



Tafheemul Quran in Colors Arabic English 018 Al-Kahf Syed Abul Aala Maududi Evergreen Islamic Center

الكَهْف Al-Kahf

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Name

This Surah takes its name from Ayat 9 in which the word *Al-Kahf* means “The Cave” occurs.

Period of Revelation

This is the first of those Surahs which were revealed in the third stage of Prophethood at Makkah. We have already divided the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) at Makkah into four stages in the introduction to Chapter 6. According to that division the third stage lasted from the fifth to the tenth year of Prophethood. What distinguishes this stage from the second and the fourth stages is this. During the second stage, the Quraish mainly resorted to

ridiculing, scoffing, threatening, tempting, raising objections and making false propaganda against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers in order to suppress the Islamic movement. But during the third stage they employed the weapons of persecution, man-handling and economic pressure for the same purpose. So much so that a large number of the Muslims had to emigrate from Arabia to Habash, and those who remained behind were besieged in Shiib Abi Talib along with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his family. To add to their misery, a complete social and economic boycott was applied against them. The only redeeming feature was that there were two personalities, Abu Talib and Khadijah, whose personal influence had been conducive to the support of two great families of the Quraish. However, when in the tenth year of Prophethood these two persons died, the fourth stage began with such severe persecutions that forced the Prophet (peace be upon him) and all his companions to emigrate from Makkah.

It appears from the theme of the Surah that it was revealed at the beginning of the third stage when in spite of persecutions and opposition, migration to Habash had not yet taken place. That is why the story of *Ashab-i-Kahf* (the Sleepers of the Cave) has been related to comfort and encourage the persecuted Muslims and to show them how the righteous people have been saving their faith in the past.

Subject and Topics

This Surah was sent down in answer to the three questions which the mushriks of Makkah, in consultation with the

people of the Book, had put to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in order to test him. These were:

- (1) Who were the sleepers of the cave.
- (2) What is the real story of Khidr.
- (3) What do you know about Zul-Qarnain.

As these three questions and the stories involved concerned the history of the Christians and the Jews, and were unknown in Hijaz, a choice of these was made to test whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) possessed any source of the knowledge of the hidden and unseen things. Allah, however, not only gave a complete answer to their questions but also employed the three stories to the disadvantage of the opponents of Islam in the conflict that was going on at that time at Makkah between Islam and unbelief.

1. The questioners were told that the sleepers of the cave believed in the same doctrine of Tauhid which was being put forward in the Quran and that their condition was similar to the condition of the persecuted Muslims of Makkah. On the other hand, the persecutors of the sleepers of the cave had behaved in the same way towards them as the disbelievers of the Quraish were behaving towards the Muslims. Besides this, the Muslims have been taught that even if a believer is persecuted by a cruel society, he should not bow down before falsehood but emigrate from the place all alone, if need be, with trust in God. Incidentally the disbelievers of Makkah were told that the story of the sleepers of the cave was a clear proof of the creed of the Hereafter, for this showed that Allah has the power to

resurrect anyone He wills even after a long sleep of death as He did in case of the sleepers of the cave.

2. The story of the sleepers of the cave has also been used to warn the chiefs of Makkah who were persecuting the small newly formed Muslim community. At the same time, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been instructed that he should in no case make a compromise with their persecutors nor should he consider them to be more important than his poor followers. On the other hand, those chiefs have been admonished that they should not be arrogant by the pleasure of transitory life they were then enjoying but should seek after those excellences which are permanent and eternal.

3. The story of Khidr and Moses has been related in such a way as to provide the answer to the question of the disbelievers and to give comfort to the believers as well. The lesson contained in this story is this: You should have full faith in the wisdom of what is happening in the divine factory in accordance with the will of Allah. As the reality is hidden from you, you are at a loss to understand the wisdom of what is happening. And sometimes if it appears that things are going against you, you cry out: How and why has this happened. The fact is that if the curtain be removed from the unseen, you would yourselves come to know that what is happening here is for the best. Even if sometimes it appears that something is going against you, you will see that in the end it also produces some good results for you.

4. The same is true of the story of Zul-Qarnain for it also

admonishes the questioners, as if to say: O you chiefs of Makkah, you should learn a lesson from Zul-Qarnain. Though he was a great ruler, a great conqueror and the owner of great resources, yet he always surrendered to his Creator, whereas you are rebelling against Him even though you are insignificant chieftains in comparison with him. Besides this, though Zul-Qarnain built one of the strongest walls for protection, yet his real trust was in Allah and not in the wall. He believed that the wall could protect a people against their enemies as long as it was the will of Allah and that there would be crack and holes in it when it would be His will. Whereas, you who possess only insignificant fortified abodes and dwellings in comparison with him, you consider yourselves to be permanently safe and secure against all sorts of calamities. The Quran turned the tables on the questioners who had tried to expose the Prophet (peace be upon him).

In the end of the Surah the same things have been reiterated that were stated at its beginning. Tauhid and the Hereafter are absolutely true and real and, for your own good, you should accept these doctrines and mend your ways in accordance with them and live in this world with this conviction that you are accountable to Allah. Otherwise, you shall ruin your life and all your doings shall be set at naught.

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. All the praise be to Allah, who has sent down upon His

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ

slave the Book, and has not placed therein any deviance.*1

وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا ۝١

*1 That is, there is nothing intricate or complicated in it that may be beyond anyone's understanding nor is there anything that deviates from the straight path of the truth and thus cause hesitation in the mind of a truth loving person.

2. Straight, that He may warn of a severe punishment from Him, and He may give good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that theirs will be a fair reward.

قِيمًا لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّمَّنْ لَدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۝٢

3. They shall remain therein forever.

مَا كَثِيرٌ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ۝٣

4. And may warn those who say: "Allah has taken a son."*2

وَيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ۝٤

*2 "Those who say" includes the Christians, the Jews and the mushrik Arabs who assigned offspring to Allah.

5. They do not have of it any knowledge,*3 nor their forefathers. Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths. They do not speak except a lie.

مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ إِنَّ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا ۝٥

*3 "Dreadful is the word" That one is the son of God, or Allah has adopted that one as a son. This has been declared to be dreadful because it was not based on any knowledge

that Allah has a son or has adopted a son. They had merely exaggerated their love for someone and invented such a relationship. And they do not realize that it is a dreadful blasphemy, impudence and fabrication that they are uttering in regards to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

6. Then perhaps you would torment to death yourself (O Prophet), following after them if they do not believe in this message, in grief. *4

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

*4 This refers to the real cause of the anxiety of the Prophet (peace be upon him) at the time of the revelation of this Surah. It clearly shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not grieve at the persecution from which he and his companions were suffering but at the deviation and moral degeneration of his people. What was consuming him was that, though he was trying to bring them out from their disgraceful state, they persisted in it. He was grieved because he was convinced that their deviation would inevitably lead them to destruction and scourge of Allah. Therefore he was working day and night to save them but it appeared that they were bent upon incurring the chastisement of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has described this state of his mind in a tradition to this effect: I may describe this thing in a parable. A person kindled a fire to spread light but the moths persist in falling over it to burn themselves alive. He tries to save them from the fire but the moths reduce his efforts to failure. The same is true of me and you. I hold you by your skirts to keep you

away from the fire, but you are bent upon falling into it. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Though apparently it is merely stated that it may be that you will consume your life for their sake out of sorrow, it also contains a sort of consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: As you are not responsible for forcing them to believe, why should you consume yourself for their sake. Your only duty is to give good news and warning and not to turn people into believers. Therefore, you may go on carrying out your mission of giving good news to the believers and warning of the bad consequences to the disbelievers.

7. Indeed, We have made what is on the earth an adornment for it, that We may test them, which of them are best in deeds.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا
لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

8. And indeed, We shall make that which is upon it (earth) a barren land, dry. *5

وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا

*5 Ayat 6 was addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but Ayats 7-8 have been directed to the disbelievers indirectly, as if to say: You must understand it clearly that all the things that you see in the world and which allure you, are a transitory adornment which has been arranged merely to test you, but it is a pity that you have been involved in the misunderstanding that all these things have been created to cater for your pleasure and enjoyment. That is why the only aim and object of life you have set

before you is: Eat, drink and be merry. As a result of this you do not pay any attention to your true and real well wisher. You must understand it well that these things have not been provided for pleasure but are actually a means of testing you. You have been placed among them to see which of you is allured by these from the real aim of life and which of you keeps steadfast in the worship of Allah, for which you have been sent to the world. All these things and means of pleasure shall come to an end on the Day, your examination is over and nothing will remain on the earth because it will be turned into a bare plain.

9. Or do you think that the companions of the cave^{*6} and the inscription^{*7} were among Our signs, a wonder.^{*8}

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ
كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

^{*6} The Arabic word *Kahf* literally means a vast cave.

^{*7} There is a difference of opinion about the meaning of *arraqim*. Some companions and their followers opined that it was the name of that habitation where this event took place and that it was situated somewhere between Aylah and Palestine. There are other commentators who take it to mean the inscription that had been set up at the cave as a memorial to the sleepers of the cave. Abul Kalam Azad, in his commentary, *Tarjmanul-Quran*, has preferred the first meaning and opined that it is the same place which has been called *Rekem* in the Bible (Joshua, 18: 27). Then he identifies it with the ancient historical city of Petra. But he has not considered the fact that *Rekem*, as mentioned in the Bible, belonged to the children of Benjamin and according

to the Book of Joshua, the territory of this clan was situated to the west of river Jordan and the Dead Sea and that the ruins of Petra are situated to the south of Jordan. That is why the modern archaeologists do not believe that Petra and Rekem are one and the same place. (Please refer to Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946, Vol XVII, page 658). We are also of the opinion that by Arraqim is meant the inscription.

*8 This question has been posed to expose the skeptical attitude of the disbelievers towards the “Sleepers of the Cave,” as if to say: Do you think that Allah, Who has created the heavens and the earth, does not have the power to keep a few persons in a state of sleep for a couple of hundred years and then to raise them up same as they were at the time of going to sleep. If you ever had pondered over the wonderful creation of the sun and the moon and the earth, you would never have expressed any doubt that such a thing was anything difficult for Allah.

10. When retreated the youths to the cave and said: “Our Lord, bestow on us from Yourself mercy and facilitate for us from our affair guidance.”

إِذْ أَوْسَى الْفِتْيَةَ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا
مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا
رَشْدًا

11. So We cast a cover over their ears in the cave for a number of years.

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ
عَدَدًا

12. Then We raised them up that We might know which

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْطَى

of the two factions would calculate the extent they had tarried, in time.

لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا

13. We narrate unto you their story with truth. *9 Indeed, they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance. *10

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدَّوْنَهُمْ هُدًى

*9 The oldest evidence of this story is found in a homily written in Syriac by Jacob of Sarug, a Christian priest of Syria, who was born in A.D. 452, a few years after the death of the companions of the cave. The homily which describes the legend in great detail was composed by him in or about A.D. 474. On the one hand, this same Syriac version came into the hands of our early commentators, and Ibn Jarir Tabari cited it in his commentary with various authorities. And on the other hand, it reached Europe where its translations and abridged versions were published in Greek and Latin. The abridged story as told by Gibbon in Chapter 33 of his The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire under the heading, "The Seven Sleepers", so closely resembles the story told by our commentators that both the versions seem to have been drawn from the same source. For instance, the name of the king, whose persecutions made the Seven Christian youths of Ephesus take refuge in the cave, was Emperor Decius according to Gibbon. He ruled the Roman Empire from A.D. 249 to 251 and whose reign is very notorious because of his persecution of the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), while our

commentators call him Decanus or Decaus, etc. The city, where this event happened was Aphesus or Aphotos according to our commentators, while according to Gibbon it was Ephesus, which was the biggest Roman city and seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor. The ruins of this city can still be seen 20 to 25 miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmir. Again the name of the king, during whose reign the companions of the cave awoke, was Tezusius according to the Muslim commentators and Theodosius II according to Gibbon. He ruled over Rome from A.D. 408 to 450, after the Roman Empire had accepted Christianity.

The resemblance between the two versions is so close that even the name of the companion whom the sleepers sent to the city to buy food after waking up has been mentioned as Jamblichia by the Muslim scholars and Jamblichus by Gibbon. The details of the story in both the versions are also similar which are briefly as follows.

When during the reign of the Emperor Decius, the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) were being mercilessly persecuted, the seven Christian youths hid themselves in a cave and fell into a sleep. Then in the 38th year of the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II (approximately in A.D. 445 or 446) they awoke when the entire Roman Empire had become Christian. Thus, they slept in the cave for nearly 196 years.

On this ground some orientalist have rejected that the above mentioned story is the same as that given in the Quran because the period of their stay in the cave

according to the Quran (Ayat 25) was 309 years. We have, however, answered this objection in E.N. 25.

There are a few minor differences between the Quranic and Syriac versions, on the basis of which Gibbon has charged the Prophet (peace be upon him) with ignorance. However, the Syriac version, on the basis of whose authenticity he has committed this gross insolence, was even according to him written thirty to forty years after the event by a Syrian. He has not taken the trouble to consider the fact that verbal versions of events do change a bit during such a long time while they are communicated from one country to the other. Therefore it is wrong to take such a version of the story for granted and literally true and to charge the Quran with discrepancy for any main difference with it. Such an attitude is worthy only of those people who are so blinded by religious prejudices that they discard even the most ordinary demands of reason.

The city of Ephesus where the event of the sleepers of the cave took place, was built about 11th century B.C. and became a great center of idol worship, its chief deity being the moon goddess, Diana, whose temple was regarded as a wonder of the ancient world. Most of her devotees belonged to Asia Minor and the Roman Empire also had accepted her as one of its deities.

After Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) when his message started reaching different parts of the Roman Empire, a few youths of Ephesus also gave up idol worship and accepted God as their only Lord. Gregory of Tours has collected details about these Christian youths in his

Meraculorum Liber, which are briefly as follows.

They were seven youths. When the Emperor Decius heard of their change of faith, he summoned them and questioned them about their new religion. In spite of knowing that the Emperor was deadly against the followers of Christ, they frankly admitted before him that their Lord is the Lord of the earth and heavens, and that they recognized none else as Deity for if they did so, they would be committing a grave sin. The Emperor became furious to hear this, and warned that he would have them killed, but then considering their tender age, he granted them three days in which they were counseled to revert to their old faith, otherwise they would be put to death.

The seven youths took advantage of the situation and fled the city to conceal themselves in a cave in the mountains. On the way a dog also followed them. They did their best to scare it away, but it would not leave them. At last they found a spacious cave as a suitable refuge and hid in it and the dog sat at the entrance. Being tired they soon fell into a deep slumber. This happened in about 250 A.D. After about 197 years, in 447 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II, they awoke suddenly when the whole Roman Empire had embraced Christianity and the Ephesians had given up idolatry.

At this time a fierce controversy was going on among the Romans regarding the reality of the life after death and Resurrection, and the Emperor himself was anxious to eradicate somehow the disbelief in the life after death from the minds of his people. So much so that one day he prayed

that God in His mercy may show a sign which may help restore and correct the people's belief. In precisely the same days the seven sleepers awoke in the cave.

After waking up, the youths started asking one another about how long they might have slept. Some said it might have been a day, others said it was a part of a day. When they reached no conclusion, they stopped arguing, leaving the knowledge of the exact period to God.

Then they sent Jean, a companion, to the city with a few silver coins to buy food, and warned him to be on his guard lest the people should recognize him, for they feared that if they were discovered the Ephesians would force them to bow before Diana. But when Jean came to the city he was astonished to see that the world had changed. The entire population had embraced Christianity, and there was nobody in the city to worship Diana. He came to a shop and wanted to buy a few loaves of bread. When he paid in a coin bearing the image of Emperor Decius, the shopkeeper could not believe his eyes and asked the stranger from where he had obtained that coin. When the young man said that it was his own, a dispute began between them and soon a crowd gathered around them, and the matter reached the chief officer of the city. The officer himself was puzzled and wanted to know the whereabouts of the treasure house from where the young man had taken the coin, but the latter insisted that it belonged to him. The officer did not believe him because he thought that a young man like him could not possibly possess a centuries old coin which had not even been seen by the elders in the city. When Jean came to

know that the Emperor Decius had died, he was pleasantly surprised. He told the crowd that he and his six companions had fled the city only the other day and taken refuge in a cave to escape Decius' persecution. The officer was greatly surprised and followed the young man to see the cave where his companions lay in hiding. And a great crowd followed behind them. When they came to the cave, it was fully established that the youths really belonged to the Emperor Decius' period. Consequently, Emperor Theodosius was informed and he also visited the cave to receive grace. Then the seven youths went back into the cave and lay down and breathed their last. Seeing this clear sign the people's belief in the life after death was restored, and a monument was ordered to be built over the cave by the Emperor.

The story of the sleepers of the cave as narrated above, corresponds so closely with that mentioned in the Quran that the seven youths can easily be regarded as Ashab-i-Kahf (the companions of the cave). Some people, however, have raised the objection that this story concerns a city of Asia Minor, and the Quran does not discuss or refer to any event that might have taken place outside Arabia, therefore it would be against the Quranic style and spirit to label this Christian story as the story of Ashab-i-Kahf. In our opinion this objection is not correct. The Quran means to impress and warn the Arabs by relating stories concerning the various ancient tribes who had transgressed from the right path and with whom they were familiar, whether they lived and flourished inside Arabia or outside it. It is for this very reason that a mention has been made of the ancient

history of Egypt in the Quran, whereas Egypt has never been a part of Arabia. The question is that when the history of Egypt can be mentioned in the Quran, why cannot Rome and the Roman history with which the Arabs were as familiar as with the Egyptian history? The Roman frontiers adjoined the northern Hijaz and the Arab caravans traded with the Romans almost throughout the year. Then there were a number of Arab tribes who were directly under Roman domination and the Roman Empire was in no way unknown to the Arabs, a fact which is fully borne out by Surah Ar-Room. Another thing which should be borne in mind is that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related in the Quran in response to a query raised by the disbelievers of Makkah, who had been prompted by the Jews and Christians to question the Prophet (peace be upon him) on such matters as were wholly unknown to the Arabs in order to test his Prophethood.

*10 That is, when they had believed sincerely, Allah increased their faith in the guidance and enabled them to become firm and steadfast on the way of the truth even at the risk of their lives rather than surrender before falsehood.

14. And We gave strength to their hearts when they stood up and said: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never shall we call upon other than Him any god. Certainly, we would have uttered then an enormity."

وَرَبُّنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا
رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوَ
مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا



15. “These our people, have taken other than Him gods. Why do they not bring upon them a clear authority. So who does greater wrong than he who invents against Allah a lie.”

هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً
لَوْ لَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ
أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٥﴾

16. “And when you have withdrawn from them, and that which they worship except Allah, then retreat to the cave. *11 Will spread out for you your Lord of His mercy, and will make for you, of your affair, ease.”

وَ إِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَ مَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا
اللَّهُ فَأَوَّا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرُ لَكُمْ
رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَ يُهَيِّئُ لَكُمْ مِنْ
أَمْرِكُمْ مَرْفَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

*11 When these God worshipping youths fled the habitations to take refuge in the hills, the city of Ephesus was the principal center of idol worship and sorcery in Asia Minor. There was a great temple dedicated to the goddess Diana, which was well known in the whole world and attracted devotees from far places. The sorcerers, workers of magic and occult arts, soothsayers and amulet writers of Ephesus were well known and their black business had spread throughout Syria and Palestine, even as far as Egypt. The Jews also had a big share in it, who attributed this art to Prophet Solomon. (Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature under Ephesus). The predicament in which the righteous people living in an environment of idolatry and superstition were involved can well be imagined from the remark of the

companions of the cave that occurs in Ayat 20: If they succeed in overpowering us, they will surely stone us to death or force us back into their faith.

17. And ^{*12} you would see the sun when it rose, moving away from their cave on the right, and when it set, passing away from them on the left, while they were in the open space of it. ^{*13} That is from the signs of Allah. He whom guides Allah, so he is guided. And he whom He sends astray, then never will you find for him a guiding friend.

وَ تَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزُورُ عَنْ
كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ
تَقْرُبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ
مِّنْهُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ
الْمُهْتَدِ وَ مَن يُضِلِّ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا
مُّرْشِدًا

^{*12} It has not been mentioned that in accordance with this mutual resolve, they left the city and went to a secret cave in the mountains in order to escape from death or forced apostasy.

^{*13} This is to show that the mouth of the cave faced the north. That is why the light of the sun could not enter inside the cave and the one who passed by it could not see who was inside it.

18. And you would have thought them awake while they were asleep. And We turned them to the right and to the left. ^{*14} And their dog

وَ تَحْسَبُهُمْ آيْقَاظًا وَ هُمْ رُقُودٌ ط وَ
نُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ
ط وَ كَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ لَوِ

stretched his forelegs at the entrance. If you had looked at them, you would have turned back from them in flight, and would be filled of them with awe. *15

اَطَّلَعَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَّيْتِ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَا
مَلَّيْتِ مِنْهُمْ رُعبًا ﴿١٥﴾

*14 That is, if someone could have looked at the seven persons from outside and seen them turning from one side to the other at intervals, he would have thought that they were not asleep but were relaxing themselves.

*15 Allah had so arranged their refuge that none dared go inside the cave and know about them for it was pitch dark in the cave and the dog was keeping watch at the entrance. If someone ever looked into the cave and saw the sleepers, he took them for some robbers and at once turned on his heels. This was the reason why their refuge remained a secret to the outer world for such a long period.

19. And in like manner, We awakened them *16 that they might ask one another. Said a speaker from among them: “How long have you stayed.” They said: “We have stayed a day or part of a day. They said: “Your Lord best knows how long you have stayed. So send one of you with this your silver coin to the city, then let him see what is the

وَ كَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ
قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ قَالُوا
لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ
اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَابْعَثُوا اَحَدَكُمْ
بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ اَيْهَا
اَزْسَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَا

purest food. Then bring you a provision from it. And let him be careful, and let not know about you anyone.”

لَيَتَلَطَّفْ وَ لَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿١٦﴾

*16 They were awakened from their sleep in the same miraculous way that was employed in sending them to sleep and keeping them hidden from the outer world.

20. Indeed, if they come to know of you, they will stone you or they will turn you back to their religion, and never will you then be successful, then ever.

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

21. And similarly, We made their case known to them (the people) *17 that they might know that the promise of Allah is true. And that, the Hour, there is no doubt about it. *18 When they disputed among themselves of their affair, they said: “Build over them a building. Their Lord knows best about them.” *19 Said those who prevailed in their matter, *20 “We surely shall make over them a place of worship.” *21

وَ كَذَلِكَ أَعْرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُنْيَانًا رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢١﴾

*17 The secret of their sleep was revealed when one of them

went to Ephesus to buy food for them and offered a coin of the period of Emperor Decius. As it was a changed world, he naturally attracted attention for he was wearing a costume of 300 year old fashion and spoke a language different from that in vogue. This was because during those two centuries the language, culture, dress etc. had undergone a marked change. So the shopkeeper looked askance at him and, according to a Syriac tradition, he suspected that he had dug up some ancient treasure. Accordingly, he gathered some people of his neighborhood and they took him before the ruler. On questioning, it was discovered that he was one of those followers of Christ, who had fled the city 300 years ago to save their faith. As most of the population had embraced Christianity, the news immediately spread throughout the city and a big crowd of the people along with the Christian Roman Ruler, arrived at the cave. It was then that the sleepers of the cave came to know that they had slept for about three hundred years. So after making salutations to their Christian brothers they lay down and their souls left their bodies.

***18** According to the Syriac tradition, at the time of this occurrence, hot discussions were going on in Ephesus about Resurrection and the Hereafter. Though the people had embraced Christianity under the influence of the Roman Empire, yet traces of shirk and idolatry of the Romans and the effects of the Greek philosophy were still very powerful. So in spite of the Christian creed of the Hereafter, many people denied this, or at least were skeptical about this. To add to this the Sadducee sect of the Jews, who formed a

great part of the population of the city, openly denied the Hereafter and professed to base this on the Torah. The Christian scholars, however, could not put forward any strong arguments to refute them: so much so that the reports of the polemical discussion given in Matthew, Mark and Luke, attributed to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), are admittedly very weak even according to the Christian scholars. (Please refer to Matthew 22: 23-33, Mark 12: 18-27, Luke 20: 27-40). That is why the disbelievers in the Hereafter were having the upper hand and even the believers were being involved in doubts about it. It was at that time that the sleepers of the cave were raised up and furnished an absolute proof of the life after death and turned the scales in favor of the believers in this dispute.

***19** It appears from the context that this was the saying of the righteous people from among the Christians. They were of the opinion that a wall should be raised at the entrance of the cave in order to let the sleepers remain in the same condition in which they were, for they argued that their Lord alone knew best about their rank and position and the reward they deserved.

***20** The people “those who prevailed in their matter” were the Roman rulers and the priests of the Christian Church, who did not let the righteous Christians have their way. This was because by the middle of the fifth century, the common people, especially the orthodox among the Christians, had become fully involved in shirk and the worship of saints and tombs. They used to visit the tombs of the saints to worship them and kept the statues of Jesus,

Mary and the apostles in their churches: so much so that a few years before the rising up of the sleepers of the cave, in 431 A.D., a great council of the representatives of the Christian world had been held in Ephesus itself, in which it was resolved that the creed of the divinity of Christ and of Mary as the mother of God, should be included in the articles of the Christian Church. If we keep in view the year 431, it becomes clear that by “those who prevailed in their matter” are meant the leaders of the Church and the officers of the government, who had the reins of the religious and political powers in their hands. In fact these were the people who were the upholders of shirk and who decided that a mausoleum should be built over the cave of the sleepers to make it a place of worship.

*21 It is an irony that some people among the Muslims have misconstrued this verse of the Quran so as to make it lawful for themselves to build mausoleums, monuments and mosques over the tombs of the righteous persons and saints. The Quran has, in fact, pointed out the deviation of the workers of iniquity who prevailed upon others and built a place of worship over the cave of the sleepers, who were indeed a sign of Resurrection and of the life after death. But they abused this good opportunity and produced another means of practicing shirk.

One fails to understand how anyone can deduce from this verse an argument for the legality of building mosques over the tombs of the righteous people, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) has categorically prohibited this.

(1) Allah has cursed those women who visit tombs and those

people who build mosques over them and burn lights over them (Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Dawud, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

(2) Beware that the people, who have passed before you, made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. I forbid you to do that. (Muslim).

(3) Allah has cursed the Jews and the Christians, for they made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

(4) The behavior of those people was strange: if a righteous person from among them, died they would build a mosque over his grave and draw his pictures. They will be treated as worst criminals on the Day on Resurrection. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

Thus, it is clear from the above sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that building of the places of worship over the tombs is utterly unlawful. The Quran has merely stated as a historical fact the sinful act of the Christian priests and the Roman rulers and has not sanctioned such a thing. Therefore no God fearing person can turn this into an argument for building mosques over the tombs.

Incidentally, it will be worthwhile to cite a statement of Rev. T. Arundell who published his discoveries in Asia Minor in 1834. He says that he had seen the remains of the Mausoleums of Mary and the seven sleepers on a hillock near the remains of the ancient city of Ephesus.

22. They will say: “(They were) three, fourth of them their dog.” And (some) will say: “Five, sixth of them

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ
خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَاجِمًا بِالْغَيْبِ وَ

their dog” Guess work at the unseen. And (some) will say: “Seven, and the eighth of them their dog*²².” Say: “My Lord is best aware of their number. None knows them but a few.” So debate not about them except an outward contending. And inquire not, about them, anyone of these. *²³

يَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ قُلْ سَرَّيْ
 أَعْلَمُ بِعَدَّتِهِمْ مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ^{تف}
 فَلَا تُحْسَبُوا فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا ^ع وَلَا
 تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا

*²² This shows that about three hundred years after this event, at the time of the revelation of the Quran, different stories had become current among the Christians about the sleepers of the cave, but generally these stories had no authentic source behind them. This was because that was not the age of the press in which authentic books might have been published. Therefore naturally the stories of events were carried from place to place by means of oral traditions, and with the passage of time many tales of fiction got mixed up with the real story.

*²³ This is meant to impress that the real thing in this story is not the number of the sleepers but the lessons it teaches.

- (1) A true believer should not on any account turn away from the truth and bow before falsehood.
- (2) A believer should not merely rely on the material means but on Allah. He should trust in God and follow the right way, even though the outward adverse circumstances might appear to be unfavorable.
- (3) It is wrong to suppose that Allah is bound by any so

called law of nature, for He is able to do anything He wills even though that might seem to be against some common experience. He has the power to change any so called law of nature, whenever and wherever He wills and bring about any extraordinary supernatural thing. So much so that He can raise up anyone who might have been asleep for two hundred years, as if he had slept only for a few hours, without letting any change take place in his appearance, dress, health, indeed in anything, during the passage of time.

(4) This teaches us that Allah has the power to bring to life all the generations past, present and future all together as asserted by the Prophets and divine Scriptures.

(5) It teaches us that ignorant people have always been perverting the signs of Allah which are sent for the right guidance of the people. That is how the miracle of the sleepers of the cave, which had been shown as a proof of the Hereafter, had been turned into a means of shirk, as if they were some saints who had been sent only for this purpose.

It is obvious from the above mentioned real lessons, which one can learn from the story of the sleepers, that a wise man will pay his attention to these things and not divert it in search of their number, their names, the color of their dog and the like. Only those people, who have no interest for the reality but for superficial things, will spend their time and energy in making investigations about such things. That is why Allah instructed the Prophet (peace be upon him): You should not enter into useless and irrelevant discussions about such things even if other people try to involve you in

them. Instead of wasting your time in such useless things, you should concentrate your attention only on your mission. That is why Allah has not Himself told their exact number lest it should encourage such people as are always hankering after useless things.

23. And do not say of a thing: “Surely I shall do that tomorrow.”

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا

24. Except that, wills Allah. And remember your Lord when you forget, and say: “It may be that will guide me my Lord ^{*24} what is nearer than this of righteousness.”

إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَ اذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبُ مِنْ هَٰذَا رَشْدًا

*24 This is a parenthetical clause which has been inserted here because of its relevancy to the preceding verse, in which it was asserted that the correct number of the sleepers of the cave is known only to Allah and a research into it is a useless task. Therefore one should refrain from investigating into unimportant things, nor enter into discussions about them. This has led to the instruction contained in the parenthetical clause for the benefit of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers who have been told never to make a positive assertion like this: I will do this thing tomorrow, for you do not know whether you will be able to do that thing or not: you have neither the knowledge of the unknown nor have full powers to do what you like. If ever inadvertently you utter anything like this,

you should at once remember your Lord and say, *InshaAllah*. Besides this you do not know whether there will be any good for you in the thing about which you say: I will do this. It is possible that you may do another thing better than that. Therefore you should trust in God and say: I hope that my Lord will guide me in this matter with that thing which is nearer to the right way for me.

25. And they stayed in their cave three hundred years and add nine. *25

وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا

*25 This sentence is connected with the theme preceding the parenthetical clause like this. Some people will say: “They were three and the fourth was their dog..”, and some people will say that they remained in the cave for three hundred years and some others would add nine more years (to the reckoning of the period). We are of the opinion that the number of the years, 300 or 309, has not been stated by Allah Himself but Allah has cited these as sayings of the people. This opinion is based on this succeeding sentence: Allah knows best about the period of their stay there. If the number of years, given in Ayat 25, had been from Allah, this succeeding sentence would have been meaningless. Abdullah bin Abbas has also opined that this is not the saying of Allah but that of the people which has been cited as a part of the story.

26. Say: “Allah knows best how long they stayed. He has (the knowledge of) the unseen of the heavens and

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَبْصِرُ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعُ

the earth. How well Seeing is He, and how well Hearing. They do not have other than Him any protecting friend, and He does not join in His authority anyone.”

مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

27. And ^{*26} recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His words, and never will you find in other than Him a refuge. ^{*27}

وَآتِلْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ
لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ تَفَّجٌ وَلَا لَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ
دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

^{*26} After relating the story of the sleepers of the cave, the Quran begins to review the condition of the Muslims of Makkah at the time of the revelation of the Surah.

^{*27} This does not mean at all that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was inclined to make any changes in the Quran to please the disbelievers of Makkah and was thinking of some formula of compromise with the chiefs of the Quraish which necessitated a warning that he was not authorized to do so. As a matter of tact, though this was apparently addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it was really meant for the disbelievers that they should not entertain any hope whatsoever for anything like this, as if to say: You must understand it once and for all that Our Messenger is not authorized to make any changes in Our revelation, for he has to precisely convey it just as it is sent down to him. If you want to accept it, you will have to

accept it in its entirety as it is being sent by the Lord of the Universe. And if you want to reject it, you may do so but you must understand it well that no modification, even in the least, will be made in it to please you. This was the answer to the repeated demand of the disbelievers: If you do insist, O Muhammad (peace be upon him), that we should accept your message in its entirety, then make certain modifications in it to accommodate some creeds and customs of our forefathers, and we will accept your message. This is our offer for a compromise and this will save our people from division. This demand of the disbelievers has been cited in the Quran at several places and the same answer has been given, e.g. When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us, say: Bring another Quran in its stead or make some amendments in it. (Surah Yunus, Ayat 15).

28. And keep patient yourself with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes overlook them, desiring adornments of the life of the world.*28 And do not obey him,*29 We have made heedless whose heart of Our remembrance, and who follows his own desire and whose affair is beyond all bounds.*30

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ
 بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا
 تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ
 الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تَطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن
 ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ
 فُرْطًا

***28** Though these words have also been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), they are really meant for the chiefs of the Quraish. According to a tradition related by Ibn Abbas, the chiefs of the Quraish would say to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they considered it below their dignity to sit with such people as Bilal, Suhaib, Ammar, Khabbab, Ibn-Masud and the like who generally remained in his company, and that if he should send them away, they would be willing to attend his meetings in order to learn about his message. At this Allah revealed this verse: And keep yourself whole heartedly content with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening in order to win His approval and do not turn your attention away from them: Do you desire to discard these sincere but poor people so that the chiefs of the Quraish, the well to do people, should come and sit near you? This was meant to warn the chiefs of the Quraish to this effect: Your wealth, your pomp and show of which you are so proud has no value at all in the sight of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). Nay, those poor people are really more worthy in their sight, for they are sincere and always remember Allah. The same was the attitude of the chiefs of Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) people, who said: And we also see that none but the meanest and the most shallow of our people have become your followers. Upon this, Noah (peace be upon him) replied: I am not going to drive away those who have believed in me, nor can I say about those whom you disdain that Allah has not bestowed any good on them. (Surah Al-Anbia Ayats 27, 29, 31).

*29 That is, do not yield to what he says, nor submit to him, nor fulfill his desire, nor follow his bidding.

*30 The original Arabic text may also mean: Who discards the truth, breaks all moral limits and rushes on headlong. But in both cases it comes to this: The one, who is neglectful of Allah and becomes a slave of his lust, inevitably transgresses all limits and becomes a victim of immoderation. Therefore the one who will submit to him, will also follow the same way and wander about in deviation after him.

29. And say: "The truth is from your Lord. Then whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve." *31

Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire, surrounding them will be its walls. *32 And if they ask for water, they will be showered with water like murky oil *33 which will scald the faces. Dreadful is the drink and evil is the resting place.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ
فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا
أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ
سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ
كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ
وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

*31 This verse makes it quite plain that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related to tell the opponents of Islam: This is the truth from your Lord. Now whosoever wills, he may accept it and whosoever wills, he may reject it. But people must understand that no compromise will be

made in regard to the truth just as the sleepers of the cave did not make any compromise with regard to their creed. They did not make any compromise in regard to the doctrine of Tauhid after they had believed in it and categorically declared: Our Lord is the One Who alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. After this declaration they did not in any way accede to the making of any compromise with their people, who had gone astray. But they firmly declared: We will not give Him up and pray to other deities, because it will be the most improper thing, if we did so. After making this declaration they left their people and deities and took refuge in the cave without taking any provisions with them. After this when they woke up, the only thing about which they showed any anxiety, was that their people might not succeed in forcing them back to their own faith. After relating these things, the Quran addresses the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect (though these words are really meant for the opponents of Islam): It is absolutely out of question whether any compromise can be made with mushriks and disbelievers. Present the truth intact to them whether they accept it or not. If they do not accept it, they themselves will meet with an evil end. As regards to those, who have accepted the truth, (whether they be youngsters or poor, indigent people or slaves or laborers) they are really those people who have a worth with Allah, and they alone will be honored. Therefore you should not discard them and prefer the chiefs and the rich people who may be neglectful of Allah and be slaves of their own desires, even though they

might be possessors of worldly grandeur.

*32 The Arabic word *Suradiq* literally means sides of a tent but, as used in the case of Hell, it may mean its external boundaries to which its flames and heat may reach. According to some commentators, it applies to the future tense “its walls will be surrounding them” so as to refer to the flames of Hell in the Hereafter. But we are of the opinion that its flames have already encircled, in this very world, these workers of iniquity, who have turned away from the truth and that they cannot escape them.

*33 The Arabic word *muhul* has several lexical meanings. According to some people, it means the residue of oil; according to others, it is lava which is formed by the melting of things in the earth; according to some others, it is molten matter and according to others, it is pus and blood.

30. Indeed, those who believed and did righteous deeds, certainly We do not cause to be lost the reward of him who did good in deeds.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا
نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا

31. For such, theirs will be gardens of Eden, flowing beneath of them are rivers. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold^{*34} and they will wear garments, green, of fine silk and gold embroidery, reclining therein upon thrones.^{*35} Excellent is

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ يُجَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ
ذَهَبٍ وَ يَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ
وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَّكِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ

the reward, and good is the resting place.

نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٦﴾

*34 The dwellers of Paradise will be adorned with bracelets of gold like the kings of ancient times. This will be to show that they will be adorned like the kings of this world, whereas an unbeliever and wicked king will be disgraced there.

*35 The Arabic word *araaik* is plural of *arika* which is that kind of throne that is covered with an umbrella. This is also to show that in Paradise the believers will sit on thrones like the kings of this world.

32. And set forth to them the parable of two men. *36 We had provided, to one of them, two gardens of grapes, and We had surrounded both with date palms and had placed between them crops.

وَ اضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَ حَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣٦﴾

*36 In order to understand the significance of this parable we should keep in view Ayat 28 in which arrogant chiefs of Makkah were told that the poor companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not be discarded to please them.

33. Both the gardens brought forth their fruits, and did not fall short thereof in any thing. And We caused to gush forth in the midst of them a river.

كَلَّمَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَ لَمْ تَنْظِلْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۖ وَ فَجَّرْنَا خِلْفَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٧﴾

34. And for him was fruit. So he said to his companion, while he was conversing with him: “I am more than you in wealth, and stronger in number of men.”

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُجَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَ أَعْزُ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

35. And he entered his garden ^{*37} while he was unjust to himself. He said: “I do not think that this will perish, ever.”

وَ دَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَن تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾

***37** He considered his gardens to be Paradise. Thus he behaved like those mean persons who, when rise to power and wealth, are always involved in the misunderstanding that they are enjoying Paradise in this world, therefore they do not stand in need of any other Paradise.

36. “And I do not think that the Hour will ever come. And if I am brought back to my Lord, I surely shall find better than this as a place to return.” ^{*38}

وَ مَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً ۖ وَلَئِن رُّدِّتْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾

***38** That is, I don't think there is any life after death, but supposing there be one, I shall fare even better there than in my present life, for my prosperity is a clear proof that I am a favorite of God.

37. Said to him His companion, while he was

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُجَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ

conversing with him:
“Disbelieved you in Him who
created you from dust, then
from a sperm drop, then
proportioned you a complete
man.” *39

بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا ط

*39 This shows that unbelief in Allah is not confined to the denial of the existence of God in so many words, but arrogance, pride, vanity and the denial of the Hereafter are also kufr. Although that person did not deny the existence of Allah, he professed it as is apparent from his words (And if I am brought back to my Lord), yet in spite of his profession, his neighbor charged him with unbelief in Allah. This is because the person, who considers his wealth and his grandeur etc. to be the fruits of his own power and capability and not the favors of Allah, and who thinks that they are everlasting and none can take than away from him and that he is not accountable to anyone, is guilty of unbelief in Allah, even though he might profess belief in Him, for he acknowledges Allah as a Being and not as his Master, Owner and Sovereign. In fact, belief in Allah demands not merely the profession of His existence but also the acknowledgment of His Sovereignty, Mastery, Rule and the like.

38. But He is Allah, my
Lord, and I do not associate
with my Lord anyone.

لَكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَ لَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي

أَحَدًا ط

39. And why not, when you
entered your garden, did you

وَلَوْ لَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ

say: “What wills Allah (comes to pass). There is no power except with Allah. *40 If you see me less than you in wealth and children.”

اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ تَرَنٍ أَنَا أَقَلُّ
مِنْكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٣٦﴾

*40 That is, If we are able to do anything, it is by the help and support of Allah alone.

40. “So it may be my Lord will grant me better than your garden, and He will send on it a bolt from heaven so it becomes a ground, barren.”

فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ
وَ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
فَتُصْبِحُ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٣٧﴾

41. “Or drains its water into deep so you would never be able to seek it.”

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَهَا غُورًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ
طَلَبًا ﴿٣٨﴾

42. And (destruction) encircled his fruit. So he was left turning his hands over what he had spent on it, and which had tumbled upon its foundations. And he said, “Would that I had not associated with my Lord, anyone.”

وَ أُحِيطَ بِشَمَرِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ
عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَ هِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ
عُرْوَتِهَا وَ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ
بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾

43. And he did not have for him any troop to help him other than Allah, nor could he defend himself.

وَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِن دُونِ
اللَّهِ وَ مَا كَانَ مُنْتَصِرًا ﴿٤٠﴾

44 There, the authority is with Allah, the true One. He is the best for reward, and the best for the final end.

هَذَاكَ الْوَلِيَّةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا
وَ خَيْرٌ عَقْبًا

45. And set forth to them the similitude of the life of the world, as water which We sent down from the sky, so mingled with it the vegetation of the earth, then it became dry stubble that scatter it the winds. And Allah is, over all things, Perfect in power. *41

وَ اضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا ؤ
اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتٌ
الْاَرْضِ فَاَصْبَحَ هَشِيْمًا تَدْرُوهُ الرِّيْحُ وَ
كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا

***41** Allah has power over everything. He gives life and also death, He causes the rise and the downfall. It is by His command that the seasons change. Therefore, O disbelievers, if you are enjoying prosperity today, you should be under no delusion that this condition will remain forever. That God, by Whose command these things have been bestowed on you, has the power to snatch away all this by another command.

46. Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of the world. And what endure as the righteous deeds are better with your Lord for reward, and better in respect of hope.

الْمَالُ وَ الْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا
الْبَقِيْثُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا
وَ خَيْرٌ اَمَلًا

47. And the day We shall set in motion the mountains, *42 and you will see the earth as leveled plain, *43 and we shall gather them. Then shall not leave out from them anyone. *44

وَيَوْمَ نَسِيرُ الْجِبَالِ وَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ
بَارِزَةً وَ حَشَرْتَهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ
أَحَدًا ۗ

*42 The mountains will begin to move about like clouds when the gravitation of the earth shall be brought to an end. The Quran has described the same thing in Surah An-Namal, Ayat 88 in this way: When you see the mountains, you consider them to be firmly fixed, but they shall be floating about like clouds at that time.

*43 “You will see the earth as a leveled plain”: You will find no vegetation and no building on it and it will become a barren plain. It is the same thing that has been stated in Ayat 8 of this chapter.

*44 That is, We will muster together every human being from the first man, Adam, to the last one born in the last moment of the Day of Resurrection: even that child which had breathed the first breath after its birth, shall be resurrected and all shall be mustered at one and the same tune.

48. And they will be presented before your Lord in ranks, “Indeed, you have come to Us just as We created you the first time. *45 But you had thought that We

وَ عَرَضُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ صَفًّا لَّقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا
كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۗ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَلَّنْ
نَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَوْعِدًا ۗ

would never make for you a term appointed.”

***45** This thing will be addressed to those who denied the Hereafter, as if to say: Well, now you see that the information given by the Prophets has come out to be true. They told you that Allah would bring you to life again as He first brought you out from the wombs of your mothers but you disbelieved in it. Now say whether you have been brought to life for the second time or not.

49. And will be placed the book of deeds and you will see the criminals fearful of that which is therein, and they will say: “Woe to us, what is this book that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, except takes account thereof.” And they will find what they did, presented. And will not do injustice your Lord, to anyone. ***46**

وَ وُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ
مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَ يَقُولُونَ يَوَيْلَتَنَا
مَا لِهَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَ
لَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَ وَجَدُوا مَا
عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَ لَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا



***46** “And your Lord does not do injustice to anyone”: Neither will an evil deed, not committed by someone, have been recorded in his conduct register, nor shall anyone be punished more than one deserved for his crime, nor shall an innocent person be punished at all.

50. And when We said to the angels: “Prostrate before

وَ إِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا

Adam,” so they fell prostrate, except Iblis. *47 He was of the jinns, so he disobeyed the command of his Lord. *48

Will you then take him and his offspring your friends other than Me, while they are your enemy. Evil is for the wrong doers such exchange.

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ
أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ ۖ فَتَّخَذُوهُ وَ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ
أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَ هُمْ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ بِيْسٌ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا

*47 The reference to the story of Adam and Iblis has been made here to warn the erring people of their folly. It is an obvious folly that people should discard their Prophets, who were their well wishers, and get entangled in the snare set by their eternal enemy, Iblis, who has been jealous of man ever since he refused to bow down before Adam and became accursed.

*48 It was possible for Iblis to disobey Allah because he was not one of the angels but one of the jinns. It must be noted that the Quran is very explicit that the angels are inherently obedient.

(1) They do not show arrogance; they fear their Lord Who is above them, and do whatever they are bidden. (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 50).

(2) They do not disobey the command that is given to them by their Lord and do whatever they are bidden to do. (Surah At-Tahrim, Ayat 6).

In contrast to the angels, the jinns have been, like human beings, given the option to obey or not to obey. Therefore they have been given the power to believe or disbelieve, to

obey or not to obey. This thing has been made explicit here by saying that Iblis was one of the jinns, so he deliberately chose the way of disobedience. Incidentally, this verse removes all those misunderstandings that are generally found among the common people that Iblis was one of the angels and not an ordinary angel but the instructor of the angels. As regards to the difficulty that arises because of this statement of the Quran: When We said to the angels, bow down before Adam. They bowed down but Iblis did not, it should be noted that the command to the angels was meant for all those on the earth who were under the administration of the angels so that they should also be made submissive to man. Accordingly all these creatures bowed along with the angels but Iblis refused to bow down along with them.

51. I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation, *49 nor was I to take the misleaders as helpers.

مَا أَشْهَدْتُهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا
 خَلْقَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ
 عَضُدًا

*49 This thing has been asserted to impress on the disbelievers that the satans were not entitled to their submission and worship, for they had no share at all in the creation of the heavens and the earth, nay, they themselves were the creation of Allah: therefore Allah alone was worthy of worship.

52. And the Day He will say: "Call partners of Mine, those

وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ

whom you pretended.” *50

Then they will cry unto them,
but they will not answer them,
and We shall put between
them a gulf of doom. *51

زَعَمْتُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَ

جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَوْبِقًا

*50 This theme has already been stated at several places in the Quran. This is to impress that it is shirk to discard the commandments and the guidance of Allah and to follow the orders and guidance of any other than Allah, though one may not be professing with his tongue that there is any partner of Allah: nay, if one might be cursing others but at the same time following their orders instead of divine commandments, even then that one shall be guilty of shirk. For instance, we see that everyone in this world curses satans but still follows them. According to the Quran, in spite of cursing them, if people follow satans, they shall be guilty of setting up satans as partners with Allah. Though this will not be shirk in so many words, it will be tantamount to the practice of shirk and the Quran denounces this as shirk.

*51 Generally the commentators have assigned two meanings to this. The one is the same that we have adopted in our translation and the other is this: We will cause enmity between them. That is: Their friendship in this world shall be turned into bitter enmity in the Hereafter.

53. And shall see the
criminals the fire and
apprehend that they are
about to fall therein. And

وَ رَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ

مُؤَاقِعُهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا

they will not find, from there, any way of escape.

54. And indeed We have diversified, in this Quran, for mankind, every kind of example. And man is more than anything quarrelsome.

55. And nothing prevented the people from believing when had come to them the guidance, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, except that there should befall them precedent of the former people or comes to them the punishment face to face. *52

*52 This is to warn the people that the Quran has left no stone unturned in making the truth plain. It has employed all kinds of arguments, parables, similitude and used all the possible effective ways to appeal to the heart and the mind of man, and adopted the best possible style. If, in spite of this, they do not accept the truth, it is obvious that they are waiting for God's scourge like the one that visited the former communities to make them realize their error.

56. And We do not send the messengers except as givers of good tidings and warners. *53 And dispute those who

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٤﴾

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةٌ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٥﴾

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَ مُنذِرِينَ ۗ وَ يُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

disbelieved with help from falsehood in order to refute thereby the truth. And they took My revelations and that with which they are warned as mockery.

بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا
آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥١﴾

*53 This verse has two meanings.

(1) We send Our Messengers to forewarn the people before the coming of the judgment of the good results of obedience and the evil consequences of disobedience. But these foolish people are not taking advantage of these forewarnings and insist on seeing the same evil end from which the Messengers desire to save them.

(2) If they insist on meeting with the scourge, they should not demand this from the Messenger because the Messenger is sent not to bring a scourge but to warn the people beforehand to escape from it.

57. And who is greater wrongdoer than him who was reminded of the revelations of his Lord, yet turned away from them and forgot that which sent forth his hands. Indeed, We have placed over their hearts coverings lest they should understand this (Quran), and in their ears a deafness. And if you call them to

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ
فَاعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَا
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ
وَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى
الْهُدَى فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾

guidance, never will they be guided, then ever. *54

*54 Allah puts a covering over the heart of a person and makes his ears hard of hearing the truth when he adopts the attitude of contention, dispute, wrangling and argumentation towards the admonition of a well wisher and tries to defeat the truth with the weapons of falsehood and cunning. Naturally this attitude produces in him obduracy and obstinacy so that he turns a deaf ear towards guidance, and is unwilling to realize his error before seeing his evil end. For such people pay no heed to admonition and warning and insist on falling into the abyss of perdition: then and then alone they are convinced that it was perdition towards which they were rushing headlong.

58. And your Lord is Forgiving, Owner of mercy. If He were to seize them for what they have earned, surely He would have hastened for them the punishment. But for them is an appointed term, they will never find beyond which an escape. *55

وَ رَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ط لَوْ
يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَلَهُمْ
الْعَذَابَ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ
دُونِهِ مَوْيلًا ﴿٥٨﴾

*55 This is to warn the foolish people that they should not be deluded by the respite that is given to them and presume that they will never be taken to task whatever they may go on doing. They forget that Allah gives them respite because He is Forgiving and Forbearing and does not punish the evil

doers on the spot, for His Mercy demands that the evil doers should be given respite so that they may mend their ways.

59. And these are the townships, We destroyed them ^{*56} when they did wrong, and We set for their destruction a time appointed.

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَ
جَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِم مَّوْعِدًا

*56 The ruined habitations were of Saba, Thamud, Midian and the people of Prophet Lot, which were visited by the Quraish during their trade journeys, and which were quite well known to other Arabs also.

60. And when said Moses to his servant: “I will not give up until I reach at the junction of two rivers, or I go on long term.” ^{*57}

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ
أَبْلُغَ بِيَمْعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا

*57 Though this story was told in answer to the question of the disbelievers, it has been used to impress a very important truth on the minds of both the disbelievers and the believers. It is this: those people who draw their conclusions only from the seeming aspects of events, make a very serious error in their deductions, for they only see what is apparent and do not go deep into the divine wisdom that underlies them. When they daily see the prosperity of the tyrants and the afflictions of the innocent people, the affluence of the disobedient people and the indigence of the obedient people, the enjoyments of the wicked people and the adversity of the virtuous people, they get involved in

mental conflicts, nay, they become victims of misunderstandings because they do not comprehend the wisdom behind them. The disbelievers and the tyrants conclude from this that the world is functioning without any moral laws and has no sovereign, and, if there is one, he must be senseless and unjust: therefore one may do whatever he desires for there is none to whom one shall be accountable. On the other hand, when the believers see those things, they become so frustrated and disheartened that sometimes their faiths are put to a very hard trial. It was to unravel the wisdom behind this mystery that Allah slightly lifted the curtain from the reality governing His factory, so that Moses (peace be upon him) might see the wisdom behind the events that are happening day and night and how their seeming aspect is quite different from the reality.

Now let us consider the question: When and where did this event take place? The Quran says nothing about this. There is a tradition related by Aafi in which he cites a saying of Ibn Abbas to this effect: This event happened after the destruction of Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had settled his people in Egypt. But this is not supported by other more authentic traditions from Ibn Abbas which have been cited in the collection of Bukhari and other books of traditions, nor is there any other source which may prove that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) ever settled in Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh. On the contrary, the Quran says explicitly that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) passed his entire life after exodus from

Egypt in the desert (Sinai and At-Tih). Therefore the tradition from Aafi cannot be accepted. However, if we consider the details of this story, two things are quite obvious.

(1) These things would have been demonstrated to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the earlier period of his Prophethood because such things are needed in the beginning of Prophethood for the teaching and training of the Prophets.

(2) As this story has been cited to comfort the believers of Makkah, it can be reasonably concluded that these demonstrations would have been shown to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), when the Israelites were encountering the same conditions as the Muslims of Makkah did at the time of the revelation of this Surah. On the basis of these two things, we are of the opinion (and correct knowledge is with Allah alone) that this event relates to the period when the persecution of the Israelites by Pharaoh was at its height and, like the chiefs of the Quraish, Pharaoh and his courtiers were deluded by delay in the scourge that there was no power above them to take them to task, and like the persecuted Muslims of Makkah, the persecuted Muslims of Egypt were crying in their agony, as if to say: Our Lord, how long will the prosperity of these tyrants and our adversity continue. So much so that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself cried out: Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed on Pharaoh and his nobles splendor and possessions in the worldly life; O our Lord, hast Thou done this that they might lead astray the people from Thy Way.

(Surah Younus, Ayat 88).

If our conjecture is correct, then it may be concluded that probably this event took place during Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) journey to Sudan, and by the confluence of the rivers is meant the site of the present city of Khartum where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet together.

The Bible does not say anything about this event but the Talmud does relate this though it assigns it to Rabbi Jochanan, the son of Levi, instead of to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and according to it the other person was Elijah who had been taken up alive to heaven and joined with the angels for the purpose of the administration of the world. (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, pp. 313-16).

It is just possible that like the events, which happened before the exodus, this event also might not have remained intact but during the passage of centuries changes and alterations might have been made in it. But it is a pity that some Muslims have been so influenced by the Talmud that they opine that in this story Moses does not refer to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) but to some other person bearing the same name. They forget that every tradition of the Talmud is not necessarily correct, nor have we any reason to suppose that the Quran has related the story concerning some unknown person bearing the name Moses. Above all, when we learn from an authentic tradition related by Ubayy-bin-Kaab that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself made it clear that in this story, by Moses is

meant Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), there is absolutely no reason why any Muslim should consider any statement of the Talmud at all.

The Orientalists have, as usual, tried to make a research into the sources of this story and have pointed out that The Quranic story may be traced back to three main sources.

(1) The Gilgamesh Epic.

(2) The Alexander Romance.

(3) The Jewish Legend of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (Encyclopaedia of Islam new edition and Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam under the heading Al Khadir). This is because these malicious scholars decide beforehand that their scientific research must lead to the conclusion that the Quran is not a revealed book: therefore they have, anyhow or other, to produce a proof that whatever Muhammad (peace be upon him) has presented as revelation, has been plagiarized from such and such sources. In this these people brazen facedly use facts and quotations so cunningly and cleverly as to achieve their mean end and one begins to have nausea at their research. If that is research what these bigoted forgers make, then one is compelled to curse their knowledge and research.

We ask them to answer our questions in order to expose their research:

(I) What proof do they have to make the claim that the Quran has based a certain statement on the contents of a couple of ancient books? Obviously it will not be research to build this claim on the scant basis that a certain statement made in the Quran is similar to the one found in these books.

(2) Do they possess any knowledge that at the time of the revelation of the Quran there was a library at Makkah from which the Prophet (peace be upon him) collected material for the Quran? This question is pertinent because if a list were to be made of the numerous books in different languages, which they allege were sources of the stories and statements contained in the Quran, it will become long enough for a big library. Do they have any proof that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had arranged for such translators as translated into Arabic those books from different languages for his use? If it is not so and their allegation is based on a couple of journeys which the Prophet (peace be upon him) made outside Arabia, a question arises: How many books did the Prophet (peace be upon him) copy or commit to memory during these trade journeys before his Prophethood? And how is it that even a day before he claimed to be a Prophet, no sign at all was displayed in his conversation that he had gathered such information as was revealed in the Quran afterwards?

(3) How is it then that the contemporary disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews and the Christians, who like them, were always in search of such a proof, could not put forward even a single instance of plagiarism? They had a good reason to produce an instance of this because they were being challenged over and over again to refute the claim that the Quran was a revealed book and it had no other source than divine knowledge and that if they said that it was a human work, they were to prove this by bringing the like of it. Though this challenge had broken the

back of the contemporary opponents of Islam, they could not point out even a single plausible source that might prove reasonably that the Quran was based on it. In the light of these facts one may ask: Why had the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be upon him) failed in their research and how have the opponents of Islam succeeded in their attempt today after the passage of more than a thousand years?

(4) The last and the most important question is: Does it not show that it is bigotry and malice that has misled the opponents of Islam to discard the possibility that the Quran may be a revealed book of Allah and to concentrate all their efforts to prove that it is not so at all? The fact that its stories are similar to those contained in the former books, could be considered equally in this light that the Quran was a revealed book and was relating them in order to correct those errors that had crept into them during the passage of time. Why should their research be confined to prove that those books are the real source of the stories of the Quran and not to consider the other possibility that the Quran itself was a revealed book?

An impartial person who will consider these questions will inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the research which the orientalists have presented in the name of knowledge is not worth any serious consideration.

61. Then when they reached the junction between them, they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the river as in a tunnel.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا
فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا



62. So when they had gone further, he said to his servant: “Bring us our morning meal. Certainly we have suffered in this our journey fatigue.”

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا
لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾

63. He said: “Did you see, when we took refuge by the rock, so indeed I forgot the fish. And none made me forget but Satan, that I should mention it. And it took its way into the river amazingly.”

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي
نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ وَمَا أَنسِنِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ
أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ
عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾

64. He said: “That is what we have been seeking.” *58
So they went back on their footsteps following.

قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ فَارْتَدَّ عَلَى
آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ﴿٦٤﴾

*58 That is, the same was the sign of the place of our destination. This shows that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had taken this journey at Allah’s behest to meet His servant. He had been told that he would meet the servant at the place where the fish would disappear.

65. Then they found a servant among Our servants, unto whom We had bestowed mercy from Us, and We had taught him from Us knowledge. *59

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً
مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

***59** The name of this servant has been stated to be Khidr in all the authentic books of traditions. Thus there is no reason why it should be considered at all that his name was Elijah, as some people have asserted under the influence of the Israelite traditions. Their assertion is incorrect not only because it contradicts the assertion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but it is also absurd because Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) was born several hundred years after Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Though the Quran does not mention the name of the attendant of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), according to some traditions he was Joshua, the son of Nun, who succeeded him.

66. Said to him Moses: “May I follow you on that you teach me from what you have been taught of wisdom.”

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ
تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ مَرشِدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

67. He said: “Indeed, you will never be able to have with me patience.”

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾

68. And how can you have patience with that you can not encompass about which in knowledge.

وَ كَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ
خُبْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾

69. He said: “You shall find me, if Allah wills, patient and I shall not disobey you in any order.”

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا
وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾

70. He said: “So if you follow me, then do not ask me about

قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ

anything until I mention to you its description.”

حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

71. So they both proceeded, until, when they embarked on the boat, he made a hole in it. He said: “Have you made a hole therein so as to drown its people. Certainly, you have done a grave thing.”

فَانْطَلَقَا^{٧١} حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا^{٧٢} قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾

72. He said: “Did I not say, indeed, you would never be able to have patience with me.”

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٢﴾

73. He said: “Call me not to account for what I forgot, and do not put upon me in my affair any hardship.”

قَالَ لَا تَأْخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا ﴿٧٣﴾

74. So they both proceeded until, when they both met a boy, so he killed him. He said: “Have you killed an innocent soul without (him killing) soul. Certainly, you have done a deplorable thing.”

فَانْطَلَقَا^{٧٤} حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَذَمُّهُ قَتَلَهُ^{٧٥} قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي بِنَفْسٍ لَيْسَ لِي بِهَا ذَمُّ^{٧٦} فَقَالَ بَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْغُلَامِ مَا يَفْعَلُ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾

75. He said: “Did I not say to you indeed, you would never be able to have with me patience.”

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

76. He said: “If I ask you about anything after this, then do not keep me in your company. Indeed, You have received from me an excuse.”

قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَحِّبْنِي ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾

77. So they both proceeded until, when they came to the people of a town, they asked for food from its people, but they refused to make them both guests. And they found therein a wall that was about to collapse, so he set it up straight. He said: “If you had wished, you could have surely taken for it a payment.”

فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا آتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّفُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ فَأَقَامَهُ ۗ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾

78. He said: “This is the parting between me and you. I will surely inform you of the interpretation of that you were not able to have over which patience.”

قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٨﴾

79. “As for the boat, it belonged to poor people working at the river, so I intended to cause a defect in it, and there was behind them a king who was taking every boat by force.”

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾

80. “And as for the boy, so his parents were believers and we feared lest he would push them in rebellion and disbelief.”

وَأَمَّا الْعُلْمُ فَكَانَ أَبُوهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا
أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۝

81. “So we intended that their Lord should replace for them one better than him in purity and nearer to mercy.”

فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ
زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ۝

82. “And as for the wall, so it belonged to two youths, orphans in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So intended your Lord that they should reach to their full strength and take out their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do this upon my accord. That is interpretation of that you could not keep to which patience.” *60

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ
فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَ
كَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ
يُبْلِغَهُمَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا
رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي
ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا



*60 In connection with this story, a very hard problem arises to which an answer must be found. Two of the three things done by Khidr are obviously against those commandments of the law which have always been in force since the creation of man. No law allows anyone the right to

damage the property of another and kill an innocent person. So much so that if a man were to know by inspiration that some usurper would illegally seize a certain boat, and that a certain boy would be involved in a rebellion and unbelief, even then no law, sent down by Allah, makes it lawful that one should bore a hole in the boat and kill the innocent boy by virtue of his inspiration. If in answer to this, one were to say that Khidr committed these two acts by the commands of Allah, this does not solve the problem, for the question is not this: "By whose command did Khidr commit these acts", but it is this: "What was the nature of these commands"? This is important because Khidr did these acts in accordance with divine command, for he himself says that these acts of his were not done by his own authority, but were moved by the mercy of Allah, and Allah Himself has testified this by saying: "We gave him a special knowledge from Ourselves". Thus it is beyond any doubt that these acts were done by the command of Allah, but the question about the nature of the command remains there, for it is obvious that these commands were not legal because it is not allowed by any divine law, and the fundamental principles of the Quran also do not allow that a person should kill another person without any proof of his guilt. Therefore we shall have to admit that these commands belonged to one of those decrees of Allah in accordance with which one sick person recovers, while another dies: one becomes prosperous and the other is ruined. If the commands given to Khidr were of this nature, then one must come to the conclusion that Khidr was an angel (or

some other kind of Allah's creation) who is not bound by the divine law prescribed for human beings, for such commands as have no legal aspect, can be addressed to angels only. This is because the question of the lawful or the unlawful cannot arise about them: they obey the commands of Allah without having any personal power. In contrast to them, a man shall be guilty of a sin whether he does any such thing inadvertently by intuition or by some inspiration, if his act goes against some divine commandment. This is because a man is bound to abide by divine commandments as a man, and there is no room whatsoever in the divine law that an act may become lawful for a man merely because he had received an instruction by inspiration and had been informed in a secret way of the wisdom of that unlawful act.

The above mentioned principle has been unanimously accepted by scholars of the divine law and the leaders of Sufism, Allamah Alusi has cited in detail the sayings of Abdul Wahhab Shiirani, Muhy-ud-Din ibn-Arabi, Mujaddid Alf Thani, Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani, Junaid Baghdadi, Sirri Saqti, Abul-Hussain An-nuri, Abu Said-al-Kharraz, Ahmad ud-Dainauri and Imam Ghazzali to this effect that it is not lawful even for a sufi to act in accordance with that inspiration of his own which goes against a fundamental of law. (Ruh-ul-Maani, Vol. XVI, pp. 16-18). That is why we have come to the conclusion that Khidr must be an angel, or some other kind of Allah's creation, exempted from human law, for he could not be the only exception to the above mentioned formula. Therefore

we inevitably come to the conclusion that he was one of those servants of Allah who act in accordance with the will of Allah and not in accordance with the divine law prescribed for human beings.

We would have accepted the theory that Khidr was a human being, if the Quran had plainly asserted that the servant to whom Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was sent for training, was a man. But the Quran does not specifically say that he was a human being but says that he was one of Our servants which does not show that he was necessarily a human being. Besides this, there is no tradition which specifically says that Khidr was a human being. In the authentic traditions related by Said bin Jubair, Ibn Abbas, Ubayy bin Kaab from the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Arabic word *rajul* has been used for Khidr, which though generally used for human beings, is not exclusively used for human beings. In the Quran itself, this word has been used for Jinns also (Surah Al-Jin, Ayat 6). It is also obvious that when a jinn or an angel or an invisible being will come before a human being, he will surely come in human shape and, in that form; he will be called a bashar (man), just like the angel who came before Mary in the shape of a human being (Surah Maryam, Ayat 17). Thus the word *rajul*, used for Khidr in the above mentioned tradition by the Prophet (peace be upon him), does not necessarily mean that he was a human being. Therefore we are quite justified in the light of the above discussion to believe that Khidr was one of the angels or some other kind of Allah's creation who is not bound by the

divine law prescribed for human beings. Some of the former scholars of the Quran have also expressed the same opinion which has been cited by Ibn Kathir in his commentary on the authority of Mawardi.

83. And they ask you about Dhul-Qarneyn. *61 Say: "I shall recite to you about him a story." *62

وَ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْقَرْنَيْنِ ^ط قُلْ
سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ^ط

*61 It is quite obvious that the conjunction *wao* joins this story with the previous story of Khidr. Thus it is a self-evident proof that the previous two stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr were also related in answer to the queries of the disbelievers of Makkah who, in consultation with the people of the Book, had put these questions to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a test of his Prophethood.

*62 The identification of Zul-Qarnain has been a controversial matter from the earliest times. In general the commentators have been of the opinion that he was Alexander the Great but the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain described in the Quran are not applicable to him. However, now the commentators are inclined to believe that Zul-Qarnain was Cyrus, an ancient king of Iran. We are also of the opinion that probably Zul-Qarnain was Cyrus, but the historical facts, which have come to light up to this time, are not sufficient to make any categorical assertion.

Now let us consider the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain in the light of his story as given in the Quran.

(1) The title Zul-Qarnain (the two-horned) should have

been quite familiar to the Jews, for it was at their instigation that the disbelievers of Makkah put this question to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Therefore we must turn to the Jewish literature in order to learn who was the person known as the two-horned or which was the kingdom known as the two-horned.

(2) Zul-Qarnain must have been a great ruler and a great conqueror whose conquests might have spread from the east to the west and on the third side to the north or to the south. Before the revelation of the Quran there had been several persons who were such great conquerors. So we must confine our research for the other characteristics of Zul-Qarnain to one of these persons.

(3) This title should be applicable to such a ruler who might have constructed a strong wall across a mountain pass to protect his kingdom from the incursions of Gog and Magog. In order to investigate this thing, we will have to determine as to who were Gog and Magog. We will also have to find out when such a wall was built and by whom and to which territory it was adjacent.

(4) Besides possessing the above mentioned characteristics, he should also be a God-worshiper and a just ruler, for the Quran has brought into prominence these characteristics more than anything else.

The first of these characteristics is easily applicable to Cyrus, for according to the Bible, Prophet Daniel saw in his vision that the united kingdom of Media and Persia was like a two-horned ram before the rise of the Greeks. (Dan. 8: 3, 20). The Jews had a very high opinion of the two-horned

one, because it was his invasion which brought about the downfall of the kingdom of Babylon and the liberation of the Israelites (Please also refer to E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Isra). The second characteristic is applicable to him to a great extent but not completely. Though his conquests spread to Syria and Asia Minor in the West and to Bakhtar (Balkh) in the East, there is no trace of any of his great expeditions to the North or to the South, whereas the Quran makes an explicit mention of his third expedition. Nevertheless, this third expedition is not wholly out of question for history tells us that his kingdom extended to Caucasia in the North. As regards to Gog and Magog, it has been nearly established that they were the wild tribes of Central Asia who were known by different names: Tartars, Mongols, Huns and Scythians, who had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires from very ancient times. It is also known that strong bulwarks had been built in southern regions of Caucasia, though it has not been as yet historically established that these were built by Cyrus. As regards to the last characteristic, Cyrus is the only known conqueror among the ancient rulers, to whom this may be applicable, for even his enemies have been full of praise for him for his justice, and, Ezra, a book of the Bible, asserts that he was a God worshiper and a God fearing king who set free the Israelites because of his God worship, and ordered that the Temple of Solomon should be rebuilt for the worship of Allah, Who has no partner.

In the light of the above, we admit that of all the conquerors, who had passed away before the revelation of

the Quran, Cyrus alone is the one to whom the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain are most applicable, but we need more evidence to determine specifically that Cyrus is definitely Zul-Qarnain. Anyhow, there is no other conqueror to whom the characteristics stated in the Quran are as much applicable as to Cyrus.

Historically, it is enough to say that Cyrus was a Persian ruler, whose rise began about 549 B.C. In a few years, he conquered the kingdom of Media and Lydia and afterwards conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. After this no powerful kingdom was left to oppose him. His conquests extended to Sind and the territory known as Turkistan on one side, and to Egypt and Libya and to Thrace and Macedonia and to Caucasia and Khawarzam in the North. In fact, the whole civilized world was under his sway.

84. Indeed, We granted power to him upon the earth, and We gave him all kinds of resources.

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾

85. So he followed a way.

فَاتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

86. Until, when he reached the setting place of the sun, ^{*63} he found it setting in a muddy spring, ^{*64} and he found near to it a people. We said: “O Dhul-Qarneyn, either that you punish or that you adopt among them a matter of kindness.” ^{*65}

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ ۚ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا قُلْنَا يَا الْقَارِنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾

*63 “The setting place of the sun” does not mean the place of the setting of the sun. According to Ibn Kathir, it means that he marched to the west conquering one country after the other till he reached the last boundary of the land, beyond which there was ocean.

*64 “He found it setting in a muddy spring”: If Zul Qarnain was Cyrus, then that place would be the western limit of Asia Minor and the black waters would be the Aegean Sea. This interpretation is supported by the use of the word *ain* instead of *bahr* in the Quran.

*65 “We said” does not necessarily mean that Allah directly revealed to him these words, and that Zul-Qarnain was a Prophet or was the one who received inspiration from Allah, and the same is the reasonable conjecture. This concerns the time when Zul-Qarnain had taken possession of the land as a conqueror and the conquered people were utterly at your mercy. Then Allah posed a question before his conscience, as if to say: Now is the time of your trial. These people are utterly at your mercy, and you have the option either to behave unjustly towards them or to treat them generously.

87. He said: “As for him who did wrong, we shall soon punish him. Then he will be brought back to his Lord, so He will punish him, an awful punishment.”

قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُكْرًا

88. “And as for him who believed and did righteously,

وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءٌ

so for him is a reward, a good one. And we shall say to him of our matter, with ease.”

الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ وَ سَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا
يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

89. Then he followed a way.

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٩﴾

90. Until, when he reached the rising place of the sun, he found it rising upon a people We had not provided for whom from it a shelter. *66

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطَّلِعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿٩٠﴾

*66 That is, when he advanced towards the east, conquering one country after the other, he reached a territory where the limits of the civilized world had come to an end and beyond which was the territory of barbaric people, who had no shelter at all of tents or buildings.”

91. Thus, and indeed, We encompassed what he had in knowledge.

كَذَلِكَ ۖ وَ قَدْ أَحْطَيْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

92. Then he followed a way.

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾

93. Until, when he reached between the two mountains, *67 he found beside them a people who did not, almost, understand a word. *68

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَّا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

*67 The “two mountains” must have been parts of that mountain range which runs between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea (as stated in Ayat 96). This must be so

because beyond them was the territory of Gog and Magog.

*68 That is, it was difficult to communicate with them: their language was almost foreign to Zul-Qarnain and his companions, and, as they were quite barbaric, none could understand their language, nor were they acquainted with any foreign language.

94. They said: “O Dhul-Qarneyn, indeed Gog and Magog*69 are causing mischief in the land. Shall we then arrange for you a payment in order that you make between us and them a barrier.”

قَالُوا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يٰجُوجَ وَ مَاْجُوجَ
مُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ
خَرْجًا عَلٰى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَهُمْ

سَدًّا

*69 As has already been pointed out in E.N. 62, Gog and Magog were the wild tribes of North Eastern Asia which, from the very early times had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires in Asia and Europe and ravaging them. According to Genesis (Chapter 10), they were the descendants of Japheth, the son of Noah, and the Muslim historians have also accepted this. And according to the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 38, 39), they inhabited the territories of Meshech (Moscow) and Tubal (Tubalsek). According to the Israelite historian Josephus, they were the Scythians and their territory spread to the north and the east of the Black Sea. According to Jerome, Magog inhabited the territory to the north of Caucasia near the Caspian Sea.

95. He said: “What has established me with my Lord is better. So help me with strength (of men), I will make between you and them a strong barrier.” *70

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ
فَاعِيْنُوْنِي بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ بَيْنَهُمْ
رَدْمًا ۙ

*70 That is, as a ruler it is my duty to protect you from the ravages of your enemies: therefore it is not lawful for me to levy any extra taxes on you for this purpose. The treasury that Allah has placed in my custody suffices for this purpose. You shall, however, have to help me with your manual labor.

96. “Bring to me sheets of iron.” Until, when he had filled up the gap between the cliffs, he said: “Blow.” Until, when he had made it a fire, he said: “Bring to me that I may pour over it molten copper.”

اَتُوْنِي زُبْرَ الْحَرِيْدِ حَتَّىٰ اِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوْا حَتَّىٰ اِذَا جَعَلَهُ
نَارًا ۙ قَالَ اَتُوْنِي اُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قَطْرًا

97. So they (Gog Magog) were not able to surmount it, nor were they able to pierce it.

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا اَنْ يُّظْهَرُوْهُ وَ مَا
اسْتَطَاعُوْا لَهٗ نَقْبًا ۙ

98. He said: “This is a mercy from my Lord. Then when comes to pass the promise of my Lord, He shall turn it into pieces. *71 And the promise of my Lord is true.” *72

قَالَ هٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّيْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاءَ
وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّآءً ۙ وَ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ
حَقًّا ۙ

***71** That is, though I have built a very strong iron wall, as far as it was possible for me, it is not ever lasting, for it will last only as long as Allah wills, and will fall down to pieces when the time of my Lord's promise shall come. Then no power in the world shall be able to keep it safe and secure.

As regards to the time of Allah's promise, it has two meanings.

(1) It may mean the time of the destruction of the wall.

(2) It may also mean the time of the death and destruction of everything destined by Allah at the end of the world i.e. the Hour of Resurrection.

Some people have entertained the misunderstanding that the wall attributed here to Zul-Qarnain refers to the famous wall of China, whereas this wall was built between Derbent and Daryal, two cities of Daghestan in the Caucasus, the land that lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian. There are high mountains between the Black Sea and Daryal having deep gorges which cannot allow large armies to pass through them. Between Derbent and Daryal, however, there are no such mountains and the passes also are wide and passable. In ancient times savage hordes from the north invaded and ravaged southern lands through these passes and the Persian rulers who were scared of them had to build a strong wall, 50 miles long, 29 feet high and 10 feet wide, for fortification purposes, ruins of which can still be seen. Though it has not yet been established historically who built this wall in the beginning, the Muslim historians and geographers assign it to Zul-Qarnain because its remains correspond with the description of it given in the

Quran. Ibn Jarir Tabari and Ibn Kathir have recorded the event, and Yaqut has mentioned it in his Mu jam-ul-Buldan that when after the conquest of Azerbaijan, Umar sent Suraqah bin Amr, in 22 A.H. on an expedition to Derbent, the latter appointed Abdur Rehman bin Rabiah as the chief of his vanguard. When Abdur Rehman entered Armenia, the ruler Shehrbraz surrendered without fighting. Then when Abdur Rehman wanted to advance towards Derbent, Shehrbraz informed him that he had already gathered full information about the wall built by Zul-Qarnain, through a man, who could supply all the necessary details and then the man was actually presented before Abdur Rehman. (Tabari, Vol. III, pp. 235-239; AI-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125, and Mujam-ul-Buldan, under Bab-ul-Abwab: Derbent).

Two hundred years later, the Abbasid Caliph Wathiq (227-233 A.H.) dispatched a party of 50 men under Sallam-ul-Tarjuman to study the wall of Zul-Qarnain, whose observations have been recorded in great detail by Yaqut in Mujam-ul-Buldan and by Ibn Kathir in AI-Bidayah. They write that this expedition reached Samarrah from where they reached Tiflis (the present Tbilisi) and then through As-Sarir and Al-Lan, they reached Filanshah, from where they entered the Caspian territory. From there they arrived at Derbent and saw the wall. (AIBidayah Vol. II, p. 111, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125; Mujam-ul-Buldan: under Bab-ul-Abwab). This clearly shows that even up till the third century of Hijrah the Muslim scholars regarded this wall of the Caucasus as the wall of Zul-Qarnain.

Yaqut in his Mujam-ul-Buldan has further confirmed the same view at a number of places. For instance, under Khazar (Caspian) he writes:

This territory belongs to the Turks, which adjoins the wall of Zul Qarnain just behind Bab-ul-Abwab, which is also called Derbent. In the same connection, he records a report by Ahmad bin Fadlan, the ambassador of Caliph Al-Muqtadar-billah, who has given a full description of the Caspian land, saying that Caspian is the name of a country whose capital is Itil (near the present Astrakhan) right through which flows River Itil, which joins the Caspian from Russia and Bulghar.

Regarding Bab-ul-Abwab he says that this city is called both Al-Bab and Derbent, which is a highly difficult passage for the people coming from the northern lands towards the south. Once this territory was a part of the kingdom of Nausherwan, and the Persian rulers paid particular attention to strengthening their frontiers on that side.

*72 Here the story of Zul-Qarnain comes to an end. Though this story has been related in answer to the questions put by the disbelievers of Makkah as a test along with the stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr, the Quran has utilized this story, too, for its own aim and object, as if to say: Zul Qarnain, about whose glory you have heard from the people of the Book, was not merely a conqueror, but also a believer of the doctrines of Tauhid and the life after death and acted upon the principles of justice and generosity. He was not a mean person like you who have

been puffed up by the possession of petty estates, and give yourselves airs of superiority.

99. And We shall leave some of them, that day, ^{*73} to surge like waves on others, and the trumpet will be blown. Then We shall gather them all together.

و تَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَ نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا

^{*73} “That Day”: “The Day of Resurrection”. As if to continue the theme of life after death to which Zul-Qarnain referred as the time of my Lord’s promise, the Quran has added verses 99-101 to it.

100. And we shall present Hell that day to the disbelievers, plain in view.

وَ عَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرَضًا

101. Those whose eyes had been within a cover from remembrance of Me, and who had not been able to hear.

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَ كَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا

102. Do ^{*74} they then think those who disbelieved that they can take My slaves instead of Me as protecting friends. ^{*75} Indeed, We have prepared Hell for the disbelievers as lodging.

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا

^{*74} This is the conclusion of the whole Surah and is not connected with the story of Zul-Qarnain only but with the subject matter of this Surah as a whole. That theme was

enunciated at the beginning of the Surah (Ayats 1-8): The Prophet (peace be upon him) invited his people.

(1) To give up shirk and adopt the doctrine of Tauhid instead.

(2) To give up the worship of the world and to believe in the life of the Hereafter. But the chiefs of his people, who were puffed up with their wealth and grandeur, not only rejected his invitation but also persecuted and insulted those righteous people who had accepted his invitation. The discourse deals with the same themes and utilizes in an excellent manner the three stories which were related in answer to the questions put by the opponents of Islam as a test of his Prophethood.

*75 That is, do they still stick to their presumption even after hearing all this and believe that their attitude will be profitable for them?

103. Say: "Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in respect of deeds."

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا



104. Those, has been wasted whose effort in the life of the world, *76 and they think that they are doing good in work.

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ

هُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

*76 This verse has two meanings. The one is the same that we have adopted in the translation. The other meaning is this: Those who confined all their endeavors to the worldly life. That is, whatever they did, they did for this world without paying any regard to God and the Hereafter. As

they considered the worldly life to be the real life, they made the success and prosperity in this world their sole aim and object. Even if they professed the existence of Allah, they never paid any heed to the two implications of this profession: to lead their lives in a way to please Allah and to come out successful on the Day they shall have to render an account of what they did in this world. This was because they considered themselves to be mere rational animals who were absolutely independent and free from every kind of responsibility and had nothing else to do but to enjoy the good things of the world like animals in a meadow.

105. Those are they who disbelieved in the revelations of their Lord and in the meeting with Him. So worthless will be their deeds. Then We shall not assign to them on the Day of Judgment any weight. ^{*77}

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ
وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ
لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْنًا

^{*77} “So worthless will be their deeds” in the sense that they will be of no avail to them in the life after death, even though they might have considered them as their great achievements but the fact is that they will lose all their value as soon as the world shall come to an end. When they will go before their Lord, and all their deeds shall be placed in the scales, they will have no weight at all whether they had built great palaces, established great universities and libraries, set up great factories and laboratories, constructed highways and railways, in short, all their

inventions, industries, sciences and arts and other things of which they were very proud in this world, will lose their weights in the scales. The only thing which will have weight there will be that which had been done in accordance with the divine instructions and with the intention to please Allah. It is, therefore, obvious that if all of one's endeavors were confined to the worldly things and the achievement of worldly desires whose results one would see in this world, one should not reasonably expect to see their results in the Hereafter, for they would have gone waste with the end of this world. It is equally obvious, that only the deeds of the one, who performed them strictly in accordance with His instructions to win His approval with a view to avail of their results in the Hereafter, will find that his deeds had weight in the scales. On the contrary, such a one will find that all his endeavors in the world had gone waste.

106. That is their payment, Hell, because they disbelieved, and took My verses and My messengers in ridicule.

ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَ
اتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

107. Indeed, those who believed and did righteous deeds, theirs will be the gardens of Paradise as a lodging.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ
لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

108. They will abide wherein. No desire will they have, from there, to be moved. *78

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَالًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

*78 "No desire will they have to be removed there from"

because they will find no place and no condition better than those in Paradise.

109. Say: “If the sea were ink for writing the words ^{*79} of my Lord, surely, would be used up the sea before that are finished the words of my Lord, even if we brought another like it as aid.”

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي
لَنفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي
وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿٦٩﴾

*79 By “words” are meant the marvelous works, the excellences and the wonders of His Power and Wisdom.

110. Say: “In fact, I am a man like you. It has been inspired to me that your god is only One God. So whoever is expecting for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deed, and not associate a partner in the worship of his Lord, anyone.”

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ
أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ
يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا
وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

