

Surah 17. Al-Israa

Asad: And lo! We said unto thee, [O Prophet:] "Behold, thy Sustainer encompasses all mankind [within His knowledge and might]: and so We have ordained that the vision which We have shown thee⁷³ - as also the tree [of hell,] cursed in this Qur'an - shall be but a trial for men.⁷⁴ Now [by Our mentioning hell] We convey a warning to them: but [if they are bent on denying the truth,] this [warning] only increases their gross, overweening arrogance."

Malik: Remember, O Muhammad! We told you that your Rabb encompasses mankind. We have made the Vision which We showed you, and the cursed tree of Zaqqum which is mentioned in the Qur'an, a test for these people of Makkah. We are giving them warning to be fearful but it only increases their inordinate transgression.

Mustafa Khattab:

And ?remember, O Prophet? when We told you, "Certainly your Lord encompasses the people." And We have made what We brought you to see¹ as well as the cursed tree ?mentioned? in the Quran² only as a test for the people. We keep warning them, but it only increases them greatly in defiance.

Pickthall: And (it was a warning) when We told thee: Lo! thy Lord encompasseth mankind, and We appointed the vision which We showed thee as an ordeal for mankind, and (likewise) the Accursed Tree in the Qur'an. We warn them, but it increaseth them in naught save gross impiety.

Yusuf Ali: Behold! We told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind round about: We granted the Vision which We showed thee but as a trial for men as also the Cursed Tree (mentioned) in the Qur'an: We put terror (and warning) into them but it only increases their inordinate transgression! ^{2248 2249 2250}

Transliteration: Waith qulna laka inna rabbaka ahata bialInnasi wama jaAAalna alruya allatee araynaka illa fitnatan liInnasi waalshshajarata almalAAoonata fee alqurani wanukhawwifuhum fama yazeeduhum illa t ughyanan kabeeran

Author Comments

73 - The vision (ru'ya) mentioned here is the Prophet's experience of the Ascension, preceded by the Night Journey (see Appendix IV). Inasmuch as this experience was and is open to most conflicting interpretations and, hence, may give rise to doubts regarding its objective reality, it becomes - as stated in the sequence - "a trial for men": the weak of faith and the superficial are shaken in their belief in Muhammad's veracity and, thus, in his prophethood; whereas those who firmly believe in God see in it an extraordinary evidence of the spiritual grace which He bestows on His chosen ones, and are, therefore, strengthened in their faith in the message of the Qur'an.

74 - As regards "the tree cursed in this Qur'an", there is no doubt that it is the "tree of deadly fruit"

(shajarat az-zaqqim) spoken of in [37:62](#) ff. and [44:43](#) ff. as one of the manifestations of hell (see {37:62-63} and the corresponding notes [22] and [23], the latter of which explains why this "tree" has become "a trial for men"). In the above context it is described as "cursed" because it obviously symbolizes hell itself. The reason why only "hell" - and no other manifestation of the hereafter - is specifically alluded to here becomes evident in the subsequent statement that it is meant to convey a warning.

29333 -

During the Night Journey mentioned in 17:1.

29334 -

The tree of Zaqqûm which grows in the depths of Hell as mentioned in 37:62-65. The pagans of Mecca used to make fun of the Prophet (?) and say, "How can a tree grow in Hell?"

2248 - The reference may be to lxxii. 28, probably an earlier Makkan revelation. But the argument is independent of time. This verse falls naturally into three divisions. Warnings and Portents and Signs are sent or not sent according to Allah's All-Wise Plan of Mercy and Justice, this is in no wise inconsistent with the apparent freedom given to the wicked: because (1) in any case Allah is all round all His creatures, and His delay as a Sign of Mercy in no way diminishes His power; (2) the Visions of Truth vouchsafed to Prophets of Allah are themselves Signs by which they can warn the ungodly; and (3) sometimes it is more merciful to give them time by not immediately bringing the matter to judgment.

2249 - Some Commentators take this as referring to the Mi'raj (xvii. 1) and others to other visions. Such visions are miracles, and become a stumbling block to unbelievers. They are an encouragement to men of faith. Thus they are "a trial for men".

2250 - The tree Zaqqum, a bitter and pungent tree described as growing at the bottom of Hell, a type of all that is disagreeable. See xxxvii. 62-65; xlv. 43-46; and lvi. 52. All these are Suras chronologically earlier than this Sura. The application of the name to a tree of the myrobalan kind in the region of Jericho is, I think, of post-Quranic date. It is a trial for wrong-doers. See xxxvii. 63 and n. 4073.

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