

of Jibrīl is the competition among the “poor, naked, barefoot shepherds of sheep and goats in making tall buildings (Muslim, Īmān, maʿrifat-l-īmān wa-l-Islām wa-l-qadar wa ʿalāmati-s-sāʿa; also see Bukhārī, Fitān, khurūj al-nār). Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (736-795/1336-1393) says in the words of the Prophet (“...competing with each other in constructing tall buildings”), there is the proof that it is blameworthy to compete boastfully, especially in the construction of tall buildings (Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm, I: 139-141).

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**See also:** BEAUTY; BELIEVERS; DISBELIEVERS; HEREAFTER; JĀHILIYYA; PARADISE; PRIDE, ARROGANCE, AND BOASTFULNESS; TAQWĀ; USURY; YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE.

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## CONFIDENCES AND CONFIDANTS

NAJWĀ, NAJĪY, NĀJĀ, TANĀJAW

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage; (ii) The Prohibition of Confidential Asides as Harmful and Satanic; (iii) The Command to Use Asides for Righteous Objectives; (iv) The Absolute and Total Nature of Divine Knowledge; (v) The Incident Cited in Sūrat al-Taḥrīm (Q 66); (vi) The Bestowal of Divine Confidences on Prophets and non-Prophets; (vii) Bibliography.

### Definitions and Usage

The noun *najwā* refers to (i) the confiding of private or secret matters to another (Q 4:114; 9:78; 20:62; 21:3; 43:80; 58:8-13x4), or (ii) any group of two or more thus engaged (Q 4:114 also, 17:47; 58:7). Both senses imply exclusivism or an aside that takes place in plain view of non-participants, each member of a *najwā* (or all, collectively) being called a *najīy*, “confidant(s)” (Q 12:80; 19:52), two or more confiding in each other (reflexive verb *tanājaw*) (Q 58:8-9x4), or one confiding to another (transitive verb *nājā*) (Q 58:12). The cognates *najwā*, *najīy*, *nājā* and *tanājaw* occur in the

Qurʾān a total of 18 times in two types of contexts: the positive contexts of Prophet Mūsā's colloquies with Allah (see MŪSA, UPON HIM PEACE) (Q 19:52) and the Muslims' consultations with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (Q 58:12-13 x3), and the negative contexts of scheming (see SECRET PLOT), as in the conferring of the brothers of Yūsuf (see YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE) (Q 12:80) and, most importantly and frequently, the asides of hypocrites (*q.v.*), including the Jews, as a disaffected group within the larger Madinan society of the Believers (*q.v.*; Q, rest of refs.).

Lexically, *najwā* is synonymous with the infinitive noun *najw* and derives from *n-j-w*, which yields the verb *najā*, *yanjū* and conveys the meanings of “salvation from harm” (*najāt*) and “haste” (*najāʿ*) as well as concealment, removal, secrecy, and constipation (Farāhidī, 6:186, *sub j-n-w/y*; Ibn Durayd, 2:117, *sub j-n-w*; Ibn Fāris, 5:397, *sub n-j-w*). The verb *najā* in the transitive sense means to overtake (a thing) and, more relevantly here, confide (in a person), as does its reciprocal form *tānājā* (hence its Form-VI noun *munājāt*, “intimate conversation”). (Saraqustī, 3:170, *nūn*, *al-muʿtall bil-wāw fī lām al-fīʿl*). The verbal Forms II (*najjā*) and IV (*anjā*) denote salvation (*najāt*), the most frequent (66 times) Qurʾānic denotation of the stem (see DELIVERANCE).

### The Prohibition of Confidential Asides as Harmful and Satanic

Confidential asides possess negative characteristics:

- *Much of their confidential asides are devoid of goodness...* (Q 4:114). Verses Q 4:105-114 were revealed in reference to the Banū Ubayriq colluding to frame the Jewish convert Labīd (or Abū Labīd) b. Sahl al-Anṣārī for theft (Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, rated *gharīb*; both *sub* Q 4:114; see Abū Nuʿaym, *Maʿrifā*, 5:2422 §5925; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Istīʿāb*, 3:1338-1339 §2234; Ibn Ḥajar, 3:285 §4238, *sub t-ʿ* and 6:5-6 §7536, *sub l-b*). The divine redirection that followed, *...except for whoever enjoins giving alms, or goodness, or reconciliation between people; and whoever does that in pursuit of the pleasure of Allah, We shall grant him an immense reward*, applies to all humanity (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 4:114).
- They typify the unjust who were intent on disparaging the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and accused him of witchcraft: *And they conceal their asides—those who are unjust—“Is he but a human being just like you? Will you endorse sorcery with your eyes wide open?”* (Q 21:3) (see INJUSTICE). The verb for “conceal,” *asarrū*, is of the auto-antonyms (*aḍḍād*)

and also means “to reveal” (Abū ʿUbayda, 2:34, *sub* Q 21:3; Ibn al-Anbārī, p. 45 §18) and this is how the verse is better understood: *And they bring out the confidence among themselves* (Ṭabarī). The verse echoed the typical clandestine meetings of the Makkan chieftains Abū Jahl, al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, and ʿUqba b. Abī Muʿayt (Muqātil).

- They constitute the inveterate sin (*q.v.*) and enmity (*q.v.*) of the Jews who (i) as a rule acted as if they were plotting against individual Muslims; (ii) would greet the Prophet—upon him blessings and peace—with the words, “*al-sām* [death] be upon you;” (iii) ignored the Prophet’s command not to do so; (iv) and challenged Allah to punish them: *Do you not see those who were forbidden confidential asides, then they keep returning to what they were forbidden, and they scheme in secret to commit sin, enmity and disobedience of the Messenger? Then, when they come to you, they greet you with a greeting with which Allah never greeted you; and then say to themselves: “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?”* (Q 58:8) (Muqātil, Muḥāhid, Ṭabarī).
- They originate with Satan (*q.v.*), who uses them to distress the believers: *Confidential asides are from none other than Satan* (Q 58:10). The hypocrites would hold asides and this would infuriate and distress the believers (Ṭabarī). “Confidential asides are cast forth by the enemy to the human psyche (*naḥs al-ṭabʿ*), as the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, ‘The angel makes a call and the devil makes a call’ [Tirmidhī, *Abwāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 3: wa-min Sūrat al-Baqara, rated *ḥasan*; Ibn Ḥibbān, 3:278 §997]” (Tustarī). It is for this reason that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and the sacred Law in his wake, forbid it for two people to converse privately in the presence of a third, or for three to do so in the presence of a fourth, etc., unless the one left out has company or gives permission (Bukhārī, *Istīʿdhān*, *lā yatanājā ithnān dūn al-thālith*; Muslim, *Salām*, *taḥrīm munājāt al-ithnayn dūn al-thālith bi-ghayri riḍāh*; Nawawī, *Sharḥ*).

### The Command to Use Asides for Righteous Objectives

Conversely, *najwā* can be used for good, as when one proceeds to privately consult the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, giving charity in the process: *O Believers, when you converse privately with the Messenger, present a charity before your private conversation; that is better for you and purer; but if you find nothing to give,*