

## Commentary

Verse 84 opens with the statement: **يَسْأَلُونَكَ** (They ask you). Who is asking? Related narratives show that they were the Quraysh of Makkah, those who were coached to ask three questions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The purpose was to test his prophet-hood and veracity. The questions were about Rūḥ (spirit), Aṣḥāb al-Kahf (People of Kahf) and Dhul-Qarnain. Two of these have already been answered. The story of the People of Kahf has appeared earlier in this Sūrah, 9-26. The question about 'Rūḥ' has appeared towards the later part of the previous Sūrah (Banī Isrā'īl 17:85). Who was Dhul-Qarnain and what happened to him? This is the third question. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

### **Dhul-Qarnain: His identity, period and country and the reason why he was so named**

Why was he named Dhul-Qarnain? (the one having two horns) Regarding its reason, there are numerous sayings, and strong differences. Some said that he had two curly locks of hair, therefore, he was called Dhul-Qarnain. Some others said that he ruled countries of the East and West, therefore, he was named Dhul-Qarnain. There was someone who also said that he had marks on his head that resembled those of horns. It appears in some narratives that he had wound marks on both sides of his head, therefore, he was identified as Dhul-Qarnain. Allah knows best. But, this much already stands determined that the Qur'ān has certainly not given him the name of Dhul-Qarnain. In fact, this name came from the Jews. He may have been known by this name with them. Whatever part of the event of Dhul-Qarnain has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān is no more than what is described below:

"He was a righteous and just king who reached the East and the West and conquered countries in between and ruled there justly. All sorts of means had been provided to him by Allah Ta'ālā in order to help him achieve his objectives. On the route of his conquests, he traveled in three directions: to the far West, to the far East and then to the mountain range in the North. At the last mentioned place, he closed the pass in between two mountains by a wall cast in molten metal which made it possible for the people of the area to stay protected against the pillage of Gog and Magog."

As for the question posed by the Jews to test the veracity and prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the answer given had left them satisfied.

They did not ask any more questions, such as: Why was he given the name, Dhul-Qarnain? Which country did he come from? What period of time did he belong to? This tells us that the Jews themselves took such questions to be unnecessary and redundant. And it is obvious that the Qur'ān mentions only that part of history or stories which relates to what is beneficial in the present life or in the life to come, or on which depends the understanding of something necessary. Therefore, neither did the Qur'ān take these things up nor were there any details about it described in any authentic Ḥadīth. And it was for the same reason that the most righteous forbears of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabī'īn also paid no particular attention to it.

Now the thing that remains to be addressed is this matter of historical narratives or that of the present Torah and Injīl. Then it is also evident that perennial interpolations and alterations have not left even the present Torah and Injīl intact as revealed Scriptures. Their status can now be that of history at the most. As for ancient historical narratives, they are overwhelmingly filled with Isrā'īlī tales that come from no authentic source, nor have they been found trustworthy in the sight of the learned of any time. Whatever the commentators have said in this matter is a compendium of these very historical narratives. Therefore, there are countless differences in them. Europeans have given great importance to history in modern times. No doubt, they have carried out painstaking research in this field. Through archaeological excavations and collection of inscriptions and artifacts, they have tried to reach the reality behind past events and in this process, they have come up with achievements not matched in earlier times. But, archaeological finds, inscriptions etc., can certainly help support an event but it is not possible to read a whole event through these. For it, therefore, historical narratives alone have become the basis. As for the validity of old historical narratives in these matters, we have just now learnt that their status is no more than that of a story. In their books, scholars of Tafsīr, classical or modern, have reported these narratives in their historical status only - no Qur'ānic objective depends on the element of their authenticity. Here too, that which is necessary is being written with the same status in view. A comprehensive research relating to this event appears in 'Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān' by Maulānā Ḥifzur-Raḥmān رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى. Readers with a taste

for history may see it there.

In some narratives, it appears that there have been four kings who ruled over the whole world - two believers, and two, disbelievers. The believing kings are Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and Dhul-Qarnain while the disbelieving ones are Nimrod (Namrūd) and Nebuchadnezzar (Bukht Naṣṣar).

About Dhul-Qarnain, it is a strange coincidence that several men have been famous in the world while bearing the same name. And it is equally strange that the title Sikandar (Alexander) is also attached with the Dhul-Qarnain of every period of time.

Approximately three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, there is a king known as Sikandar (Alexander). He is identified with the appellations of the Greek, the Macedonian, the Roman etc. He was the one who had Aristotle (Arasṭū) as his minister, who fought a war against Dārā (Darius) and who conquered his country after killing him. This was the very last person to have become known in the world by the name Sikandar (Alexander). Stories relating to him are comparatively more famous around the world, so some people have also equated him with the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This is totally wrong because this person was a fire-worshipping polytheist. As for the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned by the Qur'ān, he may not be a prophet for 'Ulamā' have differed about his being a prophet. But, everyone unanimously agrees that he was a righteous believer - then, there is the textual authority of the Qur'ān in its own right which bears testimony to it.

Quoting Ibn 'Asākir, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has given his complete family tree in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah which ascends to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He has said, 'this is the Sikandar who is recognized as the Greek, the Egyptian and the Macedonian, who founded the city of Iskandariyah (Alexandria) after his name and the Roman calendar dates back to his time. This Sikandar Dhul-Qarnain appeared after a long passage of time from the first one. This time has been identified as being more than two thousand years. He was the one who killed Dārā (Darius), overpowered the Persian monarchy and conquered their country. But, this person was a polytheist. Declaring him to be the one mentioned in the Qur'ān is totally wrong. Ibn Kathīr's own words are being quoted below:

فاما ذوالقرنين الثاني فهوا سكندر بن فيليس بن مصرح بن برس بن مبطون بن رومي بن نعطى بن يونان بن يافت بن بونه بن شرحون بن رومه بن شرخط بن توفيل بن رومي بن الا صفر بن يقزبن العيص بن اسحق بن ابرهيم الخليل عليه الصلوة والسلام۔ كذا نسبه الحافظ ابن عساكر فى تاريخه المقدونى، اليونانى المصرى بانى الاسكندرية الذى يؤرخ بايامه الروم، وكان متأخرًا عن الاول بدهر طويل، وكان هذا قبل المسيح بنحو من ثلثمائة سنة وكان ارسطا طاليس الفيلسوف وزيره وهو الذى قتل دارا و اذل ملوك الفرس واطوا ارضهم وانما نبهنا عليه، لان كثيرا من الناس يعتقد انهما واحد، وان المذكور فى القران هو الذى كان ارطا طاليس وزيره، فيقع بسبب ذلك خطأ كبير و فساد عريض طويل، فان الاول كان عبدًا مؤمنًا صالحًا وملكا عادلاً، وكان وزيره الخضر، وقد كان نبيا على ماقرناه قبل هذا واما الثاني فكان مشركا، كان وزيره فيلسوفًا وقد كان بين زمانيهما ازيد من الفى سنة، فاين هذا من هذا؟ لا يستويان ولا يشتهبان الاعلى غيبى لايعرف حقائق الامور (البداية والنهاية ص ١٠٦ ج ٢)

First of all, this research of Imām ibn Kathīr, the great scholar of Ḥadīth and history, helps remove a misconception. It clarifies that this Iskandar, who lived three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ ﷺ, who fought Dārā (Darius) and the Persian kings, and who is the founder of Alexandria, is not the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur’ān. This misconception seems to have affected some leading commentators as well. Abū Ḥayyān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and ‘Allāmah ‘Ālūsī in Rūḥ al-Ma‘ani have said that this very Dhul-Qarnain is the one mentioned in the Qur’ān.

The second point emerges from the sentence of Ibn Kathīr: **وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ نَبِيًّا** (he was a prophet). It shows that, in the sight of Ibn Kathīr, the weightier opinion was that he was a prophet. Although, according to the majority of scholars, the weightier opinion is what Ibn Kathīr has himself reported on the authority Abī al-Ṭufayl from Sayyidnā ‘Alī ﷺ that he was neither a prophet nor an angel, rather was a righteous believer. Therefore, some ‘Ulamā have explained it by saying that the pronoun in: **إِنَّهُ كَانَ** (he was) reverts to Al-Khaḍīr ﷺ and not to Dhul-Qarnain - which is closer in sense.

This leaves us with a problem. The Qur’ān mentions Dhul-Qarnain. Who is he? Which period of time did he belong to? Regarding this, sayings of ‘Ulamā differ. According to Ibn Kathīr, his time was the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, two thousand years before the time of Alexander, the Greek, the Macedonian. Al-Khaḍīr ﷺ was his minister. Ibn Ka-

thīr has also reported from the early righteous elders in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah that Dhul-Qarnain went for Ḥajj traveling on foot. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found out about his arrival, he went out of Makkah to greet him. It is said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for him and passed out some good counsel to him. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 108, v. 3) Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports from Adhrāqī that he did *ṭawāf* with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and offered sacrifice.

And Abū al-Raiḥān al-Bairūnī has said in his book al-'Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah that 'this Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is Abū Bakr ibn Samma ibn 'Umar ibn Ifrīqīs al-Ḥimyarī, the one who conquered the East and West of the Earth. Tubba' al-Ḥimyarī al-Yamānī has shown pride in his poetry that his grandfather, Dhul-Qarnain, was a believer. He says:

قد كان ذوالقرنين جدى مسلماً      ملكاً علافى الارض غير مبعداً  
بلغ المشارق والمغارب يتبعى      اسباب ملك من كريم سيد

Dhul-Qarnain, my grandfather, was a believing Muslim  
A king who conquered the non-believing Earth

He reached the Easts and the Wests seeking  
Means of power from the noble Master.

Abū Ḥayyān has reported this narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ. Ibn Kathīr has also mentioned it in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Ibn Kathīr adds that 'this Dhul-Qarnain is the first Tubba' (the title of the kings of Yaman). He was among the Tababī'ah (plural of Tubba') of Yaman and this is the same person who had ruled in favor of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the case of Bi'r Sab' (seven wells)' - (al-Bidāyah, p. 105, v. 2). In all these narratives, irrespective of the difference regarding the elements of his identity, his time period has been identified as that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

As for the detailed discussion relating to Dhul-Qarnain provided by Maulāna Ḥifzur-Raḥmān in his book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān, it can be stated in a nutshell. It can be said that the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is the king of Persia who is called Khorus by the Jews, Cyrus by the Greeks, Gorush by the Persians and Kai-Khusro by the Arabs. His period is said to be the period of Dāniyāl (Daniel) from among the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl - much later than the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

This brings it closer to the time of Iskandar al-Maqduni (Alexander, the Macedonian), the killer of Dārā (Darius). But, the learned Maulāna - like Ibn Kathīr - has also strongly maintained that Alexander, the Macedonian who had Aristotle as his minister cannot be the Dhul-Qarnain. The former was a fire-worshipping polytheist while the later, a righteous believer.

According to his research about the detailed description of Banī Isrā'īl falling into wrongdoing and rebellion twice, and of the respective punishment given to them twice, as in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-'Isra'), the Qur'ān says on the occasion of the first transgression of Banī Isrā'īl: **بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَحَاسُوا خِلَلِ الدِّيَارِ** (We sent upon you some of Our servants having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses - 17:5). Here, the men with 'strong aggressive power' are Nebuchadnezzar and his supporting troops who killed forty thousand - seventy thousand in some narratives - men from the Banī Isrā'īl in Baytul-Maqdis, while taking more than one hundred thousand of them driven like a flock of sheep to his city of Babel. After that, as regards the second statement of the Qur'ān: **ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ** (Then We gave you your turn to overpower them - 17:6), this event transpired at the hands of the same king, Kai-Khusraw (Khorus or Cyrus). He was a righteous believer. He confronted Nebuchadnezzar, secured the release of Banī Isrā'īl held as captives by him and rehabilitated them back into Palestine. He even went on to resettle and repopulate the city of Baytul-Maqdis that was ransacked earlier to the limit that he managed to have all treasures and major effects of Baytul-Maqdis carried away by Nebuchadnezzar from there returned back into the possession of Banī Isrā'īl. Thus, this person proved to be the savior of Banī Isrā'īl (the Jews).

It is likely that of the questions the Jews of Madīnah had set for the Quraysh of Makkah which they would ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test his prophethood, was this question about Dhul-Qarnain and that it had an underlying reason. This question was special since the Jews took him to be their savior and respected him.

In short, Maulanā Ḥifzur-Raḥmān has collected a sufficiently large number of evidences from the prophecies of the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl with reference to the present Old Testament as well as from historical narratives to present his research on this subject. Anyone who finds it

imperative to proceed towards additional research may consult it. My purpose in reporting all these narratives was simply to bring into focus sayings of leading Muslim scholars, historians and commentators as they relate to the life and time of Dhul-Qarnain. To decide as to whose saying is weightier and worthier out of these is not part of my objective. The reason is that things not claimed by the Qur'ān nor explained by Ḥadīth are things we have not been obligated to fix and clarify on our own for that responsibility does not rest on our shoulders. Thus, whichever saying turns out to be regarded as more weighty, worthy and sound, the aim of the Qur'ān will stand achieved after all. Allah knows best. Let us now proceed to the explanation of the verses.

Let us look at the first verse cited above: *فَلْ سَأَلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا* (I shall now recite to you a narration about him - 83). It prompts us to find out as to why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possible shorter expression of *ذِكْرُهُ dhikrahū* (his narrations) at this place and has opted for two words: *مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ('minhu dhikra')* (some narration about him)? A little reflection would reveal that these two words have been used as indicators. They tell us that the Qur'ān has not promised to narrate the entire story of Dhul-Qarnain in its historical setting. Instead, it has stated that it will mention it in part. This is evident from the use of the particle: *مِنْ (min)* and the nunation (*tanwīn*) of *'dhikra'* - a distinct feature of Arabic grammar. As for the historical debate relating to the name, lineage and time period of Dhul-Qarnain reported earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has already said in advance that it has skipped it as something unnecessary.

The word: *سَبَبًا (sabab)* used in: *وَأَتَيْنَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا* (and provided for him a way to everything - 84) is employed in the Arabic lexicon to denote everything harnessed to achieve an objective. It includes material instruments and resources as well as knowledge, insight and experience etc. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). As for the expression: *مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (to everything)*, it means all things needed by a ruler to run the state system. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā had provided for the righteous king Dhul-Qarnain practically everything needed at that time in order that he could maintain his just rule, establish universal peace and extend his area of influence to other countries.

Verse 85: *فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا* (So he followed a way) means that - though, the material means related to everything, even those that would facilitate his

access to every region of the world - however, the first thing he did was to use his means to travel in the direction of the West.

The statement in verse 86: *حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ* (until when he reached where the sun sets) means that he reached the far limit towards the West beyond which there was no populated area.

The word: *حَمِيَّةٌ* (*ḥami'ah*) in the succeeding phrase: *فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِيَّةٍ* (into a miry spring) literally means dark marsh or mud carrying the sense of water beneath which there is dark mud and which causes the water itself to appear black. As for the sense of his seeing the Sun setting into such a spring, it means that an onlooker perceived it as setting into the spring because there was no habitation or dry land in sight. This is like being in an open field while the Sun is setting where as far as one can see there appears to be no mountain, tree, or structure, naturally one who looks at the sight would feel that the Sun was sinking into the land mass.

Said in the sentence which follows immediately was: *وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا* (and found near it a people), that is, near this dark spring, Dhul-Qarnain found a people. The later part of the verse shows that these people were infidels. Therefore, as said in the next verses, Allah Ta'ālā gave Dhul-Qarnain the choice of punishing them right away for their infidelity. Or, if he so wished, he could choose to deal with them benevolently by first asking them to consider the message of faith and bring them round to embrace it through dissemination of information and good counsel. After that, he could reward those who believe and punish those who do not. In response, Dhul-Qarnain elected to go by the second option. He said that he would try to bring them to the straight path through good counsel and advice. Then, he would punish those who stood by their infidelity and reward those who believed and did what was good.

The statement: *فُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ* (We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain...') shows that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said this addressing Dhul-Qarnain. Now, if Dhul-Qarnain is taken to be a prophet, there is no problem here. It will mean that it was said to him through the medium of revelation. And if, his prophethood is not to be recognized, there is only one way to rationalize the statement: *فُلْنَا* (*qulnā*: We said) and the address: *يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ* (*ya/O Dhul-Qarnain*). This way could be to take this address to have been

made to Dhul-Qarnain through the medium of some prophet - as suggested by the reported presence of Al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام with him. Then, it is also possible that this revelation is just not the kind of *wahy* that is peculiar to a prophet or messenger of Allah. May be, it is a *wahy* or revelation in the literal sense like the word: *وَأَوْحَيْنَا* (*awḥainā*: We revealed or put into the heart) used in the Qur'ān for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - though, there is no probability of her being a prophet or messenger of Allah. But, Abū Ḥayyān says in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the command given here to Dhul-Qarnain is a command to punish and kill those people. No such command can be given without the authority of a revelation to a prophet. This action cannot be taken on the authority of Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), nor can it be activated through any other source without the authority of *wahy* (revelation) to a *nabiyy* (prophet). For this reason, no probability other than the one being mentioned here is sound: Either Dhul-Qarnain himself is taken to be a prophet, or that there may be a prophet present during his time and it is through him that Dhul-Qarnain is addressed. And Allah knows best.

### Verses 89 - 91

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٩﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿٩٠﴾ كَذَٰلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

Thereafter, he followed a way [89] until he reached where the Sun rises; he found it rising over a people for whom We did not make any cover against it. [90] Thus it was. We encompassed in knowledge whatever he had with him. [91]

### Commentary

The Holy Qur'ān does describe this state of the people Dhul-Qarnain found living towards the East meaning thereby that they were not accustomed to the use of ways and means like houses, tents and dresses to seek protection against the Sun. But, it does not mention anything about their faith and deeds, nor does it say what Dhul-Qarnain did to them. However, it is obvious that these people too were infidels and Dhul-Qarnain handled them the way he had handled the people he had found in

the West as mentioned earlier. But, describing it again at this place was not considered necessary since finding it out is also possible on the analogy of the previous event. (As in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from Ibn 'Aṭīyyah)

## Verses 92 - 98

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٩٢﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا  
لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ  
مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا  
وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ  
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ أَتُورِنِي زُبْرًا حَدِيدًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ  
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفِخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ أَتُورِنِي أُفْرِغَ عَلَيْهِ  
قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَمَا اسْطَاعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا ﴿٩٧﴾  
قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ ۖ وَكَانَ  
وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا ﴿٩٨﴾ ط

Thereafter he followed a way [92] until when he reached between the two mountains, he found on their hither side a people who did not seem to understand anything said. [93] They said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are mischief-makers on the earth. So shall we set for you a revenue, provided that you make a barrier between us and them?" [94] He said, "That which my Lord has placed under my control is better, so help me with strength and I shall make a rampart between you and them. [95] Bring me ingots of iron." (They proceeded accordingly) until when he leveled up (the gap) between the two mountain-sides, he said, "Blow." (They complied) until when he made it (like) fire, he said, "Bring me molten copper and I will pour it upon this." [96] So they (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) were not able to climb it, nor were they able to make a hole in it. [97] He said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. Then, when the promise of my Lord will come, He will make it leveled to the ground. And the promise of my Lord is always true."

### Explanation of Difficult Words

1. The word **السَّدَّ** used in the expression: **بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ** denotes what becomes a barrier against something. It may be a wall or mountain and it may be natural or artificial. At this place, the word: **السَّدَّيْنِ** (*as-saddain*) means two mountains that stood as a barrier against the intrusion of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, they still attacked through the pass in between the two mountains and which was closed by Dhul-Qarnain.

2. The word: **زُبُرٌ** (*zubar*) in: **زُبُرًا الْحَدِيدِ** (*zubar al-ḥadīd* - 96) is the plural of: **زَبْرَةٌ** (*zubrah*) which means sheets in the sense of pieces, fragments or ingots of iron which were to be used in the wall designed to block the pass, obviously a stronger device as compared to bricks and rocks.

3. The word: **الصَّدَفَيْنِ** (*aṣ-ṣadafain* - 96) signifies the two sides of the mountain facing each other.

4. According to most commentators, the last word: **قِطْرًا** (*qiṭr*) in verse 96 means molten copper. There are some others who have explained '*qiṭr*' as molten iron or pewter. (al-Qurṭubī)

5. The expression: **دَكَّاءٌ** (*dakkaa'a* - 98) used about the wall means what would crumble down to the level of the ground.

### Commentary

#### The Identity of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Location of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain

A lot of absurd and strange things disseminated through Isrā'īlī narratives and historical stories have found currency to the extent that some commentators have also reported them in terms of their historical status, though they themselves do not find them trustworthy. The truth of the matter is that the Qur'ān has mentioned it briefly and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed his community also about the details as and where necessary. What has to be believed in as part of one's faith is limited to what has been covered in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth. Beyond that, whatever historical and geographical information has been provided by commentators, Ḥadīth experts and historians could be correct, or might as well prove incorrect. As for the variant sayings of historians from among those mentioned above, they are based on traces, analogies and conjectures. Whether they are true or false, it simply does not affect

what the Qur'an says.

At this place, I would first quote Aḥādīth which, according to respected Ḥadīth experts, are sound or trustworthy. After that, historical narratives will be taken up to the measure of their need in the present context.

### Ḥadīth Reports about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj

At least this much stands doubtlessly proved from the statements of Qur'an, and Sunnah that Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are national entities from among human beings. They are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام very much like them because so says the categorical statement (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'an: *وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ* which means that all human beings surviving on the Earth after the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام shall all be from among his progeny. Historical narratives converge on the fact that they are of the progeny of Yafith son of Nūḥ عليه السلام - which is supported by a weak Ḥadīth as well. Regarding the rest of their antecedents, the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'an رضي الله عنه is most detailed and sound in authority. It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and in all books of Aḥādīth recognized for their authenticity. Ḥadīth experts declare it to be sound and authentic. This Ḥadīth carries details concerning the appearance of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then, the appearance of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. A translation of this entire Ḥadīth is being given below:

Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'an رضي الله عنه says that one morning the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mentioned Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and while doing that he said a few things which showed the low and negative aspect of his profile (such as his being one-eyed). Then, he also said a few things about him to the effect that his emergence was a matter of ominous trial (such as Paradise and Hell being with him and other extra-ordinary aspects of his persona). His narration (gripped us with such fear) as if Dajjāl was lurking somewhere (in the nearby) grooves of the date palms.

When we presented ourselves before him in the evening, he read our confused inner condition and asked, 'What is the matter with you?' (What did you conclude from what I had said?). We submitted, 'You talked about Dajjāl in the morning. Of things you said about him some seemed to belittle the matter of his emergence while you also said other

things which seemed to highlight his matter to proportions of a great trial to the extent that we thought he was present close to us in the grooves of the date-palms!' Then he said, 'Not just the Dajjāl, there are other trials I fear may afflict you more (that is, the trial of Dajjāl is not as great as you have taken it to be). If he appears - and I am among you - I shall confront him personally without you. And if he appears - and I am not among you - everyone will try to confront him in terms of his courage. And Allah is, in my absence, the guardian and protector of all Muslims. (You will recognize him as) a young man - hard curly hair, one eye protruding upwards (blind in the other as in other narratives). And if I can liken him (in this ugly profile) with someone, it is 'Abd al-'Uzza ibn Qaṭān (an ugly person from the tribe of Banū Khuḏā'ah during the Jāhiliyyah). If a Muslim from among you runs into him, he should recite the initial verses of Sūrah al-Kahf against him (which will keep him protected from Dajjāl). Dajjāl will emerge from the empty space between Syria and 'Iraq creating havoc right and left. O servants of Allah, you then stay firm against him.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, and how long will he tarry on the Earth?' He said, 'Forty days. But, the first day will be equal to one year, and the second day to one month, and the rest of the days equal to the usual.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, so on that day which will be equal to one year, shall we be offering (the five-timed) Ṣalāh for one day only?' He said, 'No. You will, rather, go by estimating time and offering prayers for the whole year.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, how fast will he be moving about the Earth?' He said, 'Fast like the cloud being followed by wind. Then he will pass by a people and ask them to rally round his false beliefs. They will believe in him and respond to his call. Then he will commission the clouds. They will start raining. He will order the Earth. It will turn green and verdant (and herds of cattle will graze therein) and when they return in the evening, their humps shall be much higher than before and their udders shall be full of milk and their waists shall be plumb. Then, Dajjāl will pass by another people and invite them to his disbelief. But, they will turn down his invitation. Losing hope, when he goes away from them, these believers will be stricken with famine and nothing of what once belonged to them will remain in their hands. And when Dajjāl will walk by this wasteland, he will address it, saying: 'Bring your treasures out.' So, its treasures will start following him like the honeybees follow their queen. Then Dajjāl

will call a man whose youth shall be in full bloom, strike him with a sword and cut him into two pieces and the two pieces will be placed as far apart as the distance between an archer and his target. Then he will call him. He will come (alive) to Dajjāl beaming with joy over his feat. In the meantime, Allah Ta'ālā will send down Al-Masīḥ ibn Maryam (Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام). He will alight at the white tower in the eastern part of Dimashq (Damascus) clad in two colored sheets with both hands resting on the wings of angels. When he bows his blessed head, drops of water will drip down from there (as if one has just come out of the shower). And when he raises his head up, from it drop silvery globules like genuine pearls. Any disbeliever who breathes the air from his breath will die that very instant and his breath will reach as far as reaches his glance. Then he will look for him until he will overtake him at the gate of Ludd (still there in Baytul-Maqdis by the same name) and kill him. After that, 'Īsā ibn Maryam will come to people whom Allah protected from Dajjāl. He will then touch their faces (with compassion for them) and give them the good news of having high ranks in Paradise.

While he would still be in the same state, Allah will reveal to 'Īsā: 'Verily, I am going to send forth the kind of men from among servants belonging to Me against whom no two hands will dare fight. So, you assemble and take My servants to the sanctuary of Mount Ṭūr (which Sayyidnā 'Īsā will do) and would send out Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and they will be seen hurtling down from every side. The first wave of them will pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah. They would drink out everything in it and when others of them will pass by it, (and seeing it dry) they will say: 'Surely, in this, there must have been water earlier in time.'

The prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will take refuge on the Mount Ṭūr. Other believers will find sanctuaries in their own fortified places. Food supplies will be there, but it would run short whereupon the head of a bull will be considered better than a hundred *dīnār*. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (and pray for the removal of their distress which will be answered) and He will send an epidemic (worm in neck) and they will be annihilated en masse to the last person. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will come down from the Mount of Ṭūr and see not a hand-span worth of land remaining unfilled with corpses and (because of their de-

composition) the place will be reeking with a strong stench. (Seeing this state of affairs) the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (praying for the removal of this distress as well which Allah will answer). He will send birds with necks like the neck of a camel. They will haul these corpses and throw them at the place where Allah wills (according to some narratives, they will put them away into the sea).

After that, Allah Ta'ālā will send rains. No clay home in the villages and no Bedouin tent in the desert will remain without it. Lands will be washed clean and left like mirror. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will tell the Earth, 'Grow your fruits and unravel the abundance of your blessings.' (And so it shall be and such shall be the bliss of increase that) one pomegranate will suffice as food for a group of people. And its shell will be used to make canopies for protection against the Sun and milk will be so blessed as to suffice for a large number of people. Milk from one cow will be enough for everyone in a tribe and milk from one goat will be adequate for a whole clan. (After forty years of this period of extra-ordinary abundance, peace and protection, when the time due for Qiyāmah will draw near) Allah Ta'ālā will send a pleasant wind which will cause their arm-pits to be benumbed and the soul of every believer and every Muslim will be taken away. Left there will be the worst among human beings, the wicked and the disbelieving ones, who will indulge in shame and outrage on the Earth like donkeys. And it is against them that the Hour will stand activated.'

As for the story of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ؓ deals with it in greater detail. It says that once they pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will climb Jabal al-Khamar, a mountain from among the mountains of Baytul-Maqdis, and say, 'We have killed whoever there was on the Earth. Come, let us now kill whoever there is out in the skies.'" So they will shoot their arrows towards the sky and Allah will make their arrows return back to them smeared with blood (so that those dim-witted people are pleased with the prospect that they have done away with whoever there was in the skies).

About the story of Dajjāl, the narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ adds that Dajjāl will stay away from al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. When it will not be possible for him to reach even the link roads

leading to it, he will come to a saline tract of land close to Madīnah. At that time, a man will come out to confront him and this man will be the best of men at that time (or, among the best of men). Addressing him, he will say, 'I am certain that you are the Dajjāl about whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told us.' (Hearing this), Dajjāl will start saying, 'Tell me, O people, if I kill this man, then make him alive, will you still doubt the thing (about my being God)?' They said, 'No.' So he will kill him and then bring him back to life whereupon he will tell Dajjāl, 'By Allah, now I have become more certain that you are the Dajjāl.' Hence, Dajjāl would want to kill him (all over again), but he will remain unable to enforce it. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, Allah Ta'ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam ؑ, 'raise the Hell-bound from your progeny.' He will wonder, 'my Lord, who are they?' Then, the Divine command will go forth that nine hundred and ninety nine of every one thousand are Hell-bound with only one bound to go to Paradise. Scared, the noble Ṣaḥābah asked, 'Yā Rasūlallah, 'who from among us shall be the one bound to go to Paradise?' Thereupon, he said, 'do not worry because out of these nine hundred and ninety nine Hell-bound people, there will be only one from among you while, ratio-wise, there will be a thousand from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Ta'ālā divided all human beings into ten parts. Nine of these belong to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj while the remaining one part covers the human beings of the whole world. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having quoted these narrations in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah, Ibn Kathīr has written that it tells us that the number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is significantly higher than the entire human population.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that 'Īsā ؑ will live on the Earth for forty years after his descension. As for the narration in Muslim which puts this duration of stay at seven years, it has been rated as less in strength or having some unapparent meaning (*marjūḥ* or *mu'awwal*) by Ḥāfiẓ in

Faṭḥ al-Bārī who has declared the very period of forty years as correct. Then there are clarifications in Aḥādīth which report that this whole period will be marked with peace and blessings. Absolutely no malice and hostility will exist among people, none even between any two of them. (Muslim and Aḥmad)

Al-Bukhārī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue even after the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Tafsīr Maḥzarī)

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh that one day the Holy Prophet ﷺ woke up from sleep with his blessed face red while he was saying:

لا إله إلا الله ويل للعرب من شرقد اقترب فتح اليوم من ردم يأجوج ومأجوج مثل  
هذه وحلق تسعين

'Lā ilāha illallāh. Alas for Arabia! Evil is drawing near. Today, a part of the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has opened up like this' and he made a ring by joining the tips of his thumb and index finger (to indicate the size of the hole in the Wall).

Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها says that following his statement, we submitted, 'Yā Rasūlallah, is our destruction possible even when we have righteous people among us?' He said, 'Yes, it is - (particularly) when evil (*khathath*) abounds' (similar reports appear in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, as in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah of Ibn Kathīr). That a hole was made into the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to the measure shown in the Ḥadīth could be taken in the real sense and also in a figurative one which would indicate the weakening of the Wall made by Dhul-Qarnain. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah report from a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Doing it everyday they reach the farthest part of this iron Wall so close as would make the light on the other side become visible to them. But, at that point, they say that they would dig all the way through it the next day, and return. However, Allah Ta'ālā makes it as strong as it was all over again. Then comes the next day and they start anew to dig through it. This cycle of their effort to dig and demolish and that of mending and fortify-

ing from Allah's side will continue until such time up to which Allah Ta'ālā intends to hold back Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. And when He intends to release them, they will dig, reach the farthest limit and say, 'If Allah wills, we shall go across it tomorrow.' (By making their effort dependent on the name and will of Allah, they will have the *taufīq* to succeed) So, when they return the next day as usual, they will find the remaining non-dug portion of the Wall as they had left it and this they will demolish and go across.

Tirmidhī has reported this narration on the authority of Abū 'Awānah, Qatādah, Abī Rafī', Abū Hurairah, in that order, and then he has said: 'غريب لانعرفه الا من هذا الوجه' (Unfamiliar. We do not know it except from this source). Ibn Kathīr has also reported this narration in his Tafsīr and then he has this to say:

اسناده جيّد قوی ولكن متنه فی رفعه نكارة

Its chains of narrators are good and strong, but its text in the matter of its ascension (the effort to raise the channel of transmission up to attribute it the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not supported by stronger sources).

Ibn Kathīr comments on this Ḥadīth in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah: If it is held to be correct that this Ḥadīth is not *marfū'* (traceable in ascending order to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), instead, is a narration from Ka'b al-Aḥbār, then, it becomes clear that it is not worthy of trust. Now there is another possibility. The narration is regarded to be free from any error made by the narrator. It is given the status of the very saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then, it would mean that this action of digging the Wall by Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will start at the time when the hour of their emergence draws close. And as for the statement of the Qur'ān, that is, no hole can be made in this Wall, it refers to the time when Dhul-Qarnain had made it. This leaves no contradiction here. Moreover, it could also be said that breaking a hole into the Wall means a hole which goes all the way through it - and this narration states it clearly that this hole does not go all the way through it. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 12, v. 2)

In Faḥ al-Bārī, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has reported this Ḥadīth with reference to 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid and Ibn Ḥibbān as well and said that they all narrate from Qatādah and some of their narrators are the authorities of

the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. Then, he has not entertained any doubt about the Ḥadīth being rated as *marfū'* (ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). Then he says with reference to Ibn al-'Arabi that this Ḥadīth contains three Divine signs, that is, miracles: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā did not let their minds think of the alternative of continuing their digging operation round the clock including the day and night both. If so, it would have not been at all difficult for a people with so many of them to work in shifts of day and night with specified assignment of duties. (2) That their minds were turned away from taking the option of scaling over the Wall by using artifices and devices. Although, from a narration of Wahb ibn Mu-nabbih, it becomes clear that these people tilled the land which also yielded fruits and they used instruments of many kinds in this process. It should have not been difficult for them under these circumstances to assemble together the means of scaling the Wall. (3) That for such a long time it never occurred to them that they should have said, Insha'Allah: If Allah wills, and that this statement will issue forth through their speech only when the time of their emergence will come close.

Ibn al-'Arabi has said that this Ḥadīth also tells us that there are people among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj who believe in the existence of Allah and in His Will. Then, it is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā may cause this statement to issue forth through their speech without having any belief and they find their job all done with its *barakah* (*ashrāṭ as-sā'ah* by as-Sayy-id Muḥammad, p. 154). But, what is obvious here is that they too have received the call of the blessed prophets. Otherwise, according to the textual authority of the Qur'ān (*naṣṣ*), they should not be subjected to the punishment of Jahannam: *وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا* (And it is not Our way to punish [anyone] unless We send a messenger - al-Isrā', 17:15). This tells us that the invitation to believe has reached them too. But, they chose to stick by their denial. However, there will also be some people among them who would be subscribing to the view that Allah exists and that He has intention and will - though, having this much of a belief is not sufficient for *'Imān* or faith, unless there is the essential faith in Prophet-hood and Hereafter. However, the saying of 'Insha'Allah': If Allah wills, despite Kufr (disbelief), is not a far out possibility.

### Conclusions drawn from the narrations of Ḥadīth

That which stands proved about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj from the statements of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ as in the Aḥādīth cited above is given below:

(1) Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام like the rest of human beings. The majority of Ḥadīth experts and historians identify them as the progeny of Yāfith, the son of Nūḥ عليه السلام. And it is also obvious that the progeny of Yāfith son of Nūḥ had spread itself out far and wide among different tribes, nationalities and many a populated areas between the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and that of Dhul-Qarnain. Thus, it is not necessary that the races known as Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were pinned down as a whole exclusively behind the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. There must have been some of their tribes and nationalities living on the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. However, it can be said that the savage killers and destroyers among them were restrained through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians refer to them generally as Turks, Mangkhol or Mongols. But, from among these, the name of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj applies only to the savage, uncivilized, blood-thirsty tyrants who remained untouched by civilization. The Turks, Mangkhol or Mongols who became civilized stand unsubstantiated by this name.

(2) The number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is several times higher than the number of the human beings of the whole world, at least at the ratio of one to ten. (Ḥadīth #2)

(3) The tribes and nationalities of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj stopped from crossing over to the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain so restrained right through the close of the zero Hour of the Last Day of Qiyāmah. The time destined for their emergence will be preceded by the appearance of Mahdī and Masīḥ عليهما السلام and that of Dajjāl (the anti-Christ). They will be released exactly after 'Īsā عليه السلام has descended and has killed Dajjāl. (Ḥadīth #1)

(4) At the time Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are to be released, the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will crumble down all leveled to the ground (verse 18:98). The merciless hordes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj would present a spectacle when, coming down from the mountain slopes all simultaneously, the speed of their descent would give the impression that they are sliding down to the ground en masse. These countless savage humans will hit the whole earth and its population. No one would be able to stand up against the killing and plunder by them. The apostle of Allah, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will, under Di-

vine command, take refuge on Mount Ṭūr along with his believing companions. People in other habitations of the world will seek asylum in available safe places. When supplies run out, necessities of life will become highly expensive. As for the rest of human population, these savages will finish them off and lick out their rivers. (Ḥadīth #1)

(5) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions that these countless locust like peoples will be destroyed simultaneously. The earth will be covered up with their dead bodies and the stench from which would make human rehabilitation on the earth difficult. (Ḥadīth #1)

(6) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions once again that their dead bodies would be disposed of into the sea or made to disappear altogether and the whole earth will be washed clean through a universal rain. (Ḥadīth #1)

(7) After that, there shall come a reign of peace lasting for nearly forty years. The earth will open the gates of its blessings. No one will remain poor and needy. No one will hurt or harass anyone. Peace and comfort shall prevail universally. (Ḥadīth #3)

(8) During this period of peace, the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue. (Ḥadīth #4) As for the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his burial in the Sacred Mausoleum, it already stands proved from the narrations of Ḥadīth. This too will transpire when he will travel to Ḥijāz for Hajj or 'Umrah. (As reported by Muslim from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه - explanatory note). After that, he will die in al-Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah and buried in the Sacred Mausoleum.

(9) During the later period of the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he was shown a dream activated through a revelation (*waḥy*) that a hole had opened up in the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, which he declared to be a sign of impending evil for Arabia. Some Ḥadīth experts (*al-muḥaddithīn*) have interpreted the opening of a hole in this Wall as real. Some others have taken it figuratively in the sense that this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain has become weak, the time of the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has come close and its effects will show up in the form of Arab decline. Allah knows best.

(10) After his descent, he will stay on the earth for forty years. (Ḥadīth #3) Earlier than him, the period of Mahdī عليه السلام will also be that of forty years, part of which will feature the confluence and cooperation of both. In his book, *Ashrāṭ al-Sā'ah* (p.145), Sayyid Sharīf Barzanjī has said that the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will follow the killing of Dajjāl and the peace prevailing thereafter and extend to forty years. This will make his total stay in the world for a period of forty-five years. And, it has been mentioned on page 112 that Mahdī عليه السلام will appear a thirty plus years before Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the total period credited to him will be that of forty years. Thus, the presence of the two blessed souls shall coincide for a number of five, or seven years, and both their periods will be marked by a reign of justice throughout the world. The earth will open up the gates of its blessings, neither will anyone remain poor, nor will anyone bear malice and hostility against anyone else. Of course, the great trial of the appearance of Dajjāl will hit the whole world during the later period of Mahdī عليه السلام - with the exception of Makkah, Madīnah, Baytul-Maqdis and the Mount of Ṭūr. This trial will be the greatest as compared to the rest of the trials the world has faced. Dajjāl and his disorder will last for forty days only. But, out of these forty days, the first day will be that of one year, the second day that of one week and the rest of days will be like they usually are. One way this can happen is that these days are really made to be that long - because, during those later times, nearly all events will be extraordinary and miraculous in nature. Then, it is also possible that the days and nights keep alternating as they usually do. But, it stands proved from Ḥadīth that Dajjāl would be a great magician. When so, it is also possible that, under the spell of his magic, common people remain unable to notice this revolutionary change in the alternation of days and nights and continue seeing this phenomena as nothing but one usual day. As for the injunction in Ḥadīth of performing Ṣalāh during that day on the estimated analogy of usual days, it also seems to support the assumption that the days and nights would be changing really, but people would not realize it cognitively. Therefore, in this day of one year, the order given was to perform Ṣalāh for three hundred sixty days. Otherwise, had the day been really one day only, the rules of the Sharī'ah would have required only five Ṣalāhs as obligatory for one day as such. In short, the total period of Dajjāl will have forty such days.

After that, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will descend, kill the Dajjāl and put an end to the disorder created by him. However, quite close to that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will emerge unleashing another spate of disorder, pillage and killing. But, the period of their presence will not go beyond a few days when they too will be destroyed all simultaneously as a result of the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. In short, there will be two ominous trials of Dajjāl and Ya'jūj Ma'jūj during the later period of Sayyidnā Mahdī عليه السلام and the early period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام which will shake the people of the entire earth upside down. Before and after these counted few days, however, the whole world will experience justice, peace and blessings. During the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, there will remain on the earth no creed and religion other than Islam. The earth will start sending forth its hidden treasures. No one will remain poor and needy. Even beasts and poisonous life forms will not hurt anyone.

### **An essential point of guidance:**

As far as the information given above about the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, these have been communicated to the Muslim Ummah by the Qur'ān, and the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Believing in it as such is necessary and opposition, impermissible. Now there remains the area of geographical and racial investigation as to questions like - Where is the wall of Dhul-Qarnain located? Who are these people called Ya'jūj Ma'jūj? Where do they live now? Here, it can be said that no Islamic 'Aqīdah (article of faith) depends on knowing this, nor does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān hinge on it. But, the religious scholars of the Muslim Ummah, only in order to answer the absurdities dished out by antagonists and to provide additional insight, have discussed this subject in details. A part of it is being reported here.

### **Views of Muslim scholars**

In his Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī has reported from as-Suddiyy that twenty-one of the twenty-two tribes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were shut off by the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. One of their tribes was left out on the inner side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. They are Turks. After that, al-Qurṭubī says that the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the Turks resemble the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and that the incidence of a war between them and Muslims during the later times appears in a ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. At present, he continues: A large number of Turk people are arrayed against

Muslims. Only Allah knows their exact number and only He can save Muslims from their evil. It appears as if they are the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - or, at least, are their forerunners. (Al-Qurṭubī, p. 58, v.11) (Al-Qurṭubī belongs to the sixth century of Hijrah when the Tātār onslaught came and destroyed the Islamic Caliphate. This great upheaval is well known in Islamic history and the Tātārs are reputed to be from the Mogol or Mongkhol Turks). But, as for al-Qurṭubī, he has simply said that they resembled the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and could be their forerunners. He has not identified the havoc caused by the Tātārs as the emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which is one of the signs of the coming of the last day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim mentioned above makes it clear that this emergence will come to pass after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام during his period.

Therefore, 'Allamah 'Ālūsī has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, strongly refuted the position of those who have taken the Tatars as the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. According to him, the very thought is a flagrant error and certainly an opposition to the textual authority of Ḥadīth. However, this much he too said that this havoc, no doubt, did resemble the havoc to be caused by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Rūḥ, p. 44, v. 16) It proves that the view of some contemporary historians who take modern Russia or China or both as the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj would have not been really wrong. However, the condition is that they should have meant by it the same thing said by al-Qurṭubī and al-'Ālūsī, that is, the upheaval caused by them resembled that of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, declaring it to be the very emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - something reported in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth as signs of Qiyāmah and which was due to come after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام - is absolutely wrong. The approach is erroneous and it betrays a rejection of the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of Ḥadīth.

Famous historian, Ibn Khaldun has taken up this subject in the prolegomena of his history. As part of his description of the sixth kingdom, he has alluded to the geographical location of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain as follows:

"Inhabiting towards the west, in the ninth part of the seventh kingdom, there are tribes of Turks called قنچاق (*qinjāq*) [Qipcaq or Qypchaq as in Bertold Spuler] and چركس (Cherkess)[Circassians, the Caucasian people, as in Spuler]. The eastern side is

populated by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. In between the two, Mount Caucasus draws the line of demarcation. It has been mentioned earlier that it begins from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ* located in the east of the fourth kingdom and goes up to the northern end of the kingdom. Then, receding away from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, it continues in a north-western direction and enters the ninth part of the fifth kingdom. From here, it reverts to its first direction until it enters the ninth part of the seventh kingdom. Once it reaches there, it goes from the south in a north-western direction. Located in between this mountain range is the 'Wall of Alexander.' It is situated in the middle of the ninth part of the seventh kingdom as we have identified earlier and the Qur'ān too informs us about it.

In his book of geography, 'Abdullāh ibn Khurdāzbih has reported the dream of the 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Wāthiq Billah in which he had seen that the Wall had opened up. As a result, he woke up all upset and sent his emissary, Sallam on a fact-finding mission. On his return, he reported the condition and distinct features of this very Wall." (Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun, p. 79)

That Wāthiq Billah, the Abbāsī Khalifah sent an observer group to investigate the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain and that it did return after having made the investigation has been mentioned by Ibn Kathīr too in *al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah*. Also said there is that this Wall has been made in iron with huge locked gates and is located towards the north-east. After narrating the event, *Tafsīr Kabir* and *al-Ṭabarī* add: One who comes back after having seen the Wall reaches the barren fields facing Samarkand in the company of guides. (*Tafsīr Kabīr*, v. 5, p. 513)

The great scholar of Islam and my revered teacher, Maulanā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī has mentioned Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain in his book, *عقيدة الإسلام في حياة عيسى عليه السلام*. Though it is an adjunct of his book yet, whatever he has mentioned there measures up to the highest level of investigation and Tradition. He said: To remain protected against the plunder and devastation by mischievous and savage human beings walls have been built on the earth, not simply at one place but at several places. Different kings have built these at various places during different ages. Most famous and the largest among these is the Great Wall of China. Its length given by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andulūsī (the royal historian of the Iranian Court) is twelve hundred miles. It was founded

by Faghfur, the Emperor of China, and that the date of its inception goes back to three thousand four hundred and sixty years after the advent of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and also that the Moghul people (Mongol or Mongkhol) call this Great Wall, 'atkuwah', and the Turks, 'burqūrqaḥ. Then he has acknowledged that several walls of this nature are found at other places as well.

Our leading fellow-servant of the Faith, Maulanā Ḥifzur-Raḥmān Sihwārwi, may he rest in peace, has given a well-documented historical detail elaborating the statement of Shaykh Kashmirī in his well-known book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān. A gist is given below:

The range of the evil savagery of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj was so extensive that, on the one hand, the people of southern Caucasia suffered from their tyrannical onslaughts while, on the other hand, the inhabitants of Tibet and China also served as sitting targets of their savagery. It was to stay safe from these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj that protective walls were built at various place during different ages. The largest among these is the Great Wall of China mentioned earlier.

The second Wall is located near Bukhārā and Tirmidh in Central Asia. It is situated at a place called Darband (meaning 'blocked passage'). This Wall was there during the time of the famous Moghul king, Taimūr Lang (Timur, the Lame; Tamerlane). The German confidant of the Roman King, Cella Berger, has mentioned him in his book. Kilafchu, the emissary of Castille, the King of Andulusia has also referred to him in his travelogue. When he presented himself as the emissary of his King before Taimūr, he had passed by this spot. He writes that the Wall of Bāb al-Ḥadīd (Iron Gate) is situated on the route coming from Mousel and which lies in between Samarkand and India. (From Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān by al-Ṭaṭṭāwī, v. 9. p. 198)

The third Wall is located in Dāghistān in Russia. This too is famous by the name of Darband (blocked passage) and Bāb al-Abwāb (The Gate of gates). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in Mu'jīm al-Buldān, al-Idrīsī in al-Jughrāfiyah and Bustānī in Dāiratul-Ma'ārif have described these in great details, a gist of which is as follows:

"In Dāghistān, 'Darband' is a Russian city. It is situated on the western shore of Baḥr Khaḍīr (Caspian Sea), latitude 43.3 North and longi-

tude 48.15 east. It is also called 'Darband Nausherwān'. Another name for it, 'Bāb al-Abwāb,' is also famous."

The fourth Wall is located in the higher parts of Caucasia towards the west of this very 'Bāb al-Abwāb' where, in between two mountains, there is a pass well known as the Dāryāl Pass. This fourth Wall is right here and is known as the Wall of Qafqāz or Mount Qoqā or Koh Qāf (Caucasus). About it, Bustānī writes:

"And close to it (the Wall of Bāb al-Abwāb), there is another Wall which goes on extending towards the West. In all likelihood, this may have been built by the people of Fāris (Persia) as a measure of defense against the northern Berbers. Since the identity of its founder was not authentically known, some people have attributed it to Alexander while some others have ascribed it to Cyrus and Nausherwan. And Yāqūt says that it has been constructed with molten copper." (Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif, v. 7, p. 651; Mu'jumul-Buldān, v. 8, p. 9)

Since all these Walls are in the North and have been built for a single need, therefore, difficulties have come up in determining as to which of these is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. And the major confusion has showed up in the case of the last two Walls because the name of both the places is Darband and there is a Wall also present at both. Out of the four Walls mentioned above, the Great Wall of China is the longest and the oldest. About it, no one says that it is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Then, instead of being in the North, it is in the Far East - and that it is in the North is clear as indicated by the Qur'ān al-Karīm.

Now, the thing revolves between the remaining three Walls which happen to be but in the North. Out of these, speaking generally, historians - Mas'ūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, Ḥamawī and others - identify the Wall located in Dāghistān, or at Darband in the Caucasian territory of Bāb al-Abwāb by the Caspian Sea as the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians who have called the Wall and Darband of Bukhārā and Tirmidh as being the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain have, most likely, been confused because of the common factor of the word, Darband. At this point, its location stands nearly fixed. Now, it can be said that it is situated in Bāb al-Abwāb by the Darband of Caucasia in the territory of Dāghistān, or is located even at a higher altitude of the Mountain of Qafqāz or Qāf (Caucasus). As for a

Wall being there on both these places is a fact proved by historians.

By way of further refinement in between the two probabilities given above, my revered teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh has, in 'Aqīdatul-Islam,' given preference to the Wall of Koh Qāf (Qafqāz: Caucasus) as being the Wall built by Dhul-Qarnain. ('Aqīdatul-Islam, p. 297)

### **The Wall of Dhul-Qarnain: Is it still there? Will it be there until Qiyāmah? Or, has it disintegrated?**

Historians and geographers of Europe do not recognize the presence of any of these northern Walls in our time, nor do they admit that the passage of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj is still blocked. On that basis, some Muslim historians have also started saying and writing that the event of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth has already taken place. Some of them have declared the great onslaught of Tātārs in the sixth century Hijrah as being the emergence of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Still others have found it sufficient to equate the contemporary rise of the Russian, Chinese and European peoples with the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and have thereby closed the case conveniently. But, all this is - as stated earlier with reference to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī - totally wrong. To say that the particular emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān was a sign of Qiyāmah translates as a denial of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. The Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth of Muslim narrated by al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān ؓ, and others says that Qiyāmah will come after three events have taken place. These events will be the emergence of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ؑ and the killing of Dajjāl. How can it be said that it has already come to pass! The reason is obvious. The Dajjāl has not emerged. Sayyidnā 'Īsā ؑ has yet to descend. And there is no doubt about it.

Nevertheless, it is not counter to any textual authority (*naṣṣ*) of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain may have disintegrated now and some people from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may have come on this side. However, this will remain subject to the condition that one admits that their last and the most massive onslaught, which will prove to be the destroyer of the entire human population, has not come yet. In fact, it will come after the great manifestation of the signs of Qiyāmah mentioned earlier, that is, the appearance of the Dajjāl and

the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام etc.

The considered view of 'Allāmah Kashmīrī رحمه الله تعالى' in this matter is that the European assertion that they have scanned the whole world and have found no trace of this Wall bears no weight. First of all, the reason is that they themselves have clearly admitted that, despite having reached the zenith of travel and research, there remain many forests, rivers and islands about which they had been unable to collect information. Then, not too remote is the probability that the Wall, despite being present, may now have taken the form of a mountain because of mountains crumbling and joining together. But, no absolute textual authority (*naṣṣ*) contradicts the fact of this Wall disintegrating before Qiyāmah, or of some people from the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj crossing over to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route.

The strongest argument put forward in favor of this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain surviving until the last day of Qiyāmah is based on the statement of the Qur'ān: فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءُ (98). Here, Dhul-Qarnain says, 'when the promise of my Lord will materialize (that is, the time will come for the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to appear), Allah Ta'ālā will make this Wall crumble down to ground level.' The proponents of this argument have interpreted the words: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord) in this verse in the sense of Qiyāmah, the Last Day - although, the words of the Qur'ān are not definite and categorical about it. The reason is that the Qur'ānic words: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord) carry a very clear sense of their own. So, what is meant here is that the arrangement made by Dhul-Qarnain to block the entry of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may not necessarily remain there, as is, forever. When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have the passage open to them, this Wall will lie demolished. Therefore, it is not necessary that it would happen precisely close to the Qiyāmah. Accordingly, all commentators have mentioned both probabilities in the sense of: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord). It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

وَالْوَعْدُ يَحْتَمِلُ أَنْ يَرَادَ بِهِ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَأَنْ يَرَادَ بِهِ وَقْتُ خُرُوجِ يَاجُوجَ وَمَاجُوجَ

And the promise has the probability that meant by it is the Day of Qiyāmah and that meant by it is the time of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.

One way of verifying this could be the eventuality that the Wall lies

demolished, the passage has opened up and the onslaught of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has begun. It does not matter whether its beginning is taken to be from the havoc caused by the Tātār in the sixth century Hijrah, or from the present ascendancy of the peoples of Europe, Russia and China. But, it is evident that the aggressive emergence of these civilized peoples - something taking place in a constitutional and legal framework - cannot be classed as rank disorder which is being particularly pointed out by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The anatomy of havoc given there is that it will unfold in the form of such a magnitude of merciless bloodshed and devastation that it will eliminate the entire human population. Rather, the outcome will, then, be that some nationalities of these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj had turned civilized after having moved to this side. They certainly turned out to be the source of great disorder and trial for Islamic countries. But, till now, their savage counterparts who know nothing but bloodshed have not come to this side as destined - and the majority of them are of that kind. These will emerge very close to Qiyāmah.

The source of the second argument is the Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad where it is said that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging this Wall everyday. But, first of all, Ibn Kathīr has declared this Ḥadīth to be *ma'lūl* (defective despite its apparently correct chain of narrators). Secondly, in the Ḥadīth itself, there is no clarification that the day Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will cross over the Wall by virtue of saying Insha'Allah the thing will happen necessarily close to the Qiyāmah. Then, the Ḥadīth does not provide any proof either that the whole lot of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will remain restrained behind the Wall. Even if some groups, or nationalities, from among them were to come to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route, it will still not be too far out an eventuality in the presence of powerful modern ships. In fact, some historians have mentioned that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj have found the way to reach this side via long sea travel. If so, the Ḥadīth does not contradict that either.

In short, there is no clear and definite proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah that goes on to establish that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain standing right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Or, their elementary and insignificant attacks against the human population on this side will not be possible. However, in all certainty, the time of that horrific and

devastating onslaught which will destroy the entire human population will be but close to the Qiyāmah as has been mentioned repeatedly. To sum up, it can be said that based on the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of the Qurʾān, and Sunnah, it is not possible to give an absolute verdict that the Wall against the Yaʾjūj and Maʾjūj has disintegrated leaving the passage open. Nor can it be said that, according to the Qurʾān, and Sunnah, it is necessary that it survives up to the Qiyāmah. Both probabilities exist. And Pure and High is Allah who knows reality best.

### Verses 99 - 101

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ  
 جَمْعًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ الَّذِينَ  
 كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَنِ ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا  
 ع  
 ﴿١٠١﴾

And on that day, We will leave them (Yaʾjūj and Maʾjūj) surging over one another. And the Horn shall be blown then We shall gather them together. [99] And on that day We will bring Jahannam fully exposed before the infidels [100] whose eyes were under a cover against My reminders, and they were not able to listen. [101]

### Commentary

As for the pronoun of the word: *بَعْضُهُمْ* (*baʿdahum*) in *بَعْضُهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ* (And on that day, We will leave them [Yaʾjūj and Maʾjūj] surging over one another - 99), it is obvious that it reverts back to Yaʾjūj Maʾjūj. Then, as for their condition described therein - 'surging over one another' - it is also obvious that this will be their state when the passage lies open for them and they will be hastening their way from the hilly heights down to the ground. Commentators have suggested other probabilities as well.

The pronoun in: *فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ* (*fajama'nāhum*: Then We shall gather them together - 99) is reverting back to the creation at large, human beings and the Jinn. The sense is that the entire creation of human beings and the Jinn who have been obligated with the precepts of the Sharīʿah (*mu-*

*kallaf*) shall be gathered together on the plains of Resurrection (al-Hashr).

### Verses 102 - 108

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنَّا  
 أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ  
 أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ  
 أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ  
 فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ ذَلِكَ  
 جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوعًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ  
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا  
 ﴿١٠٧﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

Do, then, the disbelievers deem (it fit) that they take My servants as patrons beside Me? Surely, We have prepared Jahannam as entertainment for the disbelievers. [102]

Say, "Shall We tell you about the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? [103] Those are the ones whose effort in the worldly life has gone in vain while they think they are doing well. [104] Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him, so their deeds have gone waste and We shall not assign to them any weight. [105] That is their punishment, the Jahannam, for they disbelieved and made My signs and My messengers a mockery. [106]

Surely those who believed and did righteous deeds theirs are the Gardens of Firdaus as entertainment [107] where they will live forever and will not wish to move from there." [108]

### Commentary

According to Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ, in the first verse (102): أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ (Do, then, the disbelievers deem [it fit]

that they take My servants as patrons beside Me?), there is an elision (حذف: *hadhf*) in the text at this place, that is: فيجد بهم نفعاً ويتفعون بذلك الاتحاذ . As such, it would mean: 'Do these disbelieving people who have taken My servants - instead of Me - as the objects of their worship and the dispensers of their matters and problems think that this make-shift arrangement made by them would bring them some benefit and they would enjoy it?' This is a form of interrogative meant for negation or disapproval. In short, it means that such thinking is wrong, a mark of ignorance.

The word: عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) used here means angels, and the particular prophets whom the people of the world worshiped taking them as partners in the pristine divinity of Allah - as Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليهما السلام. Those who worshiped angels were some Arabs. As for those who ascribed partners to Allah, the Jews and Christians both did it. The Jews did it in respect of Sayyidnā 'Uzair عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and the Christians, in respect of Sayyidnā 'Isā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. Therefore, meant here by: الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (*al-ladhīna kafarū*: Those who disbelieved) in this verse are these very groups of disbelievers. Some commentators have taken عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) at this place to mean satans. In that case, الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (those who disbelieved) would mean disbelievers who worship the Jinn and satans. Some other commentators have taken عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) at this place in the general sense of something created, under mastery, which becomes inclusive of all false objects of worship, idols, fire and stars. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمه الله تعالى has referred to this aspect in the Summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān while explaining servants as subjects. However, the first explanation given above has been rated as weightier in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and other Tafsīrs. Allah knows best.

The word: أَوْلِيَاءَ (*awliyā'*) is the plural of وَلِيٌّ (*waliyy*). This word is used in the Arabic language to carry several meanings. At this place, it means one who gets things done, resolves matters, fulfills needs - which is the particular attribute of the true object of worship. The purpose thereby is to take them as objects of worship.

Who are those referred to as: الْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا (The greatest losers in respect of [their] deeds - 103)? At this place, the first two verses (101, 102) are, in terms of their general sense, inclusive of every individual or

group that would put in a lot of effort in some deeds taking them to be good, but with Allah their effort is ruined and their deed, wasted. Al-Qurṭubī said that this situation is caused due to two things. One: Corruption in Belief. Two: Hypocrisy. It means that a person whose very Belief and Faith is not correct - no matter how good he is in his deeds and how painstaking in his effort - will find all this useless and wasted in the Hereafter.

Similarly, the deed of anyone who acts for the pleasure of the created by way of hypocrisy, that deed too will remain deprived of *thawāb* (reward). It is in terms of this general sense that some revered Ṣaḥābah have declared the Khārjites as the substantiation of this verse. Then, there are some commentators who take the Mu'tazilah, the Rawāfiḍ and some others as the groups who have strayed away from the straight path. But, in the next verse (105), it has been determined that meant at this place are those particular disbelievers who deny the verses of Allah Ta'ālā and the coming of Qiyāmah and Ākhirah. It was said: **أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا** **بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ** (Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Mazḥarī and others prefer the view that really meant at this place are particular disbelievers who deny Allah, the Last Day and the Reckoning of deeds. But, apparently too, even those people whose deeds were ruined by their corrupted beliefs and whose effort had gone waste cannot remain unaffected by its general sense. As for the related sayings reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sa'd رضي الله عنه, this is precisely what they mean. (Qurṭubī)

The last sentence in the same verse (105): **فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا** (and We shall not assign to them any weight) means that their deeds may appear to be great outwardly, but when placed on the balance of reckoning, they will carry no weight. The reason is that these deeds will be of no use and will not carry any weight because of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (ascribing of partners to Allah).

According to a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, there will come a tall and heavy man who, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of a mosquito.' Then he said: 'If you wish to verify it, recite this verse of the Qur'an: **فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا**

(and We shall not assign to them any weight).'

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه says: '(on the day of Qiyāmah) deeds as big as the mountains of Tihāmah will be brought in. But, they will carry no weight on the balance of justice.' (Qurṭubī)

The word: الْفِرْدَوْسِ (al-Firdaus) in: جَنَّاتِ الْفِرْدَوْسِ (Gardens of Firdaus) means a verdant valley full of fruits and flowers - with reference to Paradise. However, difference exists as to the origin of this word. Is it Arabic, or is it non-Arabic? Those who call it non-Arabic have to refine it further. Is it Persian or Greco-Roman or Syriac? There are different views about this.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'when you ask of Allah, ask for Jannatul-Firdaus because it is the highest and the superior most rank of Jannah. Above it, there is the Throne of the Rahmān and from it issue forth all streams of Jannah.' (Qurṭubī)

The purpose of the last sentence: لَا يَتُوبُونَ عَلَيْهَا حَوْلًا (and will not wish to move from there - 108) is to tell that this station of Jannah is a never-ending, ever-lasting blessing for them. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has promulgated His command to the effect that whoever has entered Jannah will never be expelled from there. But, there was the possibility of some doubt crossing someone's heart, for human beings naturally get fed up by living at one place. They wish to move out and go to other places. Now, if they were not allowed to go elsewhere out of Jannah, they might start feeling the pinch of a sort of restriction. This was answered in the verse by saying that taking Jannah on the analogy of other places is rank ignorance. Once a person goes into the Jannah, everything he saw and lived with in the mortal world would find all that trifling in the presence of the bliss and beauty of Jannah and - so blessed in that manner - no one would ever even think of going out of here.

### Verses 109 - 110

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ  
كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ

يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ الْهَكْمِ إِلَهًا وَاحِدَةً فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ  
عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, "If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition." [109]

Say, "Surely, I am but a human being like you; it is revealed to me that your God is the One God. So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord." [110]

### Commentary

The cause of the revelation of the last verse of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَلَا يُشْرِكْ وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110), as mentioned in Ḥadīth reports, shows that *shirk* at this place means hidden *shirk*, that is, hypocrisy (رياء : *riyā*).

One such narration from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has been reported by Imām Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak as being sound on the criterion set forth by the two authorities, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to the narration, one of the Muslims used to carry out Jihād in the way of Allah. Side by side, he wished that his soldiering and bravery in the cause be recognized and appreciated by the people. This verse was revealed about him (which tells us that one gets no *thawāb* (reward) by having such an intention in Jihād).

In Kitābul-Ikhlāṣ, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā have reported from Ṭāwūs that a Ṣaḥābī stated before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are occasions when I am ready to worship, or to do some righteous deed, my aim thereby is nothing but the pleasure of Allah. But, along with it, I do have the wish that people would see me doing it.' Hearing this, he observed silence until the cited verse was revealed.

And in Abū Nu‘aym and in the history of Ibn ‘Asākir, it appears on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ that whenever the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jundub ibn Zuhayr ؓ prayed, fasted or gave in charity and then saw people admiring him for doing those deeds, he felt pleased

about it and would then increase the frequency of those deeds. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The gist of narrations given above is that the *shirk* prohibited in this verse is the hidden *shirk* of showing off (*riyā'*). And that a deed may though be for Allah alone but, along with it, should it become associated with some selfish motive of name, fame and recognition, then, this too will be a kind of hidden *shirk*, something that makes one's deed go waste, even harmful.

However, there are some other Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth which apparently seem to indicate otherwise. For example, Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that he submitted before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: 'There are times when I am on my prayer mat inside my house (making Ṣalāh) and, all of a sudden, there comes someone. I like it that he saw me in that state. (Would that be *riyā'*?)' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'O Abū Hurairah, may Allah have mercy on you. Then you get two rewards, one for the deed you were already doing in secret, and the other for what you did openly after the coming of that person. (This is no *riyā'*).'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked, 'What do you say about a person who does some good deed, then hears people praising it?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قَدْ أُخْرِجَ الْمُدَّثِّرُ : "This is instant good news for the believer." (that his deed was accepted with Allah and He had his servants praise it).

The apparent difference in these two kinds of narrations has been resolved and brought in agreement in Tafsīr Maḥzarī. It says that the first kind of narrations about the cause of the revelation of the verse apply to a particular situation. This is when one associates his intention to please people or to earn a good name for himself along with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah through his deed to the extent that he further increases the frequency of that deed on being praised by people for it. This is, no doubt, hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and hidden *shirk*.

And the latter narrations, those from Tirmidhī and Muslim, concern another situation. This is when one has acted for the pleasure of Allah alone without any inclination of receiving publicity or praise for it and

then Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, gives him fame by making people praise him. If so, it has nothing to do with *riyā'* (showing off). In fact, this is spontaneous good news for the believer (that his deed has found acceptance with Allah).

### Riyā' and its Evil Consequences: Stern Warnings of Ḥadīth

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'What I fear most about you is minor *shirk*.' The Ṣaḥābah asked: 'Yā Rasūlallah, what is minor *shirk*?' He said, 'Riyā' (to do something only to show people). (Reported by Aḥmad in his Musnad)

After having reported this Ḥadīth in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported the remarks: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, when Allah Ta'ālā will reward His servants for their deeds, He will ask the practitioners of *riyā'* to go for their rewards to those they wanted to impress with their deeds and find out whether or not they have any for them.'

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā says 'I am free and above from associating with those associated with Me. Whoever does a good deed and then associates in it someone else with Me, then, I leave the entire deed for the one associated.' And, according to another narration, 'I withdraw from that deed making it exclusive for the person associated with me.' (Narrated by Muslim)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه reports that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying, 'Whoever does a good deed to earn a fair name among people, then, Allah Ta'ālā too deals with him in a manner that he is disgraced before them.' (Narrated by Aḥmad in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān - from Tafsīr Maḥzarī)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī that Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked about *ikhhlāṣ* (unalloyed sincerity) and *riyā'* (showing off). He said: *Ikhhlāṣ* requires that your good deeds remaining hidden should be what you like and the bad deeds remaining hidden should be what you do not like. After that, if Allah Ta'ālā discloses your deeds before the people, you should say, 'Yā Allah, all this is Your grace and favor, not the outcome of my deed and effort.'

And Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه that the Holy

Prophet ﷺ once mentioned *shirk* by saying: هُوَ فِيكُمْ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَيْبِ النَّمْلِ (It is right there in you more stealthily than the soundless movement of an ant). Then, he added, 'I tell you something which, if you do, you will remain safe against all sorts of *shirk*, major or minor (*riyā'*). Make this prayer (*du'ā'*) three times every day:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَشْرِكَ بِكَ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا أَعْلَمُ

O' Allah, I seek refuge with You lest I associate a partner with You while I know and I seek forgiveness from You for what I do not know.

### Some Merits and Properties of Sūrah al-Kahf

Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever remembers to recite the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* (upheaval, trial) caused by Dajjāl (anti-Christ). (Reported by Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī)

And Imām Aḥmad, Muslim and al-Nasā'ī have reported within this narration from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' words to the effect that 'whoever remembers to recite the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* of Dajjāl.'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the initial and the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will have light for him, from his feet up to his head. And whoever recites this Sūrah in full will have light for him, from the ground up to the sky." (Reported by Ibn al-Sunni, and Aḥmad in his Musnad)

And as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites Sūrah al-Kahf in full on the day of Jumu'ah will have light for him until the next Jumu'ah. (Reported and declared as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Ḥākim and al-Baihaqī in al-Da'awāt - from Maḥzarī)

To Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ someone said, 'I resolve in my heart to wake up in the later part of night and make Ṣalāh but sleep overtakes me.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'recite the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf - from: قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا (109) to the end of the Sūrah (110) - before you sleep. Then, the time you intend to wake up will be the time when Allah Ta'ālā will wake you up.' (Reported by ath-Tha'alibī)

And according to the Musnad of al-Dārimī, Zirr ibn Ḥubaish told 'Abdah, 'Anyone who sleeps after having recited these last verses will wake up at the time he or she intends to.' And 'Abdah says, 'we have tried this repeatedly. It happens just like that.'

### **An important word of advice**

Ibn al-'Arabī quotes his Shaikh, Ṭurtūshī: 'Let not the hours of your dear life pass away confronting contemporaries and socializing with friends. Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā has concluded His statement on the following verse:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110  
(Al-Qurtubī)

**Alhamdulillah**  
**The Commentary on**  
**Sūrah al-Kahf**  
**And Volume V**  
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