Sūrat al-Anbiya
Verse 82

21:82 - Among the Shayatin were some who dived for him and performed tasks other than that, and We were watchful over them

Questions for Reflection
1) Who were these Shayatin that worked for Prophet Sulaymān? (The Jinn)
2) Why did Allah give him the Shayatin as workers? Would they not do evil on his behalf? (It was a sign of his power given to him by God. Shayatin are actually a term for the Jinn. The evil one was Iblis. See link in connecting topics)
3) What was the purpose of diving for the Prophet?

Commentary
This verse talks of yet another blessing granted to Prophet Sulaymān. The Shayatin worked for him. In Sura Saba the same blessing is mentioned but the term Jinn is used (34:12-13). The Jinn are a creation of Allah who have intellect, awareness, and responsibility. They are not visible to the human beings. Just like the human beings they too have two groups; the good and virtuous Jinn and the disobedient and evil ones. The Quran gives some detail about them in Sura Jinn. Other verses of the Quran also mention their existence (see verses 6:130, 17:88, 51:56, among others).

The Jinns who worked for Prophet Sulaymān were skilled in their work. According to hadith, Allah made their spirit-like bodies take on material form for the Prophet, so they could work for him. He made some of them to dive into the sea and bring up pearls and other treasures of the sea. Others worked on buildings. They constructed beautiful places of worship and sculptures of trees, huge bowls and cauldrons (metal pots for cooking over an open fire). The Quran mentions their work in another place - and every builder and diver from the demons, and others bound together in chains (38:37-38).

Some of these Jinn could be rebellious and hence the mention that Allah was watchful over them. His authority and control over them prevented them from running away, undoing the work that the Prophet’s other workers did, and from disobeying the orders of the Prophet.

Allah saw the sincerity of Prophet Sulaymān’s desire to serve him and to spread His word among people. He also saw how tirelessly the Prophet worked and how hard he was on himself. So he gave him unique gifts that would enable him to rule over a large kingdom for the sake of Allah. Hadith tells us that Prophet Sulaymān was given a ring with the inscription – Glory be to the One by whose words the Jinn were controlled.

Prophet Sulaymān was never proud or boastful of the gifts he was given. He considered himself a poor servant of Allah. As a king he would go to his people and be with them. He would exchange pleasantries with the rich, but he would sit down and spend time with the poor saying ‘Miskin with the Masakin’, showing acute awareness of his inner poverty and complete reliance on Allah.
Lessons
1) One of the unique features of the kingdom of Prophet Sulaymân was its army of Jinns. They worked for him on various things.
2) The Jinns are a created being who have responsibility and accountability, just like the human beings. They can be good or evil.
3) Unless there is protection and firm authority in a group, there can be rebellion as seen even in a kingdom as unique as that of Prophet Sulaymân.

Connecting verses
1) Prophet Sulaymân had control over humans and Jinn – 27:17
2) The Jinn;
a) Partnered with the human being in the command to be grateful – 55: 13, 16, 18 . . .
b) They listen to the Quran and glorified Allah – 72:1-3

Connecting Topics
1) Difference between Shaytan and Iblis

2) Who are the Jinn?