

ple of Kahf. All three are indeed unique and it was the *karāmah*, a matter of wonder, that manifested itself in an extraordinary way around these people devoted to Allah (a thing of wonder that manifests itself at the hands of a prophet of Allah is called a *mu'jizah* or miracle, while if it appears at the hand of some other pious persons, it is called 'Karāmah').

First of all, to be overtaken by continuous sleep for a long time and to stay alive in that state without eating and drinking is by itself a matter of wonder, and certainly contra-habitual and extraordinary. Its details will appear in the verses that follow. Given here is one state of their long sleep, that is, Allah Ta'ālā had arranged for their protection in the Cave in a way that the Sun would pass by them morning and evening but would not shine over their bodies inside the Cave. The advantages of the sunshine passing by them were things like the stabilization of the traces of life, moderation and balancing of the effects of wind, chill and heat etc. And then, the Sun not hitting their bodies directly may have also been a factor in keeping their bodies and dress protected.

This arrangement of keeping them shielded from direct sunlight could also be conceived if the cave lies situated in a particular structural position and the opening of its entrance happens to face south or north in a way that sunlight does not get in there naturally. Ibn Qutaibah went to the trouble of making elaborate mathematical calculations to determine the peculiar location of this Cave precisely in terms of latitude and longitude. (Maḥzarī) Contrary to this was the approach of al-Zajjaj who said that the staying of sunshine away from them was not because of any inherent situation or formation of the Cave, instead, it was an extraordinary phenomenon manifested as a *karāmah*. It seems when it was said: *ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ* (That is one of the signs of Allah) at the end of the verse, it was obviously there to prove that this arrangement of protection from the Sun was not the outcome of any particular formation or location of the Cave. Instead, it was a sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

To put it candidly, Allah Ta'ālā had it all arranged for them that sunlight will not reach their bodies. It may have been caused through its particular formation or location, or through the barrier of a cloud or something similar when the Sun would start shining, or the very rays of the Sun would be moved away from them in an extraordinary manner.

All these probabilities exist within the verse. There is no need to insist upon fixing any of these as the absolute reality.

The People of Kahf during their long sleep were in a state that an onlooker would have taken them to be awake

The second state of the People of Kahf pointed out is that there were no signs of sleep on their bodies in spite of having been put to sleep for such a long period of time. In fact, they were in a condition that anyone who looked at them would think that they were awake. Generally, commentators say that their eyes were open. The body is relaxed in sleep but this relaxation was not there. The change in the momentum of breathing that comes upon the sleeping was also not there. It is obvious that this state too was nothing short of being extraordinary, a kind of *Thaumaturgy* (*karāmah*), in which the apparent consideration of wisdom was their protection lest someone taking them to be asleep attacks them, or steals things with them. Then, the changing of sides to the right and the left could also give an onlooker the realization of their being awake. And then, there was a particular benefit as well in changing sides - in that the dust they were sleeping on does not eat into an unchanged side.

The dog of the People of Kahf

At this point, we have a question on our hands. It appears in an authentic Ḥadīth that angels do not enter a house that has a dog or picture. Then, there is a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. There, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever keeps a dog, except the one used for hunting or guarding livestock, has two *qirāts* deducted every day from his reward (*qirāt* or *karat* is the name of a small weight)." And in the report narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, there is the exception of a third kind of dog, that is, a dog kept to guard land produce.

Based on these Ḥadīth reports, one can ask as to why did these worthy men of Allah take a dog with them? One answer to this could be that the prohibition of keeping a dog is an injunction of the Sharīʿah brought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and it is possible that it may not be so prohibited in the Sharīʿah (law) brought by Sayyidnā ʿĪsā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Then, it is reasonably imaginable that these people who had property and livestock may have kept a dog for their protection from intruders and since the faithfulness of a dog is well known, the dog followed them

when they went out from the city.

Good Company is a Blessing - Even for a dog!

Ibn 'Aṭīyah says that his father told him that he heard a sermon of Abū al-Faḍl Jawharī in the Hijrah year 469 at the Great Mosque of Egypt. Speaking on the Mimbar, he was telling everyone, 'whoever loves good people, he too gets a share from their goodness. See when the dog of the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf loved them and followed them closely as if appended with them, Allah Ta'ālā mentioned it in the Qur'an'.

Al-Qurṭubī mentions this report of Ibn 'Aṭīyah in his Tafsīr. In his comments, he says when a dog can reach this station by being in the company of the righteous and the saintly, imagine how high the station of true believers and pure monotheists who love righteous men of Allah would be. In fact, there is comfort and good news in this event for Muslims who are weak in deeds but do love the Holy Prophet ﷺ fully and duly.

It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه said, "One day, I and the Holy Prophet ﷺ were coming out of the Masjid. We met a person at the door. He asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, when will the Qiyāmah come?" He said, "What preparations have you already made for Qiyāmah? (In view of which you want it to come soon)." Hearing this, the man was somewhat ashamed and corrected himself by saying, "I have not collected a lot of prayers, fasts and charities for Qiyāmah, but I love Allah and His Messenger." He said, "If so, [on the day of Qiyāmah] you shall be with those whom you love." Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه says, "when we heard this bliss of a sentence from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we were so happy that we had never been that happy since we embraced Islam." After that, Sayyidnā Anas said, "[al-ḥamdulillāh] I love Allah, His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما, therefore, I look forward to being with them." (Qurṭubī)

Allah Ta'ālā had invested the People of Kahf with such awe as would make an onlooker run in terror

The address in verse 18: *لو اطلعت عليهم* (If you had a look at them) is apparently to people at large. Therefore, it does not necessarily follow from it that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too could be filled up with awe generated by the state of the People of Kahf in their Cave. So, the address here is to

common people. They are being told that, were they to cast a look at them in that state, they would have fled away from them in terror and the resulting awe of them would have gripped them all over.

What was the basis of this awe and what were the reasons for it? This is something in which debate is useless - therefore, the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not explained it. The truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His wisdom, had created such conditions for their protection that the Sun stays away from their bodies, and the onlooker takes them to be awake and is filled with awe of them and is consequently unable to see them fully. It is possible to have these conditions prevail by way of particular physical causes as well as by way of an extraordinary input or as the working of wonder (*karāmah*). Now, when the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not determined any particular reason for it, debating it with hollow conjectures is futile. Preferring this approach, Tafsīr Maḥzarī cites Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in support. They have reported an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ who says: 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the Cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah.' Then, he recited this very verse: *لَوْ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ* (If you had a look at them, you would have fled from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18). [This tells us that, in the sight of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the address in *لَوْ اطَّلَعْتَ* (If you had a look) was to the Holy Prophet] But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept his opinion [perhaps, because he may have taken the address as being to common people and not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ]. Or, it may be that the Qur'ān has portrayed the condition of the time when the People of Kahf were alive and asleep. Now a long time had passed since they died. It was not likely that they would still have the same atmosphere of awe around them]. However, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, with his position unchanged, sent a few men to find out the facts. But, when they stepped into the Cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a hot wind upon them because of which they could not see anything.

(Mazharī) (This report was also referred earlier under 'The People of Kahf: Place and Period')

Verses 19 - 20

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۗ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۗ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ۗ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ ۗ وَلَا يَشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿١٩﴾ إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذَا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

And similarly We raised them up so that they ask each other. One of them said, "How long did you stay?" They said, "A day, or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knows best how long you stayed." So, send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city and let him look around which of the eatables are the purest and let him bring you some food therefrom. And he must be polite and must not let anyone know about you. [19] If they know about you, they will force you to revert to their faith and in that case, you will never find success. [20]

Commentary

The word: كَذَلِكَ (*kadhālik*) in the first sentence is for comparison. The purpose at this place is to describe the mutual likeness of two events. One of these is the event of the long sleep of the People of Kahf for an equally long period of time mentioned in the beginning of the story under the verse: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا: "So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years - 11." The second event relates to the rising of these people from that long drawn sleep - intact, healthy and fit despite the absence of any energy-giving intake - and becoming wide awake. Both are alike in being signs of the power of Allah Ta'ālā. For this reason, when 'raising them up' was mentioned in this verse, the word: كَذَلِكَ (*kadhālik*: 'And similarly') was used to indicate that the way their sleep was not like the habitual sleep of common people, very similarly, their rising too was distinct from natural habit. Then, as for the next statement after that:

لِيَسْأَلُوْا meaning 'so that they ask each other [as to how long the sleep was],' it is not the reason of 'raising them up.' Instead, it is a mention of a usual phenomenon. Therefore, the particle: لام (*lām*) in: لِيَسْأَلُوْا (*liyatasā'alū*: so that they ask) has been identified as the *lām* of 'āqibah (consequence) or *sairūrah* (result) meaning that which naturally follows as a sequel. (Abū Ḥayyān, al-Qurṭubī)

In short, their long sleep was a Divine sign. Similarly, sitting up all awake after hundreds of years - fit and healthy without usual nourishment - was also another perfect Divine sign. And it was also Divinely intended that they too should come to know that they have been sleeping through hundreds of years, therefore, it began with questions asked between each other and ended at the incident mentioned in the next verse: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْرَضْنَا (And in this way We made them known - 21). It means that the people of the city knew their secret and, despite the difference in determining the period of their stay, everyone believed that they had been sleeping in the Cave for a long period of time.

Given in: قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ (One of them said - 19) is the detail of what was said briefly at the beginning of the story (12) - that they differed about the period of their stay in the Cave and that one of them did say the right thing. According to this detail, one person from among the People of the Cave ventured to pose the question as to how long did they sleep. Then, came the response from some that said, 'a day, or part of a day' - because, these people had entered the Cave in the morning and when they woke up, it was evening. Therefore, they thought, that was the day they had entered the Cave and the duration of their sleep was just about a day. But, some from among these very people realized that, perhaps, this was not the day they had entered the Cave. If so, who knows how many days have gone by? Therefore, they decided to let this particular knowledge about the event rest with Allah. By saying: قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ (Your Lord knows best how long you stayed - 19), they dismissed this debate as unnecessary and turned their attention to the need of the hour, that is, to send a man to the city to bring some food from there.

The word: الْمَدِيْنَةِ (*al-madīnah*) in the phrase: اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ (*ila al-madīnah*: to the city) proves at least this much that there used to be a big city close to the Cave where they had stayed. In his Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said that the name of the city at the time the People of Kahf

left was Ifsūs and now, the name was Ṭarsūs. Al-Qurtubī has said in his Tafsīr that during the time idol-worship and ignorance prevailed in this city, its name was Ifsūs. But, when the believers of that time, that is, the followers of Sayyidnā Masiḥ ﷺ, overtook it, they renamed it as Ṭarsūs.

The word: *بِوَرَقِكُمْ* (with this silver [coin] of yours - 19) tells us that these good men had also brought some money with them when they came to the Cave. From here we know that the procurement and management of essential expenditures in life is not contrary to the norms of Zuhd (abstention from worldly desires) and Tawakkul (trust in Allah). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The word: *أَزْكَى* (*azkā*) in: *أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا* (which are the purest - 19) means what is clean and pure. According to the Tafsīr of Ibn Jubayr, it denotes Ḥalāl food. They were alert to the need for such precaution because at the time they had left the city, people used to slaughter animals in the name of idols and that was what they sold in the market. Therefore, they stressed upon the man going out to bring food only after making sure that it was Ḥalāl.

Ruling

This tells us that eating food in any city, bazaar or hotel, where most of the food available is Ḥarām, is not permissible without prior investigation.

The word: *رَجْمٌ* (*rajm*) in: *أَوْ يَرَجْمُونَكُمْ* means 'they will stone you to death - 19.' It will be recalled that the king had warned them - before they went to the Cave - that they will be killed if they kept adhering to their present faith. This verse tells us that a renegade in their faith used to be punished by being stoned to death in which everyone participated, expressed collective anger and lent a hand in killing him.

Perhaps, the punishment for adultery committed by a married man or woman by stoning to death, as proposed in the Shari'ah of Islam, may be aimed at exposing the one guilty of this abominable act at the cost of all norms of modesty and propriety. The execution of the culprit was to remain public with everyone joining in so that two things were ensured - let that disgrace be at collective level, and let all Muslims express their wrath practically so that no one dares repeat this act of shame among

them.

The expression: فَاَبْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ (So, send one of you - 19) tells us that the group in the Cave picked up a man from among them to go to the city and gave him the money to buy food which he would bring back. Al-Qurṭubī finds this significant. He quotes Ibn Khuwaizmandād and describes some rulings deduced from here.

Rulings

1. Partnership in capital is permissible - because, this amount was shared by all.
2. Power of attorney or delegation of management is permissible in capital, that is, one person can, as an authorized agent, disburse from shared capital with the permission of others.
3. If a group of people shares food, it is permissible - though, individual food intake usually differs with one eating less while the other, more.

Verse 21

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَرِيبٌ فِيهَا ۖ إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا رَّبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ۗ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا

﴿٢١﴾

And in this way We made them known to the people so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour. When they were disputing among themselves in their matter, they said, "Erect a building over them. Their Lord knows them best." Said those who prevailed in their matter, "We will certainly make a *masjid* (mosque) over them." [21]

Commentary

Described in this verse which opens with the words: وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And in this way We made them known) is the disclosure of the secret of the People of Kahf before the residents of the city. Along with it given there is a view of His wisdom, and of the belief in the Hereafter and the

Last Day when the dead will rise again, and that they will ultimately believe in it. How this came about has been mentioned briefly in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as follows:

The secret of the People of Kahf:

How did the people of the city learn about it?

When the People of Kahf went out, the Mushrik king Daqyānūs, the oppressive ruler of that city died. Centuries went by. Then, it was taken over by people who were pure monotheists. Their king was a righteous man (whose name has been given as Baidūsīs in Tafsīr Maẓharī with references to historical narratives). During his time, it so happened that differences became rampant on the issue of the dead rising again on the day of Qiyāmah. One sect rejected the possibility of human bodies rising again after the process of decomposition, disintegration and dispersal as scattered particles all over the world. Baidūsīs, the king of the time, started worrying about ways to dispel these doubts. When nothing worked, he got into ragged clothes, sat down on a heap of ash and prayed to Allah. Lamenting and pleading earnestly, he said, 'O Allah, now it is up to Thee to make things work out in a way that the belief of my people gets corrected and they take to the right path.' On one side was this king engaged in his plaint and prayer while, on the other side, Allah Ta'ālā arranged to have his supplication answered in His own way. The People of Kahf woke up. They sent one of their men (reportedly named Tamlikha) to the city bazaar to buy food. He went to a shop and paid for the food he bought in the form of a silver coin dating back to the time of king Daqyānūs who reigned there three hundred years ago. The shopkeeper was taken aback. Where did this coin come from? What period does it belong to? He was confused. He showed it to other shopkeepers. Everyone said that the man had struck some treasure and was there with a coin from it. This man told them that nothing of that kind had happened to him and the coin was his own.

The shopkeepers detained him and produced him before the king. As said earlier, this king was a righteous man of Allah. It is said that he was aware of the old state treasure house and in its archaeological section he had also seen the tablet inscribed on which there was a list of the names of the People of Kahf along with the description of the incident of their escape. According to some, the cruel king Daqyānūs was the one

who had ordered that such a tablet should be inscribed to declare them as proclaimed offenders, to preserve their names and addresses and to have them arrested on sight. Some other reports say that there were people in the royal court who disapproved of idol-worship by heart and took the People of Kahf as votaries of truth. But, they did not have the courage to declare it openly. What they did was to have this tablet inscribed to be kept as memorabilia. The name of this tablet was Raqīm because of which the People of Kahf were also called the People of Raqīm.

So, this king knew something about this event and at that time he was busy praying to Allah that He would somehow make his people believe that making dead bodies rise again was not beyond His most perfect power.

Therefore, when he inquired into the background of Tamlikhā, he was convinced that the man was one of the People of Kahf. He said that he used to pray to Allah in the hope that He would somehow make him fortunate enough to meet the people who had run away from Daqyānūs for the sake of their faith. Now that Allah had perhaps heard his prayer, he was grateful. May be there is, in this event, some decisive proof that makes people believe in the rising of the dead. After saying this, he asked this man to take him to the Cave from where he had come.

The king arrived there with a retinue of people from the city. When the Cave came close, Tamlikhā asked the king to wait there for a while so that he could go in and inform his companions about the situation. He would tell them that the king was there to meet them along with his people and that the king was a believer, a monotheist and so were his people. If he failed to do that, and the king appeared there unannounced, it was likely that they might take him to be their enemy like the previous one. When Tamlikhā went in the Cave, he related the whole story before his companions. They were pleased. They greeted the king showing due respect for him. Then they returned to their Cave. And as most narratives have it, when Tamlikhā related the whole story before his companions, they died and could not meet the king. At this stage, Abū Ḥayyān has reported a narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ which says that after the meeting, the People of the Cave took leave of the king and the visiting citizens and went into the Cave. It was at that time that Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them. Allah knows best the reality as it is.

However, the people of the city now had before them a marvel of Divine power manifested so decisively and clearly. They came to believe in the working of that power. They saw living human beings kept alive for three hundred years without food and things essential in life. And then, they also saw them raised intact, healthy and fit after having been kept asleep for such a long time. With all this in view, why should it be at all difficult for that power to make these bodies come alive after having met their death? Through this event, their perception that the resurrection of bodies was a far out proposition stood refuted. They now realized that taking the Power of the master of the universes on the analogy of the power of human beings was an act of ignorance by itself.

A hint was made towards this very aspect in the words: *لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَرْبَبٌ فِيهَا* (so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour). It means, 'Allah raised the People of Kahf after having kept them asleep for a long time so that others realized that His promise to raise the dead on the Last Day of Qiyāmah was true, and that there was no doubt about the coming of the Qiyāmah.'

People differed after the death of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf

As for the holiness of the People of Kahf, everyone agreed about that and thought of making a memorial for them close to the Cave. However, there was a difference of opinion on the nature of the building. Some reports tell us that idol-worshippers, still left in the city, also used to visit the site. They proposed that it should be a public welfare building. But, the king and the official in his government were believers who played a dominant role in public affairs. They proposed that they should make a mosque over there so that it serves as a memorial to them and also becomes the cause of saving people from idol-worship in the future. At this place in the Qur'ān, the reference to this difference of opinion is hemmed in by the sentence: *رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ* (Their Lord knows them best).

Regarding the meaning of this sentence, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has mentioned two probabilities. (1) This was said by the same people from the city present there, because when a memorial was proposed after their death, people thought of inscribing a tablet mentioning the names and the details about the people of the Cave for the memory of whom the building was to be dedicated. And so they started talking variously

about the background details concerning the People of Kahf. In the end, when their differences remained unresolved, they said: رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (their Lord knows them best). After saying that, they turned to the main job at hand which was raising a building in their memory. Those who were dominant decided to make a mosque. (2) Then, the probability that this was said by Allah Ta'ālā also exists here as it warns people who indulged in mutual disputations around baseless issues during that time. They are being told here that they do not know the reality and they do not have the sources to arrive at that knowledge. Why, then, would they waste their precious time in futile argumentation? Then, it is also possible that the warning was beamed at Jews and others who used the crutch of this event to indulge in baseless debates during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Pure and High is Allah who knows best.

Ruling

This event tells us that making a *masjid* for Ṣalāh near the graves of men of Allah is no sin. As for the Ḥadīth in which words of curse have appeared against those who make the graves of prophets a *masjid*, it means making the graves as such a place of *sajdah* or prostration - which is, by consensus, *Shirk*, and *Ḥarām*. (Maḥzarī)

Verse 22

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ
رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةً وَتَأْمِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۗ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ
بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ۗ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا ۚ وَلَا
تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

Some will say, "Three, the fourth of them being their dog," and some will say, "Five, the sixth of them being their dog, just making conjectures." And others will say, "Seven, the eighth of them is their dog." Say, "My Lord knows best about their number." No one knows them except a few, so do not argue about them except an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them. [22]

Commentary

The verse opens with the word: سَيَقُولُونَ (*sayaqūlūn*: Some will say).

Who are these people who will say? There are two probabilities therein. (1) They could be the people who had differed among themselves during the time of the People of Kahf about their name and lineage, already mentioned in the previous verse. Out of these very people, some had made the first statement, some others, the second and still others, the third. (Mentioned in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from al-Māwardī)

(2) The second probability is that the pronoun in '*sayaqūlūn*' could be reverting back to the Christians of Najrān who had argued with the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the number of the People of Kahf. They had three sects among them. One sect was called Malkāniyah. They made the first statement about the number, that is, gave the number as three. The second sect was Ya'qūbiyah. They went by the second statement, that is, they were five. The third sect was Naṣṭūriyah. They made the third statement, saying that they were seven. However, some said that this third statement was that of Muslims. What finally happened was that the third statement turned out to be true as it appears from the hint given by the Qur'an*, and the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The use of the conjunction *wāw*:(and) in: *وَأَمِنَهُمْ* (*wā thāminuhum*: and the eighth of them) is worth noticing here. At this place, three statements have been reported about the number of the People of Kahf - three, five and seven - and after each, their dog has been counted. But, no conjunction '*wāw*' has been introduced in between their number and the count of the dog in the first two statements. The sentence: *ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ* (Three, the fourth of them being their dog) and the sentence: *خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ* (Five, the sixth of them being their dog) appear without that conjunction '*wāw*.' But, the arrangement is different in the third statement. Here, the word: *سَبْعَةً* (Seven) is followed by a connective '*wāw*' attached to the text of: *وَأَمِنَهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ* (and the eighth of them is their dog).

Giving its reason, commentators say that early Arabs used to count up to seven digits, after which the number that followed was counted as separate, similar to its present counterpart, the number 9 where units end and the tens begin. Therefore, while counting from three to seven,

*. The hint is that the former two views about their number have been termed by the Qur'an as 'conjectures' while the third view has appeared without such a comment. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

they would not use the connective 'wāw.' To give a number after seven, they would state it separately with the help of a connective 'wāw' - and for this reason, this 'wāw' (and) was called the 'wāw' (and) of 'thamān' (eight). (Maẓharī and others)

The names of the People of Kahf

The fact of the matter is that the names of the People of Kahf do not stand proved authentically from any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Names given in exegetical and historical reports differ. The closest out of these is the report given on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه by al-Ṭabarāni in al-Mu'jīm al-Ausaṭ with sound chains of narrators. The names given there are:

Muksalmina مَكْسَلْمِينَا

Tamlīkhā تَمْلِيخَا

Martunis مَرطُونِسْ

Sanunis سنونس

Sarinunis سَارِينُونِسْ

Dhu Niwas ذُونُوَاسْ

Ka'astitiunis كَعَسْطَطِيُونِسْ

Basic rule in debatable matters: Avoid long-drawn argumentation

Referring to the animated efforts to determine the number of the People of Kahf, and other matters, the text says: فَلَا تَمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءَ ظَاهِرٍ ص وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ (So do not argue about them except [with] an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them). The rule of conduct, a golden legacy of the Qur'ān, taught in these two sentences to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are, in fact, significant guiding principles for the learned among the Muslim community. The thing to do when difference arises on any issue is to state what is necessary clearly. If people, even after that, elect to pursue a course of unnecessary debate, one should offer cursory comments in the light of the earlier presentation and conclude the debate. Any effort to dig deeper to affirm one's claim or to make the extra effort to refute the assertion of debaters should be avoided - for nothing good would really come out of it. Moreover, any further prolongation of the debate and altercation would result in uncalled for waste of time as well as pose the danger of mutual bickering.

The second line of guidance given in the other sentence is that the optimum information given to him through Divine revelation about the People of Kahf should be taken as perfectly sufficient and satisfactory for all practical purposes. Let him not worry about finding more and asking others. As for asking others, it could have another aspect too. May be, the question asked is to expose their ignorance or to disgrace them. This too would be contrary to the high morals prophets have. Therefore, restraint was placed on asking both kinds of questions, either for additional investigation, or to prove the addressee ignorant and disgrace him.

Verses 23 - 26

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَايٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ز
وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي رَّبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا
رَشْدًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَكَبُوتَا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾
قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا ۗ لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَبْصُرُهُ
وَأَسْمَعُ ۗ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وٰلِيٍّ ۗ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And never say about anything, "I am going to do this tomorrow," [23] unless (you say - 'if) Allah wills.' And remember your Lord if you forget, and say, "I hope my Lord will lead me to what is closer, than this, in guidance." [24]

And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine. [25]

Say, "Allah knows best how long they stayed. To Him belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth - how well He sees and how well He hears! They have no supporter other than Him and He lets no one share His authority." [26]

Commentary

The story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf is due to end on the four verses cited above. In the first two of these, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ummah has been taught to say 'Insha'Allah Ta'ālā' along with the promise or affirmation of doing something in the future. Because, who knows if one does or

does not live, and even if one does, will one be able to do or not to do that? Therefore, a believer should be confident about it in his or her heart, and confess to it verbally as well that in the event of making a commitment to do something next day, what will be said will be: 'If Allah Ta'ālā wills, I shall do this thing tomorrow.' This is what the saying of Insha'Allah means.

In the third verse (25), a decision has been given on a controversy. This was a debate in which people had held different opinions during the time of the People of Kahf, and equally different were the sayings of the Jews and Christians of the contemporary period about it, that is, the period of time they kept sleeping in the Cave. It was stated in the verse that those were three hundred and nine years. This is, so to say, a clarification of the statement made briefly at the beginning of the story: فَصَرَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكُهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا (So We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep] in the Cave for a number of years - 11).

After that, those who still differ with it have been warned once again that they are not the ones who know the reality of things as they are. The One who knows it all is none else but Allah with whom rests the knowledge of all that is unseen in the heavens and the earth. He is All Hearing. He is All Seeing. The time duration of three hundred nine years given by Him should be enough for their satisfaction.

Saying 'Insha'Allah' on doing something in the future

The background of the revelation of the first two verses has been reported in Lubāb from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ in the following manner. When the people of Makkah acting as coached by the Jews, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf etc., he promised to answer that next day without having said Insha'Allah. The least shortcoming issuing forth from the close ones brings some or the other notice of caution. Therefore, no revelation came for the next fifteen days. Naturally, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was grieved and the Mushriks of Makkah had their opportunity to laugh and ridicule. After this interval of fifteen days, when the answer to the questions asked was revealed, these two verses were revealed along with it as a measure of guidance. They told him that, should he need to say something about what he was going to do the next day, he should invariably affirm it by saying Insha'Allah, for everything depends on the intention and will of

Allah Ta'ālā. These two verses, it will be noted, have been introduced at the end of the story of the People of Kahf.

Ruling

Firstly, these two verses (23,24) tell us that saying Insha'Allah in the given situation is *mustaḥabb* (recommended). Secondly, they tell us that, should this part of the statement be left unsaid inadvertently, then, one may say it at the time one remembers. This injunction relates to the particular matter for which these verses have been revealed. It means that the purpose is simply to say this word to invoke Divine blessing and to confess to one's servitude and not to make the statement contingent or conditional. Therefore, it does not follow from here that one would do the same in buying and selling transactions and contracts where conditions are imposed and on this rests the contract between parties. Is it possible to impose a condition whenever one remembers later in case one had forgotten to include the condition at the time of signing the original contract? The difference of some jurists exists in this issue details of which appear in books of Fiqh.

As for the period of sleep in the Cave given as three hundred nine years in the third verse (27), this statement concerning the time duration, as evident from the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān, is but from Allah Ta'ālā. Ibn Kathīr has declared this to be the position of the majority of commentators, earlier and later. Abū Ḥayyān and al-Qurṭubī have also adopted this view. But, they have also reported another saying from Qatādah and others. It holds that this statement of three hundred nine years is also the saying of some of those who had differed and that the saying of Allah was what was said later: **اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا** (Allah knows best how long they stayed - 26). The reason is, had the earlier statement giving the duration as three hundred nine years been the word of Allah, there would have been no occasion for saying: **اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا** (Allah knows best how long they stayed) after that. But, the majority of commentators have said that both these sentences are the word of Allah. The first one describes reality as it is. The second one warns those who differ with it. They have been told that once the statement giving the duration has come from Allah, accepting it is mandatory. Since He is the One who really knows, trying to differ with Him on the basis of mere conjectures and opinions is (to make an understatement) unreasonable.

The question that arises here is about the manner in which the Holy Qur'an has described the duration of stay. First it mentions three hundred years. After that, it has said that added to those three hundred there are nine. The number three hundred nine was not given initially. According to commentators, there is a reason for it. Since the Jews and Christians followed the Solar Calendar, their count remained three hundred years. And since Islam goes by the Lunar Calendar in which three more years are added every hundred years, therefore, three hundred years of Solar Calendar become nine more years in accordance with the Lunar Calendar. It was to tell the difference between the two years that this expressive diction was employed.

Yet another question arises here about the People of Kahf. During their time and then within the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews and Christians had their differences about two things - the number of the People of Kahf and the duration of their sleep in the Cave. The Qur'an does describe both. However, it has done so with a difference. The number was not mentioned explicitly. Rather, only a hint has been given by not refuting the view which was correct. But, the fixed duration was declared in very clear words: *وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا* (And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine -25). The reason is that this very remarkable diction of the Qur'an strongly suggests that this debate on the number of the people of Kahf is virtually useless. No worldly or religious issue relates to or depends on it. Yes, this unusual sleep for such a long period of time, being healthy and fit without food and drink and then sitting up in good shape after such a long time is certainly a working model of Resurrection. That there is a Day of Judgement and that there is a Hereafter can be argued on this basis. Therefore, the period of sleep was stated very clearly.

People who deny the extraordinary miracles, or people who are in the habit of explaining them away overawed by the objections of modern day Jewish and Christian orientalists, have not spared even the Qur'an. For example, in the case of this verse (25), they have tried to use the explanation of Qatādah as a prop to reject the duration of three hundred nine years as the saying of those very people who were differing among themselves. But, they have erred. The statement: *سِتِينَ عَدَدًا* (for a number of years - 11) which appears in an earlier sentence of the Qur'an cannot be

called the saying of anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā! To prove the miraculous nature of the event even this much is sufficient that someone remains asleep for years and years and then rises and sits up all intact, fit and alive. Allah knows best.

Verses 27 - 31

وَأْتِلْ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۗ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۗ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ
 مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ
 بِالْغَدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنِكَ عَنْهُمْ ۗ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ
 الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَلَا تَطْعَمَنْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ، عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ
 وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِرْ
 وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ۗ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا ۗ أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ۗ
 وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ ۗ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ۗ
 وَسَاءَ مَا مَرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ
 أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
 تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا
 خَضْرَاءَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَأَسْتَرَقٍ مُتَّكِنِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۗ نِعْمَ
 الثَّوَابُ ۗ وَحَسُنَتْ مَرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾

And recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no one to change His words and you will never find a refuge beside Him. [27]

And keep yourself content with those who call their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and let not your eyes overlook them seeking the splendor of the worldly life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who has followed his desire and whose behavior has exceeded the limits. [28]

And say, "The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny." Surely, We have prepared for the unjust a fire, whose tent envelops them. And if they beg for help, they shall be helped with water like oily dregs scalding the faces. And vile is the drink and evil is the Fire as a resting-place. [29] As for those who believe and do righteous deeds - of course, We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [30] Those are the ones for whom there are eternal gardens the rivers flowing beneath them. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will be dressed in green garments made of fine silk and thick silk, reclining therein on couches. Excellent is the reward and beautiful is the Garden as a resting- place. [31]

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh admit of no discrimination

Some events have been mentioned in the background of the revelation of the verse: *وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ* (And keep yourself content - 28). It is possible that all of them became the cause of this instruction. Al-Baghawī reports that 'Uyainah ibn Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī, the chief of Makkah paid a visit to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sitting there with him was Sayyidnā Salman al-Farisi ؓ who was one of the poor Ṣaḥābah. His dress was tattered and his looks, that of a *derwish*. Then, there were some other poor and humble people like him sitting within the gathering. 'Uyainah said, 'these are the people who stop us from coming to you and listening to you. We cannot sit with such broken-down people. You should remove them from your gathering, or you should, at the least, have one separate gathering for us and another, for them.'

Ibn Marduwayh reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Umaiyyah ibn Khalaf al-jumaḥī advised the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should not have poor and broken-down Muslims as those close to him. Instead of that, he should prefer to have the chiefs of Makkah and the Quraysh tribe with him. If these people embraced the religion brought by him, it will advance the cause of religion.

Pursuant to events of this nature, came the Divine instruction that firmly stopped him from accepting their advice. Not only that he should not remove them from his company, in fact, the command given reads: *وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ* (*waṣbir nafsak*: translated as 'and keep yourself content'). If

translated literally, it could mean 'keep yourself tied with them,' not in the sense of not leaving them anytime, but meaning that he should attend to and relate to these very people, seeking their advice in essential matters and working in association with them alone. Why should he do that and what was the wisdom behind it? The words that follow spell the reason out. They call their Lord morning and evening, remembering Him under all conditions. And what they do is exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah. All these conditions around them are conditions that attract the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. And such are the people to whom comes the help of Allah. So, let them not worry about the loss of worldly support for the final victory shall be theirs.

The reason why he was prevented from accepting the advice of the Quraysh chiefs has been given towards the end of the verse. It was said that their hearts were heedless of the remembrance of Allah, everything they did was subservient to their physical desires and these conditions guaranteed that they would stand alienated far from the mercy and support of Allah Ta'ālā.

At this point, someone may doubt that this advice was reasonably practicable. A separate gathering for them would have not hurt. In fact, it would have made it easier to convey the message of Islam to them and equally easier for them to accept it. But, the creation of such a division would have amounted to seating the rebellious rich on a pedestal of honor, an action that could have broken the hearts of poor Muslims or dampened their courage. Allah Ta'ālā, in His ultimate wisdom, would not put up with anything like this. Instead of that, the ground rule of Da'wah and Tablīgh given by Him was that there should be no discrimination or distinction against or for anyone in it. Allah knows best.

Ornaments for the People of Jannah

It has been mentioned in verse 31: يُحَلُّونَ فِيهَا (They will be adorned therein) that men inmates of Jannah will also be adorned with bracelets of gold. The question it may bring up is that wearing ornaments is neither becoming for men, nor can these be called beauty and embellishment in any relative sense. If bracelets were put on them in Jannah, may be they make them look awful.

The answer is that embellishment and beauty are subservient to

practice or custom as recognized in a society. What is considered to be embellishment and beauty in one country or region could more than often be detested in other countries and regions. And this could be the other way round as well. Similarly, something is taken to be an embellishment in a given period of time. Comes another time and it becomes a blemish. When ornaments and silk dresses will come to be established as embellishment and beauty for men of Jannah too, no one is going to feel strange with it there. That which puts restraints on us here is a law of this world which stipulates that it is not permissible for men to wear any ornament of gold, even a ring or chain for watch made of gold. Similarly, silk clothes are not permissible for men. This will not be the law of Jannah. That is a universe of existence separate from this entire universe of our experience. It cannot be imagined on the analogy of anything in and around us on this basis alone.

Verses 32 - 44

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ
وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾ كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ
أَكْلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۖ وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلْفَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَسَكَانَ لَهُ
تَمْرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفْرًا ﴿٣٤﴾
وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾
وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً ۖ وَلَئِنْ رُدِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا
مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ
مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾ لَكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا
أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَوْ لَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۖ
لَأَقْوَمُ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ تَرَنِّيًا أَنَا أَقَلُّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾ فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَنْ
يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ
صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾ أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ ۖ طَلَبًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَأُحِيطَ بِشَمْرِهِ فَاصْبَحَ يَقْلَبُ كَفَيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ
 عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَا بَنِيَّ لِمَ أَشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ
 فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ
 الْحَقِّ ۗ هُوَ خَيْرٌ نَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾ ع

And give them an example. There were two men; We gave one of them two gardens of grapes and We surrounded them both with date-palms and placed tillage between them. [32] Both the gardens brought forth their fruit and suppressed nothing from it and We caused a stream to flow through them. [33]

And he had wealth. So, he said to his companion while conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and stronger in manpower." [34] And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will ever perish [35] and I do not think that the Hour is to come. And even if I am sent back to my Lord, I will surely find a better place than this to return to." [36] Said his companion as he was conversing with him, "Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop, then He fashioned you into a man? [37] As for me, I believe the fact that Allah is my Lord and I do not associate anyone with my Lord. [38] And why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, '(Everything is) as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah'? If you see me less than you in wealth and children, [39] then, I hope my Lord will give me (what is) better than your garden and send to yours a punishment from the heavens and it becomes a barren land." [40] Or, its water becomes deep-sunk so that you will never be able to search it out. [41] And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides and he stood wringing his hands (in anguish) over what he had invested therein while it was fallen down on its trellises and he was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord!" [42] And there were no supporters who could come to his help, other than Allah, nor was he able to help himself. [43] Here is that the power of protection rests with Allah - The True One. He is the best in rewarding and best in requiting. [44]

Commentary

The word: ثَمَرٌ (*thamar*) in: وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ (And he had wealth - 34) means the fruit of trees as well as wealth, in an absolute sense. At this place, Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and Qatādah have taken it in the later sense (Ibn Kathīr) According to the Lexicon, al-Qāmūs, this word is used to denote the fruit of the tree and wealth of all kinds. This tells us that not only did he own gardens and farms, he also had gold, silver and other luxuries. Even his words reported by the Qur’an: أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا (I am greater than you in wealth -34) also express the same sense. (Ibn Kathīr)

About the statement: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَقْوَمُ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ : "[Everything is] as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah," it has been reported in Shu‘ab al-‘Imān on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "whoever sees something, likes it - and says '*masha'Alahu la quwwata illa bil-lah*' - nothing will harm it (that is, what he likes will stay protected).' And it appears in other reports, 'whoever recites this *kalimah* when he likes something he sees, it will stay protected against the evil eye.'

The gist of the arguments of these two persons, as explained by Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavi in Khulāṣa-e-Tafsīr

These verses have described the event of two persons one of whom had a lot of wealth and, proud of it, he refused to accept that there is any life after death, and if there is one, he claimed, he will be given more wealth and reward therein. His argument was that if Allah was not pleased with him, he would not have this amount of wealth in this world.

The other person, though less than him in wealth, was a true believer. He refuted the argument of the former one by saying that the worldly wealth is not a sign of one's being close to Allah, because the worldly benefits are given by Allah, in one way or the other, even to the disbelievers and sinful persons, rather to the snakes, scorpions and beasts. It is a horrible mistake to presume that they are the signs of one's being approved by Allah. Therefore, neither your wealth is the proof of your behaviour being approved by Allah, nor my lesser wealth is a proof of disapproval by Him. Allah's approval or disapproval depends on one's faith and deeds alone and not on the amount of wealth one has.

The word: حُسْبَانًا (*ḥusbāna*) in verse 40 has been explained by Qatādah as 'punishment' in an absolute sense, by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as 'fire' and by some as 'stoning.' As for what appears after that in the Qur'ān: أُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ (And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides - 42), it obviously means that some major calamity hit his gardens, wealth and things of luxury reducing everything to ruins. The Qur'ān does not mention any particular calamity explicitly. It appears that, some fire came down from the skies and burnt the whole thing - as it appears in the Taf-sīr of 'ḥusbān' by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās who has explained it as 'fire.' And Allah knows best.

Verses 45 - 49

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاۤءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتِ الْاَرْضِ فَاَصْبَحَ هَشِيْمًا تَذْرُوْهُ الرِّيْحُ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ اَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَالْبَقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ تَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ اَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ نُسِيْرُ الْجِبَالِ وَتَرٰى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۗ وَحَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ تُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَعَرَضُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ۗ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۗ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَنْ نَّجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَوَضَعَ الْكِتٰبُ فَتَرٰى الْمُحْرِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا فِيْهِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰوَيْلَتْنَا مَا لِهٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ لَا يَغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّ لَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّا اَحْصٰهَا ۗ وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حٰضِرًا ۗ وَلَا يَظْلُمُ رَبُّكَ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

And give them the example of the worldly life; it is like water We sent down from the sky, then mingled with it was the vegetation of the earth, and then it turned into chaff that the winds blow about. And Allah has power over everything. [45] Wealth and children are the embellishment of the worldly life and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better to hope for. [46]

And (visualize) the Day We shall make mountains move and you see the earth exposed and We shall gather them together so as not to leave a single one of them. [47] And they shall be presented lined-up, before your Lord. Lo! You have come to Us just as We had created you at first. Instead, you claimed that We will not have for you an appointed time. [48] And placed there would be the book (of record), then you will see the guilty scared of what is therein and saying, "Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken into account. And they will find what they did all there. And your Lord will not wrong anyone. [49]

Commentary

The meaning of 'everlasting virtues' ('*al-bāqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*'- 34)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Accumulate 'everlasting virtues' as much as you can." It was said, "What are they?" He said, "Saying: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (Pure is Allah. There is no god but Allah. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah is great and there is no power and no strength except with Allah). Ḥākim has called this Ḥadīth - Ṣaḥīḥ. And al-Uqaili reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great): These are the 'everlasting virtues.'" The same has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah رضي الله عنه. And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "I like saying: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great) better than everything under the Sun."

Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه said, "Recite: لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (*lā haula wa lā quwata illā bil-lāh*: There is no power and there is no strength except with Allah) a lot, because it removes ninety nine types of ailments out of which anxiety is the least painful."

Thus, according to the Tafsīr of 'everlasting virtues' in this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid, it means the very recitation of these words. And Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, Masrūq and Ibrāhīm said that 'everlasting virtues' denote five daily prayers.

And there is another report from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه which says that '*al-baqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*' or 'everlasting virtues' in this verse means righteous deeds in a general sense. Included therein are the words mentioned above, and the five prayers, and all other righteous deeds as well. This explanation has also been reported from early commentator Qatādah. (Maẓharī)

This also happens to be the drive of the meaning in terms of the words of the Qur’ān for these words literally convey the sense of the righteous deeds that are to keep surviving. And it is obvious that all deeds that qualify as righteous and sincere are abiding and everlasting in the sight of Allah. Ibn Jarīr and al-Qurṭubī have preferred this particular Tafsīr.

Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said, 'Cultivation is of two kinds. Wealth and children are the cash crops of the mortal world while 'everlasting virtues' are the deferred crops of the Hereafter.' Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Everlasting virtues are one's intention as the acceptance of righteous deeds depends on it.'

‘Ubaid ibn ‘Umair رضي الله عنه said, 'Everlasting virtues are righteous daughters for they are, for their parents, the greatest treasure-troves of reward from Allah.' This is supported by a narration of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها according to which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, "I saw a man from my *ummah* under orders to be taken to Hell. Thereupon, his righteous daughters clung to him and started wailing and crying and plaintively supplicating: O Allah, spare him for he was very kind to us in the mortal world and he worked very hard to raise us in our family. Allah Ta‘ālā, in His mercy, forgave him. (Qurṭubī)

Visualize the Day of Resurrection

The address to everyone on that fateful Day of Qiyāmah shall be: لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (Lo! You have come to Us [empty-handed, without any of those things you proudly possessed] just as We had created you at first - 47). Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once gave a Khuṭbah in which he said, "O people! On the Day of Qiyāmah, you will come walking bare-footed, bare-bodied, before your Lord and the one to be donned

with a dress first shall be Ibrāhīm, peace be on him." Hearing this, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها asked, 'Yā Rasūlallāh, is it that all men and women shall be naked, and seeing each other?' He said, "That day, everyone will be gripped by such preoccupation and anxiety that no one will have any occasion to cast a look towards any one - all eyes shall be raised upwards."

According to al-Qurṭubī, the statement appearing in a Ḥadīth that the dead will meet each other in Barzakh dressed in their shrouds is not contradictory of this Ḥadīth, because that is the case of Grave and Barzakh (post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) while the present one concerns the plains of Resurrection. And there are some Ḥadīth reports to the effect that the deceased person will rise on the Day of Resurrection in the dress he or she was buried. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'Give good *kafn* (shroud) to the deceased among you because they will rise on the Last Day dressed in these.' Some commentators have interpreted the report as relating to Shahīds (martyrs who are buried in their dress). Then, there are others who have said that it is possible that some people rise dressed on the Day of Resurrection and some others, without it. In this way, both kinds of reports conjoin. (Maḥzarī)

Recompense (*al-jazā'*) is the Deed (*al-'amal*) itself

Towards the end of verse 49, it was said: *وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا* (And they will find what they did all there). Commentators generally explain its sense by saying that they will find the recompense of their deeds present there. My respected teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, used to say that there is no need for this interpretation here. Countless Ḥadīth narratives prove that these very deeds of the mortal world will become the recompense - reward or punishment - of the Hereafter. Their forms will transform there. Righteous deeds will transform into the blessings of Paradise and evil deeds will turn into the Hell-fire, snakes and scorpions.

It appears in Aḥādīth that the wealth of those who do not pay Zakāh will come to them in the grave in the form of a big snake. The thing will bite them saying, *أَنَا مَالُكَ* (*anā māluk*: I am your wealth). The righteous deed, transformed into an elegant human visitor will come to mollify one's terrible loneliness in the grave. Sacrificial animals will provide the ride over the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ. Sins committed will be placed on top of

everyone's heads as their burdensome wherewithal on the Day of Resurrection.

About devouring what belongs to the orphans by unfair means, it was said in the Qur'an: *إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا* (they only eat fire into their bellies - 4:10). All such Qur'anic verses and Ḥadīth narratives are generally interpreted as figures of speech. But, in the light of the view given above, none of these need a figure of speech to explain. Everything stays intrinsically real, as is.

The Qur'an has equated the unlawful consumption of an orphan's property with fire. So, the reality is that it is nothing but fire even at that time. But, in order to experience its effect, the condition is that one must pass away from this mortal world. It is like someone calling a matchbox by the name of fire, which is correct. But, in order that it becomes fire, it remains subject to the condition of friction. Similarly, if someone says that petrol or gas is fire, he would be considered as right - though, it would actually materialize only when the condition of being touched by a tiny flame of fire is fulfilled.

The outcome is that one's deed - whatever good or bad one does in the moral world - will take the form of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. That will be a time when its marks of identification will become different from that of the mortal world and take a form of its own. And Allah alone knows best.

Verses 50 - 59

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ كَانَ مِنَ
 الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ ۖ فَتَخَذُوا نَهْ، وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ، أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ
 لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ ۖ بئسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾ مَا أَشْهَدْتُهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلَقَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا
 ﴿٥١﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ
 يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا

أَنَّهُمْ مُوَافِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا
 الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ط وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٥﴾
 وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ
 تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ح وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ
 الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ
 بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدُهُ ط إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ
 قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ط وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ
 فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَرَبُّكَ الْعَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ط لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا
 كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ط بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ
 مَوْئِلًا ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ
 مَوْعِدًا ﴿٥٩﴾

And remember when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Adam." So, they prostrated themselves, all but Iblīs. He was of the Jinn, so he transgressed from the command of your Lord. Is it then that you will take him and his progeny as friends instead of Me while they are enemy to you? Evil is he as substitute, for wrongdoers. [50]

I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation. And I am not the one to take those who mislead as helpers. [51] And the Day He will say, "Call My 'partners' whom you took as such." So, they will call them but they will not respond to them and We will put a place of disaster between them. [52] And the sinners will see the Fire, so they will know that they are to fall into it and they will find no way to bypass it. [53]

And indeed We have explained in this Qur'an every subject in various ways for the people. And man is most quarrelsome of all things. [54]

And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance came to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord but (their demand) that there should come to them what used to come to the earlier peoples or that the punishment should come to them face to face. [55]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warnings, and those who disbelieve raise disputes with the false (arguments) so that they may nullify the truth with it. And they have made My signs and the warnings given to them a mockery. [56]

And who is more unjust than the one who was reminded through the signs of his Lord but he turned away from them and forgot what his own hands sent ahead. And We have put covers on their hearts so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And should you call them to the right path, even then they will never ever take to guidance. [57]

And your Lord is the Most Forgiving, the Master of Mercy. If He seizes them for what they did, He would cause their punishment to come soon. But, for them, there is an appointed time from which they will never find a refuge. [58]

And these towns We destroyed when they transgressed and We made an appointed time for their destruction. [59]

Commentary

The progeny of Iblīs, and his descendants and followers

The word: *وذرئته* (*dhurriyyatah*) in verse 50 indicates that Iblīs (Shaiṭān, Satan) has offspring, and a host of descendants and followers. Some commentators have said that 'progeny' at this place means 'accomplices.' That the Shaiṭān has offspring from his loins is not necessary. But, there is a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth which Ḥumaidī has reported in Kitāb al-Jam' bain al-Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضي الله عنه. According to his narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, "do not become like those who are the first to enter the bazaar (shopping centre), or those who are the last to leave it, for the bazaar is a place where the Shaiṭān has his eggs and offspring laid around." This would indicate that the progeny of Shaiṭān spreads out in that manner - through what is laid and hatched by him. After having presented this report, al-Qurṭu

bī has said that the Shaitān has accomplices and armies is something established by conclusive proofs - and as for the Shaitān having offspring, a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth has appeared above. Allah knows best.

The statement: وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (And man is the most quarrelsome of all things - 54) has been testified through a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Anas رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, a man from among the disbelievers will be brought forth. He will be asked, 'what was your response to the messenger We had sent to you?' He will say, 'O my Lord, as for me, I did believe in You and in Your messenger too and that I obeyed him in everything I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'here is your book of deeds before you. All this you say is not there.' This man will say, 'I do not believe in this book of deeds.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'what about these angels of Ours? They used to watch you. They bear witness against you.' This man will say, 'I do not accept their testimony as well, nor do I know them, nor have I seen them while I was doing what I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'if so, this Preserved Tablet (اللوحة المحفوظة) is before you. Written here too is the same thing about you.' He will say, 'my Lord, have You granted me asylum from injustice or have you not?' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'Of course, you have your refuge against injustice with Us.' So then, he will say, 'O my Lord, how can I accept the verdict of those unseen witnesses I am not familiar with at all? As for me, I can only accept a witness that comes from my own person.' At that time, his mouth will be sealed, and his hands and feet will bear witness against his *kufr* and *shirk*. After that, he will be released and thrown into the Hell. (The subject matter of this narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, also from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه - al-Qurtubī)

Verses 60 - 70

وَاذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ
حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي
الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ إِنِّي جَدَاءٌ نَأَىٰ لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ
سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ

الْحَوْتَ ۖ وَمَا أَنْسَيْنِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي
 الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغُ ۖ فَارْتَدَّ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا
 ﴿٦٤﴾ فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا
 عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ
 رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ
 مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خَيْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنِ شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا
 أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ
 أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And when Mūsā said to his young man, "I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years. [60] So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel. [61] When they went further, he said to his young man, "Bring us our morning meal; we have, indeed, had much fatigue from this journey of ours." [62] He said, "You see, when we stayed at the rock, I forgot the fish. It was none but Satan who made me forget it to tell you about it - and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea." [63] He said, "That was what we were looking for." So they returned, retracing their footsteps. [64] Then they found one of Our servants whom We blessed with mercy from Us and whom We gave knowledge, a knowledge from Our own. [65] Mūsā said to him, "May I follow you on (the undertaking) that you teach me a bit of right knowledge you have been given." [66] He said, "You can never afford to keep patient while with me. [67] And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp?" [68] He (Mūsā) said, "You will find me patient, if Allah wills, and I shall not disobey any order from you." [69] He said, "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me about anything unless I, on my own initiative, tell you about it." [70]

Commentary

وَأَذْكَرَ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتْنِهِ (And

when Mūsā said to his young man), the opening sentence of verse 60, 'Mūsā' means the famous prophet, Mūsā son of 'Imrān عليه السلام. The attribution of this event to some other Mūsā by Nawf al-Bakālī has been sternly refuted by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī.

As for the word: فتي (*fatā*), it literally means a young man. When this word is used as attributed to a particular person, it carries the sense of his attendant or servant because it is usually a young and strong man who is taken in for this kind of service in order that he could handle all sorts of jobs. Incidentally, it also happens to be an article of good Islamic etiquette that a servant or attendant should be addressed nicely, either by his name, or an appellation such as 'young man.' The ground rule is that even servants are not to be addressed as servants. At this place, the attribution of '*fatā*' is to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, it means Sayyidnā Mūsā's attendant in service. It appears in Ḥadīth narratives that the name of this attendant was Yūsha' son of Nūn, son of Ifrā'īm, son of Yūsuf عليه السلام. Some narratives identify him as the maternal nephew of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. But, no categorical decision can be taken in this matter. As for his name being Yūsha' ibn Nūn, that much stands proved on the authority of sound narratives. However, there is no proof for the rest of the antecedents. (Qurṭubī)

The word: مَجْمَعُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) literally means every such place where two waters meet - and it is obvious that they are many all around the world. Exactly which place is meant by '*majma' al-baḥrayn*' in this context? Since the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not pinpointed it precisely, therefore, sayings of commentators differ in terms of traces and contexts. According to Qatādah, it signifies the meeting point of the seas of Fāris (Persia) and Rūm. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah has identified a place near Azerbaijan. Some point out to the confluence of the Gulf of 'Aqabah in Jordan and the Red Sea (Sharm ash-Shaykh). Some others have said that this place is located in Ṭanjah (Tangiers in North Africa). Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه reports that it is in Africa. Suddiyy gives its location in Armenia. Some give its location at the meeting point of the sea of Andulus (Gibraltar) and the Great Ocean (Atlantic). Allah knows best. However, this much is clear that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام the fixed geographical location of this place towards which he had

made his journey. (Qurṭubī)

The Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses) and Al-Khaḍir (Elias)

Details of this event appear in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Once when Mūsā عليه السلام rose to address his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, those present there asked him, 'of all human beings, who is the foremost in knowledge?' Since (in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام there was no one more knowledgeable than himself) therefore, he said, 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' (Allah Ta'ālā has His special ways of grooming prophets close to Him, therefore, this statement was not welcome. The etiquette of the situation demanded that he should have resigned his answer to the ultimate knowledge of Allah and said that 'Allah alone knows as to who is the foremost in knowledge among His entire creation'). So, the answer given by Mūsā عليه السلام brought displeasure from Allah Ta'ālā and to him it was revealed: 'Present on the meeting point of the two seas, there is a servant of Ours. He is more knowledgeable than you.' (When Mūsā عليه السلام came to know this, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā that it was incumbent on him to travel and learn from the person who is superior to him in knowledge). So, he said: 'O Allah, tell me where to find him.' Allah Ta'ālā said, 'put a fish in your basket and travel in the direction of the meeting point of the two seas. When you reach the place where this fish disappears, that shall be the place where you meet that servant of Ours.' As commanded, Mūsā عليه السلام put a fish in the basket and set out. His attendant, Yūsha' ibn Nūn was also with him. During the course of travel, they reached a rock where they lied down resting their heads against it. All of a sudden, on that spot, the fish moved, left the basket and went into the sea. (With this miracle of the fish coming alive and slipping out into the sea, yet another miracle unfolded when) Allah Ta'ālā stopped the flow of water currents all along the way the fish took into the sea making the place like a tunnel into the sea. (Yūsha' ibn Nūn witnessed this extraordinary event while Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep). When he woke up, Yūsha' ibn Nūn forgot to mention this strange happening before him and resumed their journey onwards from there. They traveled for a whole day and night. When came the morning of the next day, Mūsā عليه السلام asked his companion of the journey, 'bring us our morning meal. We have, indeed, had

much fatigue from this journey of ours.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that (as Divinely arranged) Mūsā عليه السلام felt no fatigue at all before that, so much so that he had over-traversed the spot where he had to reach. It was only when Mūsā عليه السلام asked for his morning meal that Yūsha' ibn Nūn recalled the fate of the fish, tendered his excuse for having forgotten to mention it for the Satan had made him forget about the need to report this matter to him earlier. After that, he disclosed that the dead fish had come alive and gone into the sea in an amazing manner. Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said: 'that was what we were looking for.' (That is, the place where the fish comes alive and disappears was the desired destination).

So they turned back that very instant and took the same route they had taken earlier in order to find the spot they were looking for. Now, when they reached the familiar rock, they saw that someone was lying there covered with a sheet from the head down to the feet. Mūsā عليه السلام (taking things as they were) offered the greeting of *salām*. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'where in the world does this '*salām*' come from in this (uninhabited) wilderness?' Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'I am Mūsā.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl?' He confirmed, 'Yes, I am Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl. I have come here to ask you to teach me the knowledge Allah has given to you specially.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'you will be unable to remain patient with me. O Mūsā, there is a knowledge Allah has given to me and which you do not have while there is a knowledge which Allah has given to you which I do not have.' Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'if Allah wills, you will find me patient. I shall not disobey you in any of your orders.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'If you are to be with me, do not ask me about anything unless I tell you about it first.'

After having said this, they started walking by the shore. Then came a boat. A ride was negotiated. The boat people recognized al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and let them come on board free of any charges. No sooner did he step into the boat, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام forced out a panel of the boat with the help of an axe. Mūsā عليه السلام could not restrain himself. He said, 'These people gave us a free ride on the boat. This is what you did to them in return. You tore their boat apart so that they would drown. You have really done something very bad.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before

that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Thereupon, Mūsā offered his excuse that he had forgotten his promise and requested him not to take him to task on his act of inadvertent omission.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, after relating this event, said, "The first objection raised by Mūsā against al-Khaḍir was activated by forgetfulness, the second as a condition and the third by intention. (Meanwhile) a bird came, sat down on the side of the boat and took out a beak-full of water from the sea. Thereupon, addressing Mūsā, al-Khaḍir said, "even the combined knowledge of the two of us, yours and mine, cannot claim a status against Divine knowledge that could be compared even with the water in the beak of this bird as related to this sea."

Then, having disembarked from the boat, they started walking on the shore. All of a sudden, al-Khaḍir saw a boy playing with other boys. Al-Khaḍir killed the boy with his own hands. The boy died. Mūsā said, 'you took an innocent life unjustly. Indeed, this was a grave sin you committed.' Al-Khaḍir said, 'Did I not tell you before that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Mūsā noticed that this matter was far more serious than the first one. Therefore, he said, 'if I question you after this, you will be free to remove me from your company. As far as I am concerned, you have reached the limit of excuses from me.'

After that, they started walking again until they passed by a village. They requested the village people to house them as guests. They refused. In this habitation, they noticed a wall that was about to collapse. Al-Khaḍir made it stand straight with his own hands. Surprised, Mūsā said, 'we requested their hospitality. They refused. Now you did such a big job for them. If you wished, you could have charged wages from them to do it.' Al-Khaḍir said, ' هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ ' (It means that the condition now stands fulfilled, therefore, time has come for you and me to part company).

Then, after telling Mūsā the reality behind the three events, Al-Khaḍir said: ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا which means: "That was the reality of the events over which you were unable to remain patient."

Once he had narrated this entire event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I wish Mūsā عليه السلام could have remained more patient so that we would have come to know more about the two of them."

This lengthy Ḥadīth appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in a manner that it establishes three things. It clearly mentions the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl, the name of his young companion during the travel as Yūshā' ibn Nūn and the name of the 'servant of Allah' to whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was sent towards the meeting point of the two seas as Al-Khaḍīr. Now, from this point onwards, we shall take up the verses of the Qur'ān, and explain their sense.

Some rules of the road and a model of high prophetic determination

The first statement made in verse 60: لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ("I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years") was from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as addressed to his traveling companion, Yūshā' ibn Nūn. The purpose was to inform him about the direction and destination of the intended journey. This too releases a refinement in manners for he was taking the necessary steps to orient his companion and attendant with the knowledge of things essential for the journey. Proud and arrogant people just do not regard servants and attendants worth addressing, nor would they pass on any information to them about a projected journey.

The word: حُقُبًا (*ḥuqubā*: years) is the plural of: حُقْبَةً (*ḥuqbah*). According to lexicographers, *ḥuqbah* is a period of eighty years. Some add more years to this definition. The truth of the matter is that *ḥuqbah* refers to a long period of time. There are no set limits about it. Here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has told his companion on the trip that he has to reach a particular place at the meeting point of the two seas. There he must reach as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and that he was determined to continue his journey until he reaches that destination no matter how long the journey takes. When ready to obey the command of their Lord, this is a model of high determination exhibited by prophets.

Precedence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام over Al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام, his upbringing and miracles

In the next verse, it was said:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel - 61.

Before we explain the nature of the extraordinary happening there, it is appropriate to first refer to the distinct position bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the comity of prophets. This has been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, and Sunnah. The special distinction of having conversed with Allah Ta'ālā is his hallmark. With al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the matter is different. To begin with, the very fact of his being a prophet has been debated. Even if his prophet-hood (*nubuwwah*) is acknowledged, he does not hold the station of a messenger (Rasūl) of Allah. Neither is he credited with a Book, nor does he have a distinct community of followers. Therefore, considering all related aspects, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has marked precedence over al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own wise ways to help those close to Him perform better. He would not let the least want or short coming go uncorrected and not amended. This process of reform at the highest level would even bring serious displeasure from Allah and it is through an equally serious measure that they are made to repair for it. This whole story reflects the same mode of personal training. By saying: *انا* (*anā*: I), he had said: 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' Allah Ta'ālā did not like it. So, as a measure of warning, he was given the whereabouts of a servant who had a field of knowledge specially given to him by Allah. This Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not have. Though the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was far higher in rank than that given to him, but the truth of the matter was that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just did not have it. On the other side, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with an intense desire to seek knowledge. As soon as he smelt the scent of knowledge elsewhere too, knowledge that he did not have, he was all set to go for it traveling like an ardent student and it was Allah Ta'ālā Himself that he turned to for the address of that servant of His (al-Khaḍir عليه السلام). Now, there is something worth pondering at this point. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that Mūsā عليه السلام should meet al-Khaḍir عليه السلام at that spot, He could have arranged that easily. Or, if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was Divinely destined to travel, he could have been given a clear address to help him reach it without any botheration. But, what happened here was differ-

ent. The address given to him was far from being precise - 'when you reach the place where the dead fish stirs and disappears, that will be the place you will find Our servant.'

Just about what this Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī proves is that the command to put a fish in their basket came from Allah Ta'ālā. Beyond that, it is not known whether the order was to carry a fish for eating or that it was to be carried as separate from what was to be eaten. Both probabilities exist. Therefore, some of the commentators said that this grilled fish was put in to eat and, during the course of the journey, the two travelers kept eating out of it as well. Eaten thus was almost half of it. After that, miraculously enough, this grilled and half-eaten fish came alive and went into the sea.

Ibn 'Aṭīyyah and many others also observed that this fish kept surviving in the world as a matter of miracle and there were those who even saw that it had only one side intact while the other was eaten. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah has also put his personal sighting on record. (Qurṭubī)

And there are other commentators who have said that the command was to put a fish in a basket separate from that for food. The fish was put as commanded. Here too, at least this much is definite that the fish was dead. Its stirring up, becoming alive and going into the sea was nothing but a miracle.

We have said a little earlier that the address of al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام was left imprecise in a manner that it would not remain easy to pinpoint it. Obviously, this too was nothing but a trial and test for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. As though this was not enough, the scenario of an additional test was activated for them when they had reached the exact spot but forgot the fish. In the verse of the Qur'ān, this act of forgetting has been attributed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his companion both: نَسِيًا حَوْتَهُمَا (they forgot their fish - 61). But, as regards the story proved from the Ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī, it seems to indicate that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep when came the time for the fish to become alive and go into the sea. This extraordinary event was witnessed by Yūshā' ibn Nūn only and he had intended that he would relate it to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as soon as he woke up. But, soon after that happened, Allah Ta'ālā cast a state of oblivion on him and he forgot to do that. If so, the attribution of forgetfulness to both of them would be similar to the statement of the Qur'ān: يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا

اللؤلؤ والمرجان - 55:22. Here it has been said that pearl and coral are extracted from both sweet and brackish waters - although, these are collected from the later only. But, saying something like this in usage is common. Then it is also possible that since both respected elders had forgotten to take this fish along with them as far as the journey from that point onwards was concerned. Therefore, forgetfulness was attributed to both.

Nevertheless, this was yet another test. After having reached the projected destination, the fish came alive and disappeared into the sea. The reality had unfolded and the place was pinpointed. But, that was not the end. The seeker of truth had to undergo yet another test. Therefore, forgetfulness overtook both of them and it was only after having traveled one day and one night more that they realized hunger and fatigue. This was the third test, because any realization of fatigue and hunger should have naturally come earlier than that. If they had recalled the fish at that earlier time and place, they would have not suffered from such a long additional journey. But, such was the will of Allah Ta'ālā that they had to face a little more of hardship. It was only after having gone through the grind of such a long journey that they felt hungry and thirsty and there it was that they remembered the fish and found out that they had come far ahead of their desired destination. Therefore, they returned back on the same footprints they had left earlier.

The first mention of the fish going into the sea was made through the word: سَرَبًا (*sarabā* - 61). Sarab means a tunnel that is dug to open up a passage through the mountains or an underground subway in cities. This tells us that the fish when it went into the sea had a tunnel-like passage forming itself in whatever direction it moved. Water currents did not obstruct its passage at all, rather left it open - as made explicit by the narrative from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. The second time, when Yūshā' ibn Nūn related this event before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام after their long journey, it was done in the following words: وَأَتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea - 63). There is no contradiction between the two, because the incidence of a tunnel forming itself into the sea was by itself an extraordinarily amazing event.

About al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and the issue of his prophet-hood

Though the name of the person concerned in this event has not been mentioned in the Qur'ān - in fact, he has been called: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا (a ser-

vant from among Our servants - 65) - but, in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, his name has been given as: الْخَضِيرُ (al-Khaḍīr). Literally, it means green, verdant. Giving the reason for his name being al-Khaḍīr, commentators at large say that grass would grow at the spot where he would sit, no matter what the nature of the land. It would just turn green. The Qur'ān has also not made it clear whether al-Khaḍīr ﷺ was some prophet, or was one of the men of Allah. But, in the sight of the majority of religious scholars, the proof of his being a prophet is embedded within the events mentioned in the Qur'ān. There is a reason for it. Some of the proved events during this journey that issued forth from al-Khaḍīr ﷺ are absolutely counter to the Sharī'ah and there can be no exemption from an injunction of the Sharī'ah except under the authority of a Divine revelation, something restricted to a prophet and messenger of Allah. A *waliyy* (man of Allah) could also come to know something either through *Kashf* (illumination) or *Ilhām* (inspiration). But, that is not an authority to prove a rule of Sharī'ah. No injunction of the externally codified Sharī'ah can be changed on that basis. Therefore, it stands established that al-Khaḍīr ﷺ was a prophet and messenger of Allah. Given to him were some of those particular injunctions, injunctions that were counter to the codified Sharī'ah. Whatever he did, he did under the authority of this excepted injunction. He himself has attested to that in the sentence of the Qur'ān saying: وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ، عَنْ أَمْرِي (and I did not do it under my authority - 82) that is, did it under Divine authority.

In short, according to the majority of religious scholars of the Muslim community, al-Khaḍīr ﷺ too is a prophet and messenger. But, it was an imperative of creation that some duties were assigned to him from Allah. The knowledge given to him related to these very duties. Of this Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had no information, therefore, he objected. This subject has been dealt with in *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* of Abu Ḥayyān and in most commentaries variously.

It is not lawful for any *waliyy* or man of Allah to contravene the injunction of codified Sharī'ah

Right from here we learn that there is no shortage of ignorant and misguided Ṣuffīs who give a bad name to *Taṣawwuf*. The likes of them would say that Sharī'ah is something else and *Ṭarīqah* is something else. There are many things taken as *ḥarām* in the Sharī'ah, but they

are permissible in the Ṭarīqah. Therefore, even if you see a *waliyy* (man of Allah) involved in a major sin openly and clearly, you cannot raise an objection against him! This is heresy, flagrant and false. No *waliyy*, no man of Allah anywhere in this world can be taken on the analogy of al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام, nor can any act contrary to the codified Shari'ah issuing forth from him be called permissible.

Following the teacher is incumbent on the student

In verse 66: هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا , Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, despite being a prophet and messenger of great resolve, has most reverentially requested al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام if he could follow him to learn his knowledge from him. This tells us that the etiquette of acquiring knowledge is nothing but that the student should show respect for the teacher and follow him (as an individual who is eager to learn) - even if the student happens to be superior to his teacher. (Qurṭubī, Maḥḥarī)

It is not permissible for an 'Ālim' of the 'Shari'ah' to patiently bear what is contrary to the Shari'ah

By saying: إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خَيْرًا (You can never be able to keep patient while with me. And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp? - 67, 68), al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام was telling Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about the fact and the reason why he would be unable to keep patient with him. He knew nothing about the reality of the thing. What he meant was that the nature of knowledge given to him was different from the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, things he did would appear to be objectionable in his sight, until he himself was to apprise him of their reality. Thus, the objections he would raise against such actions would be triggered by the dictates of his mission as a prophet.

Since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was ordered to go to and learn from al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام by none but Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, he was initially at peace with himself hoping that nothing he did would really be counter to the Shari'ah - though, he may not understand it externally. So, he promised to keep patient. Otherwise, the making of such a promise is not permissible for any 'Ālim of Dīn. But, later on, overtaken by his strong sense of honor relating to the Shari'ah, he forgot about this promise.

The first event was really not that serious. That the boat people

would suffer from financial loss or the boat may sink remained at the level of an impending danger only - which stood removed later on. But, in the case of the event that took place thereafter, Mūsā عليه السلام did not even make that promise of not objecting. In fact, when he saw the incident of a boy having been killed, he objected vehemently and did not offer any excuse whatsoever for his objection either. He simply said if he came up with an objection next time, al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام would have the right of not keeping him in his company. The underlying logic was that no prophet and messenger of Allah can bear by seeing things being done against the norms of the Shari'ah and yet maintaining a stance of peevish patience. However, this was a unique situation. There were prophets on both sides. Therefore, the reality unfolded. It finally turned out that these fragmentary events were exempted for al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام from the purview of the general rules of the Shari'ah. Whatever he did, he did only in accordance with the dictates of the Divine Waḥy (revelation). (Mazhari)

Basic difference in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام: Resolution of an apparent dichotomy

Naturally, a question arises here. We see that, according to the explanation of al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام, the nature of the knowledge given to him was different from that of the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Now, when both these two areas of knowledge were given by Allah Ta'ālā alone, why did this contradiction and difference show up in their two respective injunctions? Qādī Thanauḷāh of Pānīpat has given a research-based answer to this question in his Tafsīr Mazhari. It is the closest to being right and appealing. Given below is a gist of what I understand from his presentation:

'The blessed souls Allah Ta'ālā honors with His revelation and prophet-hood are generally those who are entrusted with the mission of making people better. Sent to them is a Book and Shari'ah which offer principles and rules that serve as blueprints of guidance and betterment for the creation of Allah. Blessed prophets and messengers mentioned in the noble Qur'ān as such were all assigned with the mission of Law and Reform. To this related the Revelation they received. But then, there are services essential to the realm of creation (*takwīn*) as well. Generally, appointed to take care of these are the angels of Allah. However, Allah

Ta'ālā has specifically chosen some from among the group of prophets also in order to carry out the services of *takwīn* (whereby the decisions of Allah's will relating to the management of His creation are enforced). Al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام belongs to this very group. These imperatives of *takwīn* relate to minor incidents and events, that a certain person should be saved from getting drowned, or someone should be killed, promoted or demoted or subdued. These matters do not relate to common people at all, nor are they addressed by these imperatives. In such events of minor consequences, one may confront some of those situations where killing a person is against the religious law. But, under the imperative of creation, that particular event has been exempted from the general religious law and the act has been made permissible for the person who has been appointed to carry out this imperative of *takwīn*. Under such conditions, the experts of religious law are not aware of this exempted injunction and are compelled to call it '*ḥarām*' (unlawful) and the person who has been exempted from this law under the imperative of *takwīn* remains in the right in his own place.

In short, wherever such a contradiction is perceived, it is no contradiction in the real sense. It is simply the exemption of some minor events from the general religious law. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abu Ḥayyān said:

الجمهور على ان الخضر نبي وكان علمه معرفة بواطن قد اوحيت اليه وعلم موسى
الاحكام والفتيا بالظاهر

The majority holds Al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام to be a prophet and his knowledge was the gnosis of (the inner dimensions of the human) self which was revealed to him and the knowledge of Mūsā عليه السلام was of the injunctions and rulings on the apparent. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, v. 6)

For the aforesaid reason, it is also necessary that this exemption should take effect through revelation to a prophet. The Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration) of some Waliyy (man of Allah) are never sufficient to make such an exemption effective. This is the reason why the act of al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام in killing a boy apparently without a just reason was *ḥarām* (unlawful) in the sight of the Sharī'ah which rules on the apparent. But, as for al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام, he was appointed to do that while exempted from this law as an imperative of creation (*takwīn*). Taking the Kashf and Ilhām of some non-prophet on the analogy of al-Khaḍīr

ﷺ and thereby taking something *ḥarām* (unlawful) to be *ḥalāl* (lawful) - as popular among some ignorant Sufis - is totally anti-religion and certainly, a rebellion against Islam.

Ibn Abī Shaibah reports an event relating to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه by saying that Najdah Harūrī (a Kharijite) wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās and asked as to how did al-Khaḍir عليه السلام kill a minor boy when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of minors. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās answered his letter by saying, 'if you were to receive the same knowledge about some minor as was received by Sayyidnā Mūsā's 'man of knowledge' (that is, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام), the killing of a minor would become permissible for you too! What he meant was that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had received his knowledge about it only through revelation exclusive to a prophet. That nobody can have now because prophet-hood has ended. There is to be no prophet after the Last among Prophets, that is, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, who could have through revelation knowledge about some particular person to have been exempted under Divine command in the case of such events. (Maẓharī)

From this event too, the real thing becomes clear, that is, no one other than a revelation-receiving prophet has the right to declare anyone as exempted from any Islamic legal injunction.

Verses 71 - 78

فَانْطَلَقَا ۗ ثُمَّ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۖ قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ
 أَهْلَهَا ۚ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا أَمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ
 صَبْرًا ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا
 ﴿٧٣﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ۗ ثُمَّ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَمًا فَقَتَلَهُ ۗ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً
 بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ۗ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ
 تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا
 تُصَحِّبْنِي ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ۗ ثُمَّ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا آتَىٰ
 أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ ۖ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّقُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقِضَ فَاقَامَهُ، ط قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ
هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

﴿٧٨﴾

So, they both moved ahead until when they boarded the boat, he broke it. He (Mūsā) said, "Did you break it that you drown its people? You have done something terrible indeed." [71] He said, "Did I not tell that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?" [72] He (Mūsā) said, "Do not hold me accountable for what I forgot. And do not burden me with something difficult in this matter of mine." [73]

So, they moved ahead until when they met a boy, he killed him (the boy). He (Mūsā) said, "Did you kill an innocent person in retaliation of nobody? You have done something abominable indeed." [74] He said, "Did I not tell you that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?" [75] He (Mūsā) said, "If I ask you about something after this, do not allow me your company. You have now reached a point where you have a valid excuse from my own side (to do so)." [76]

Then, they moved ahead until they came to the people of a town; they asked its people for food and they refused to host them. Then, they found there a wall tending to fall. So he set it right. He (Mūsā) said, "Had you wished, you could have charged a fee for it." [77] He said, "Here is the point of parting ways between me and you. I shall now explain to you the reality of things about which you could not remain patient. [78]

Commentary

It was said in verse 71: *أَحْرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا* (Did you break it that you drown its people?). About it, it appears in the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had dislodged a plank of the boat with an axe because of which there was a danger that water would fill up the boat and it would capsize. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had objected to it. But, according to historical reports, water did not fill into this boat. This may have happened either because al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had somehow repaired it himself soon after - as in a report carried by al-Baghawī according to which al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had replaced the plank with

glass. Or, water just did not enter the boat in the manner of a miracle. However, the context of the Qur'an by itself is telling us that the boat did not capsize - something which supports these reports.

We now move to the sentence: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا (until when they met a boy -74). The word: غُلَامٌ (*ghulam*) in the text is used for a minor boy in the Arabic usage. This boy killed by al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was a minor - as corroborated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and most commentators. Further on, when the words: نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً (innocent person) were used for him, that too supports the view that he was a minor. The reason is that زَكِيَّةً (*zakiyyah*) means 'free of sin' and it can be either the attribute of a prophet or a minor child who faces no accounting for what is done by him and no sin is written in his Book of Deeds.

The habitation mentioned in: أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ (the people of a town - 77) which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍir عليه السلام passed through and whose inhabitants refused to host them was Anṭākiyah, as in the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, and Aikah, as in the report of Ibn Sīrīn. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that it was some habitation of al-Andulus (Spain) (Maḏharī). Allah knows best.

Verses 79 - 82

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا
وَكَانَ وِرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ
أَبُوهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾ فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ
يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكْوَةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ
فَكَانَ لِغُلَمَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ
أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَآرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا
عَنْ رَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ، عَنِ أَمْرِى ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ
عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾ ط

As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who worked at sea. So I wanted to make it defective as there

was a king across them who used to take every boat by force. [79] And as for the boy, his parents were believers. We apprehended that he would impose rebellion and infidelity upon them. [80] We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety and more akin to affection. [81] And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father was a pious man. So your Lord willed that they reach their maturity and dig out their treasure - a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do it on my own accord. This is the reality of things about which you could not remain patient." [82]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: *أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ* (As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people - 79). About the poor people to whom this boat belonged, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥḅār رحمه الله that they were ten brothers. Five of them were handicapped while the other five worked hard to eke out a living for all of them by plying a boat against whatever fare they could collect.

The definition of a *Miskīn*

A *miskīn* has been defined as one who has nothing. But, from this verse, we learn the true definition of a *miskīn*: Anyone who does not have the amount of wealth and property that exceed his need, basic and necessary, to the limit of legal *niṣāb* (threshold of *zakāh*). One who has less than that is also included under the definition of *miskīn*. The reason is that people called '*al-masākīn*' (plural of *miskīn*: poor people) had at least one boat the price of which will not be less than the amount of *niṣāb* (threshold). But, as it was engaged in earning what those people needed, basically and necessarily, they were still called '*masākīn*' (poor people). (Maḅharī)

Regarding the last sentence of verse 79: *مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا*, al-Baḅhawī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the direction in which this boat was sailing, there was a cruel king who used to take boats ferrying people through by force. Al-Khaḅḅir رضي الله عنه found it expedient to pull out a plank from the boat so that the cruel king, seeing this damaged boat, would let it go and thus those poor people would remain safe from the likely mishap. Comments sage Rūmī:

گر خضر در بحر کشتی را شکست صد درستی در شکست خضر هست

Yes, al-Khidr did break the boat while sailing at sea
But, a hundred saving graces in his breaking we see

The opening sentence of verse 80: *وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ* (As for the boy) means the boy who was killed by al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. The reality behind it, as stated by him, was that the boy was cut out for infidelity and rebellion against parents. But, his parents were pious people. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said that they apprehended that, once this boy grew up, he would harass his parents and cause them pain. And when he took to infidelity as a young man, he would not only become a live trial for the parents but would also endanger the very faith of his parents because of their love for him.

In verse 81, it was said: *فَارَدْنَا أَنْ نُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبَّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكْوَةً وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا* "We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety [having good deeds and morals] and more akin to affection [fulfilling due rights of the parents]."

It will be noticed that the form used in this situation is plural: *حَشِينَا* (we apprehended) and: *أَرَدْنَا* (we wished). One reason for it could be that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام attributed this apprehension and wish to himself and to Allah Ta'ālā both. And it is also possible that he may have attributed it to himself alone - if so, the expression: *أَرَدْنَا* (we wished) would mean: 'we prayed to Allah' because this matter of replacing a boy with a better one is an act which falls in the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام or some other human being cannot be associated with it.

If, at this point, someone were to say: If it was in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā that this boy will grow into an infidel and mislead his parents as well, then, this event - true to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā - should have necessarily transpired as it did. Then this doubt would be incorrect for the reason that nothing can come into being contrary to Divine knowledge.

It can be answered by saying that it was there in Divine knowledge with the appendage and condition: If he reached maturity, he will not only become a disbeliever himself but would pose a danger for other Muslims also. Then, as he was killed before reaching the age of maturity, the ensuing event is not contrary to Divine Knowledge. (Mazharī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have reported from Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah that Allah Ta‘ālā had blessed the parents of the slain boy with a girl in his place who became the mother of a prophet. And, as in a report from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, she gave birth to two prophets. Some other reports say that through the prophet she gave birth to, Allah Ta‘ālā gave guidance to a large community.

About the statement: *وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا* (and there was beneath it a treasure for them - 82), Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā’ رضي الله عنه has reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that it was a treasure chest of gold and silver. (Narrated by Tirmidhī and al-Ḥakim, from Maḥzarī)

Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said that it was a tablet of gold inscribed with the following good counsel. This report was also narrated by Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه with its chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: (Qurṭubī)

1. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillahir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful).
2. Amazing is the person who believes in destiny, then how could he despair.
3. Amazing is the person who believes that Allah Ta‘ālā is the sponsor of all in their sustenance, still, why would he consume himself in striving for more than he needs and in achieving what is redundant.
4. Amazing is the person who believes in death yet, how could he remain all happy.
5. Amazing is the person who believes in the reckoning of the Hereafter yet, how could he afford to be heedless.
6. Amazing is the person who knows the world and its vicissitudes yet, how could he sit relaxed about it.
7. *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ* (*lā ilaha illallāh Muḥammad rasūlullāh*: There is no god but Allah Muḥammad is a messenger of Allah).

The benefit of the righteousness of parents reaches children, and their children.

The statement: *وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا* (and their father was a pious man - 82)

carries a hint that arrangements were made to have the buried treasure secured for the orphan children through al-Khaḍir عليه السلام for the reason that the father of the orphan children was some pious man dear in the sight of Allah. Therefore, it was to grant his wish and to bring benefit to his children that Allah Ta'ālā made this arrangement. Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir says: 'It is because of the piety and righteousness of a servant of His that Allah Ta'ālā protects his children, and the children of his children, and his family, even the homes built around his own.' (Maḥzarī)

As in al-Qurṭubī, sage Shiblī used to say that he was a guarantee of peace for the city and the area adjoining it. When he died, it was soon after his burial that the disbelievers of Dailam crossed Euphrates and took over Baghdād. At that time, everyone was saying that they were struck by double distress - the death of Shiblī and the sack of Dailam, (Qurṭubī, p. 29, v. 11)

According to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, this verse also indicates that people too should show consideration and affection for the children of the learned and the pious - unless, of course, they were to succumb to disbelief and sin.

Later, the word: أَشَدُّ (*ashudd*) in: أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا (that they reach their maturity - 82) is a plural form of: شِدَّة (*shiddah*) meaning maturity, the age when one reaches full maturity and becomes able to decide what is good or bad for him. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this is the age of twenty-five years. Others put it at forty years because it appears in the Qur'an: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ، وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً (until when he reaches his maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years - al-Aḥqaf, 46:15)

Prophetic Eloquence and the Nuances of Etiquette: An Example

Before we turn to this example, let us first understand that nothing can happen in this world, good or bad, without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. All phenomena of good and evil is as created by Him and is subservient to His intention and will. Things understood or named as evil or bad do deserve to be called as evil or bad in terms of particular individuals and particular circumstances. But, given a total world-view, they all are necessary and nothing but good in terms of being a Divine creation as based on wisdom.

In short, whatever calamity or accident stands activated in this world simply cannot materialize without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. In that respect, every good and evil can also be attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. But, the fact is that, given the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, no evil is evil. Therefore, etiquette demands that evil should not be attributed towards Allah Ta'ālā. The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'an: وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعَمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِي وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي (It is He who gives me [things] to eat and drink, [26:79] and when I am sick, it is He who cures me - 26:80) are a good example. They teach us the same etiquette when the provision of food and drink has been attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes the provision of cure from sickness. This too has been attributed to Him. In between came the mention of sickness. He attributed it to himself in the words: وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي (and when I am sick, it is He who cures me) - not in the manner: When He makes me fall sick, He cures me too.

Let us now consider the diction of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. When he formed the intention of breaking the boat - which was obviously a vicious act - he attributed this intention to himself and said: أَرَدْتُ (*ara[d]tu*: I wanted to make it defective - 79). After that, he mentioned the killing of the boy and wished some one would replace him who would be better than him. Here, there was evil in the act of killing while being blessed with better progeny in his place was something good. Therefore, because of this common factor, the form used was that of the first person, plural. It was said: أَرَدْنَا (*aradnā*: we wished - 81) so that whatever obvious evil there lies in it is beamed back to his own self and whatever good lies in it stands attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. As for the third event - setting the wall right to secure the property of the orphans - it was nothing but good. This was attributed entirely to Allah Ta'ālā by saying: فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ (*fa arāda rabbuk*: So your Lord willed - 82).

Is al-Khaḍir عليه السلام alive, or is he dead?

The event related to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'an has nothing to do with the question of his life or death after it. Therefore, no clear statement in this regard is present in the Qur'an, and Sunnah. Some reports suggest his being alive till now while others tell us otherwise. Thus, scholarly opinion has always been at variance in this matter. Those who hold that he is alive argue on the basis of the narrative from

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه carried by al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak. It says, 'when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left this mortal world, there came a person in black and white beard. Tearing the crowd of people, he reached inside and started weeping. Then, turning to the noble Companions, he said the following words:

إِنَّ فِي اللَّهِ عِزًّا مِّنْ كُلِّ مُصِيبَةٍ، وَعِوَضًا مِّنْ كُلِّ فَآئِتٍ، وَخَلْفًا مِّنْ كُلِّ هَالِكٍ، فَآلَى
اللَّهِ فَآئِبُونَ وَإِلَيْهِ فَارْغَبُوا وَنَظَرُهُ، إِلَيْكُمْ فِي الْبَلَاءِ فَانظُرُوا فَإِنَّمَا الْمَصَابُ مَن لَّمْ يُجْبِرْ

Indeed, in Allah there is endurance against all distress, and recompense of everything taken away, and He is the real caretaker for He alone survives after everyone is dead. So, return to Allah, turn to Him passionately and long for Him alone - because, deprived is he who has been deprived of the reward of the enduring distress.

After having said these words, when the visitor departed, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهما said, 'he was al-Khaḍir عليه السلام.' This narrative has also been reported by Ibn al-Jazrī in his al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn where the compiler is particular about including nothing but what is authentic.

And in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it appears that Dajjāl (Imposter) will reach a point close to Madinah when a man of Madīnah will come out to confront him. He will be the best of men during that time, or among the better ones. Abū Ishāq said, 'this person will be al-Khaḍir عليه السلام.' (Qurtubī)

And Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā has reported in Kitāb al-Hawātif with necessary chains of authority that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام who told him about a Du'ā' which, if recited by anyone after every Ṣalāh, would bring for him great reward, forgiveness and mercy. That prayer is given below:

يَا مَنْ لَا يُشْعَلُهُ، سَمْعٌ عَنْ سَمْعٍ، وَيَا مَنْ لَا تُغْلِطُهُ الْمَسَائِلُ، وَيَا مَنْ لَا يَبْرُمُ مِنَ الْحَاحِ
الْمُلِحِّينَ، أَذْفَنِي بُرْدَ عَفْوِكَ وَحَلَاوَةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ

O He whose hearing of one thing does not hamper His hearing of the other,

And O He who never errs in responding to (millions of) requests simultaneously,

And O He who never becomes weary of the complaints made repeatedly by those who make them in prayers, let me, in Your mer-

cy, have a cool taste of Your forgiveness and sweetness of Your pardon. (Qurṭubī)

Then, within the same book, exactly the same event, the same prayer and the same incidence of meeting with al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه as well. (Qurṭubī)

Similar to this, there are countless events relating to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام that have been attributed to the community's men of Allah (*awliyā*’).

As for those who do not accept the likelihood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive, their major argument comes from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. He says, 'one night, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم led the ‘Ishā’ prayer for us during the latter days of his blessed life. After having turned for *salām*, he rose and said these words:

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَيْلَتَكُمْ هَذِهِ فَإِنَّ عَلَى رَأْسِ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مِنْهَا لَا يَبْقَى مِمَّنْ هُوَ عَلَى ظَهْرِ الْأَرْضِ
أَحَدٌ

Do you see this night of yours? And after a hundred years from this night, not one of those present over the land will be alive!

After having narrated this report, Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'people say different things about it. But, what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم meant to say was that this age will be over after hundred years.'

This narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, almost in the same words. But, after having quoted this report, Allāmah al-Qurṭubī said, 'it offers no conclusive argument for those who hold that the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive is false because, in this narrative, the words used for the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام are general with a strong emphasis on the generality. Yet, it contains no decisive authority (*naṣṣ*) to prove that this generality covers the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام necessarily. The reason is that Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام too is among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who has not died, nor was he killed. Therefore, as obvious, the letters: الف لام (*alif-lām*) in the words: عَلَى الْأَرْضِ (*‘ala al-ard*: over the land) is the *alif-lām* of 'ahd,' (which points out to something familiar to the addressees), and means the land of Arabia. It does not include the whole land mass of the world out of which the Arabs had never heard

even the names of the land of Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj), the far East and the Islands of the West.' This was the view of 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī.

Similarly, some people have taken the issue of the Finality of Prophet-hood as contrary to the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive. The answer to this is also clear. It can be said that the way the 'life' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is not contrary to the Finality of Prophet-hood, the 'life' of al-Khaḍir can also be quite similar.

Some people have raised a doubt about the 'life' of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. They say, if he were present during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it would have been mandatory for him to come to him and to serve the cause of Islam under him. Because, it was said in Ḥadīth: *لَوْ كَانَ مُوسَى كَوُ كَانَ مُوسَى حَيًّا لَمَّا وَسِعَهُ إِلَّا آتِيَ عِيَّ* "Had Mūsā been alive [today], he would have had no choice but to follow me [for my coming has resulted in the abrogation of the Faith of Mūsā عليه السلام]." But, not far out is the possibility that the 'life' and prophet-hood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام may be different from that of the usual Sharī'ah-bearing prophets. Since he is charged with the duty of carrying out certain affairs of creation (*takwīn*) entrusted with him by Allah Ta'ālā, He takes care of this appointed duty staying aloof from people at large. As for following the Sharī'ah of the Last Prophet, it is not a far out proposition that he may have started acting in accordance with it after the advent of the prophet-hood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. (Allah knows best)

In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has reported events of several pious elders having met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام but, along with it, he has also said:

وَالْمُحْمُورُ عَلَى أَنَّهُ مَاتَ

As for the majority of religious scholars, they hold the position that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has died. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, vol.6)

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qāḍī Thana'ullāh of Pānīpat has said, 'the resolution of all these difficulties lies in what Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sarhandī, known as the reviver of the second Islamic millennium, said on the basis of his *mukāshafah* (discovery through induced illumination). His words are: 'I personally asked al-Khaḍir عليه السلام about this matter in a state of *kashf*. He said', "I and Ilyās عليه السلام are both not alive. But, Allah Ta'ālā

has granted us the ability to appear in the guise of living men and help people in different ways." (Allah, the Pure, the Exalted, knows best)

Conclusion

I have said earlier that none of our articles of faith or problems of religious practice is connected with the death or life of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. Therefore, no clarification or explanation was given in the Qur'an, and Sunnah about it. So, there is just no need to enter into unnecessary discussion or debate in it, nor have we been obligated to believe in any one of the sides of the issue. But, as this problem has found currency on a wider level, details have been provided.

Verses 83 - 88

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ ^ط قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾ إِنَّا
مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾ فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ
عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا ^ط قُلْنَا يَا الْقَارِنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ
حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالَ إِمَّا مِنْ ظَلَمٍ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ، ثُمَّ يَرُدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ،
عَذَابًا نُكَرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ وَإِمَّا مِنْ أَمِنٍ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءٌ الْحُسْنَىٰ ^ج
وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ، مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

And they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, "I shall now recite to you some narration about him." [83]

Surely, We gave him power on Earth and provided for him a way to everything. [84] So he followed a way, [85] until when he reached where the sun sets, he found it setting into a miry spring and found near it a people. We said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, either you punish or take to something good for them." [86] He said, "As for the one who transgresses, we shall punish him, thereafter he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him - an evil punishment. [87] As for the one who believes and acts righteously, he will have the best in reward, and we shall deliver to him of our command that which is easy."