Taymeeyah relates, “There was a Shaykh knowledgeable in the religious sciences and Qur’anic recitation to whom the devils came and eventually managed to seduce. They told him that Salaah was no longer required of him and that they would bring him whatever he wished. As soon as he complied with their wishes, they began to bring him a variety of sweets and fruit. This continued until he was advised to repent by some scholars that he visited who were firmly following the [Sunnah](#). He subsequently repented and repaid the owners of the sweets for what he ate while under the influence of the JINN.” He then went on to say, “Many of those who call on Shaykhs in time of need saying, ‘O master so and so, or Shaykh so and so, fulfill my need’ have seen an image of the Shaykh saying, ‘I will fulfill your need and put your heart at ease,’ then it fulfills their needs or repels their enemies. In such cases it is a devil taking the Shaykh’s form when they committed Shirk by associating partners with Allaah and calling on others beside Him.”

Ibn Taymeeyah then went on to enumerate similar instances involving himself saying, “I know of many such incidences even among a group of my companions who called on me in times when they were struck by calamities. One was afraid of the Romans and another of the Tatars. Both of them mentioned that they called out to me, they saw me in the air and I repelled their enemies for them. I informed them that I did not hear their cries nor did I repel their enemies. It was a devil taking my appearance to seduce them when they associated partners with Allaah the Almighty. Similar incidents have also happened to the students of my contemporaries among the scholars, whereby some of their students have sought refuge in them and have seen them fulfill their needs. The scholars have also denied doing so and indicated that it was in fact the work of devils.” [Majmoo’ Al-Fataawaa, Vol. 35, pp. 112-116]

In another book, Ibn Taymeeyah said, “I know people whom the plants greet and inform them of their beneficial ingredients, however it is, in fact, Satan who has entered the plants and spoken to them. I also know of others to whom stones and trees speak saying, ‘Congratulations, Oh friend of Allaah’ and when the people recite Aayatul-Kursee it stops. I am acquainted with yet others who have gone bird-hunting and the sparrows addressed them saying, ‘Take me so that the poor may eat me.’ Such are cases of the evil JINN possessing the birds in the same way that others who, while in their house with the doors and vice versa [Many of those in our times who have claimed what is known as ‘out-of-body experiences’ or ‘astral travel’ have recorded in vivid detail incidences similar to those mentioned by Ibn Taymeeyah.

Others have met beings which claimed to be guides, guardian spirits or their higher selves. However, the common thought which links most of these experiences is the ultimate expression of idolatry: that man is God, as was expressed by Al-Hallaaj and countless others before and after him.] He may even be taken through the closed city gates and back again swiftly by the JINN. Lights may shine on him or someone looking like his friend may call on him but, if he recites [Aayatul-Kursee](#) continually, it will all disappear.” He also said, “Some mystics have also said that the JINN showed them something shiny like water and glass in which images or pictures of whatever they sought information would appear and they in turn would inform people.” Ibn Taymeeyah mentioned other instances and then concluded by saying, “This is such a vast topic that if I were to mention all that I knew, it would fill a very large volume.” [Ibn Taymeeyah, Al-Furqaan Bayna Awliyaa ar-Rahmaan wa Awliyaa ash-Shaytaan, pp. 87-92]

**Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips**