

Ashaabe-Kahf & the Location of their Cave

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***IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST
BENEFICENT AND MERCIFUL.***

A Baseless Thought

The air was filled with a thick, nauseous stench of animals' blood. For as far as the eyes could see clusters of people were scattered around in small gatherings and groups engrossed in their individual forms of worship. Some were ferociously slaughtering their sacrifices in the name of false gods, some humbly kneeling over besides tiny lifeless idols proclaiming boundless servitude, whilst others chanted and prostrated to numerous hand carved, stone statues.

A single lone figure stood and glanced around, attentively observing the customary rituals around him. The atmosphere was strained for many of these people were worshipping half heartedly due to the oppression of their tyrant king Daqyaanoos.

A thought crossed his mind - baseless.

Worshipping a being, any being, demands total submission. Belief that he is the Creator, not the created; the Provider rather than the Receiver. Suddenly the youth was filled with a deep resentment for idol-worship. He was overwhelmed with a sincere desire to release himself from his surroundings and quickly, yet cautiously began to make his way away with a new found determination in his heart to submit to the real Lord of both worlds: Allah.

The zealous young man strode away towards an opening, leaving behind the noisy pandemonium of his astray people and took refuge under the shade of a tree. Before long he sighted the distant figure of another youth approaching from the same direction. He watched curiously as he also came and took refuge beneath the tree. Both sat in silence as they observed a third, then a fourth figure heading towards the same destination until a small congregation of seven unacquainted youths gathered.

Each individual was curious about the other, yet at the same time each one was reluctant to reveal his thoughts lest the tyrant king learns of their apostasy.

Exchanging thoughts

Eventually, after what seemed like eternity of silence had elapsed one youth spoke up, "**Brothers**", he began cautiously, breaking the ice, "***We had all chosen to detach ourselves from the carnival, maybe we should inform each other of our thoughts.***" Hearing this request for honesty a bold youth stepped forth and confessed, "***The truth is.....***" he spoke, "***I simply do not agree with the choice of religion our people have adopted. I strongly believe the only deity worthy of worship is, Allah subhanahu wa ta'aalaa who created the heavens and the earths and all that beholds it.***"

Hearing their own thoughts voiced out aloud inspired the rest to disclose their own beliefs which were exactly the same. This immediately sent a wave of relief over their hearts and an instinctive band of companionship was formed immediately.

With the support of their new found friendship after their total faith in Allah, the youngsters decided to construct a place of worship where they would gather and worship Allah. But as time passed, people rapidly learnt of this 'alien' form of worship and rumours spread quickly like wild fire until they reached the king who was obviously outraged.

The king's exasperation rose at their intolerable courage and in a gust of fury ordered that their fine exquisite robes be removed saying, "***I shall withhold your punishment temporarily to allow you to think the matter over. If you wish you may return to the religion of your forefathers and no harm shall come to you. If, however, you refuse to accept this proposal you shall most certainly be beheaded,***"

One More Companion

This ultimatum offered the group the perfect opportunity to escape to safer grounds. Embracing this chance they fled towards the wilderness in search of a safe haven. As they made their way along they suddenly became aware of another presence pursuing them. They turned to find a brown/yellow dog at their heels.

Despite their many efforts to deter the creature it remained steadfast at their footsteps until finally Allah granted the dog ability to speak with which it spoke out loud, "***Should I not love those who love Allah?***" Hearing this the youths allowed the dog to accompany them in their trek.

It has been stated regarding this fortunate dog that it is the only dog which shall enter paradise. Surely, it is a point to ponder over. *If a creature as disgraced as a dog can achieve such a lofty rank by accompanying the pious and beloved bondsmen of Allah, what can be said regarding the humans who adopt such benevolent company?*

The Escape

Finally they took cover in a hidden cave of the foot of a mountain. The cave was spacious inside and was situated either towards the northern or southern direction, either way it was impossible for the sun's rays to fall inside the cave. It made the perfect hideout.

They appointed one amongst themselves to go to the city in disguise for purchase and investigation. He informed one day that they were being searched for by the soldiers of the king and their relatives were being compelled to give information about them.

As they were discussing this matter, Allah, all of a sudden, set sleep over them. As they lay there, along with their new found companion, Qitmeer the dog, they drifted through the first few moments of an extraordinary sleep which was destined to last 309 years.

During this state of deep sleep the Almighty Allah above watched over them and organized his own manner of protecting them from the outside world.

What happened?

Seven open eyed figures lay peacefully inside, undisturbed by the blazing sun outside. Occasionally, the silence was broken momentarily as the sleeping bodies swiftly turned to avoid decomposition eating at their sides. Then after a few seconds of disturbances, silence would prevail again.

To an outsider or passer-by the scene, barely visible in the dimly lit cave would appear eerie, almost ghostly. No doubt an inquisitive glance inside would fill one with fear causing him to flee in awe of them.

The years gradually rolled by and in the ever changing world outside, custom and society advanced leaving the emigrants of the grave centuries behind; untouched by the aging world of time.

Eventually, after a number of years the bodies stirred, limbs stretched and consciousness returned to bring the youths plunging forward 300 years into the future. Despite the lengthy sleep, signs of it were virtually nonexistent. Upon awakening, one youth questioned casually, "*How long have you stayed here?*"

The youths glanced out into the dusky evening and assumed the night they were witnessing was the end of the same they had entered the cave. "*Oh, (maybe) a day or part of the day,*" came the reply.

Joining in the conversation, a few more spoke up, "***Your Lord knows best how long you have stayed.***"

The topic was brushed aside as quickly as it had begun and they began to discuss plans for the future. However, before any step ahead they decided to satisfy their hunger. Approaching the matter tactfully, one youth advised,

' Send one of you with this silver coin to the city and let him see what food is purest there and bring you a supply thereof.' (*Kahf : 20*)

The youths realised caution was a necessity here because the king definitely must have issued an arrest warrant for them. As this was the first time any of them had dared to venture into the city after the king's ultimatum they added a few words of advice. '***(Let him) be courteous and let no man know of you. For they, if they should come to know of you they will never prosper.***

(*Kahf: 20/21*)

The Silver Coin

And so, with this advice and silver coin clutched tightly in his hand, one zealous youth named Yamleekha set off towards the local bazaar. Little did he know that in the city he was heading to, corruption and controversial opinions were slowly breaking to surface amongst the city dwellers themselves. A large sect was stubbornly denying the resurrection of mankind after his biological death. Whilst one sect blatantly denied this far fetched possibility, the other faithfully adhered to their sound initial belief, consequently causing dispute throughout.

" How," they argued persistently, ***" can even one human being ever return to its original state after spending centuries wasting away into dust and ashes? According to us this is surely beyond the grounds of possibility."***

In the confusion of satans attempts to misguide them they had grown blind to the extraordinary manner in which Allah created man in the first place from a clot of blood. To resurrect was nothing in comparison.

As time and era had, so had belief changed in 300 years and so had the king of the nearby city. The tyrant king, Decius, had been replaced by King Baydoosees who was not only alot more merciful but was also a pious god fearing believer. Witnessing the dispute within his people King Baydoosees's anxiety grew and he deeply worried for the safety of his peoples' belief.

A Prayer

One day, realising there was only one solution to this problem, the king retired to the privacy of his personal quarters where he sat alone; a sorrowful figure dressed in old worn out clothes. He looked a pitiful sight with tears streaming damnlessly down his cheeks and his hands raised high in prayer to Allah. Through his racking sobs a few

words could be heard, ***"Oh, Allah, I am relying on you and you alone to create a meaning of understanding for my people and lead them onto the righteous path...."***

Meanwhile, in the market place Yamleekha was choosely wandering around searching for provisions. He was aware of the fact that the townsfolk often slaughtered animals in the name of false Gods and he certainly didn't want to partake their sacrifice. Stopping at a nearby stall he settled for some suitable goods and offered his coin in return. The shopkeeper absent mindedly accepted the coin but when he glanced down at it his eyes grew wide in astonishment. ***"Why, this coin is over three centuries old,"*** he exclaimed to himself in surprise. Puzzled, the shopkeeper walked over to the nearby stall keepers who all inspected the coin, then unanimously came to the conclusion that this strange young man has probably embarked upon some ancient buried treasure.

Together they confronted Yamleekha with this who persistently denied it.

"No, no, no, brothers you've got it all wrong. I have not discovered any treasure. This is definitely my own coin"

His cries were to no avail as the townsfolk immediately arrested him and took him to the kings courts. King Baydoosees was engrossed in his prayers when he was disturbed by the arrival of the so-called criminal. As he entered the courts he was greeted by the towns people who related the situation to him. After hearing one side of the story the king looked towards Yamleekha who began to explain himself, ***"Your Majesty,"*** began Yamleekha, ***"I am no thief and neither have I unearthed any great treasure. The truth is "*** And so, patiently, the king listened to Yamleekha's story. Once he had finished he remembered the ancient tablet named 'Raqeem' which had been preserved amongst the city's historical treasures. It had either been written by order of Decius himself who wanted the public to be aware of the fate of those who dared oppose the king, or by a group of true believers who secretly agreed with the youths, but lacked the courage to openly announce their apostacy, and had written this tablet as a memorium.

Slowly, as everything began to fall into place, it dawned upon Baydoosees that Allah had, as He had promised to, accepted his prayer and sent a way for him to prove to the people that resurrection after death is possible.

The king was overjoyed upon hearing the whole truthful story, and said, ***"Yamleekha, take me with you to your cave so I too can meet the rest of your group."***

And so, the king with a large group of the townspeople made their way towards the city. Upon reaching the cave, Yamleekha turned to face the king, ***"Sire, may I stop you here so I can enter the cave alone first and inform the rest, of the situation, otherwise they will assume the tyrant king and his troops have found us."*** The king agreed and waited patiently outside.

Last Breath

After many minutes had passed Yamleekha had still not reappeared so the king decided to investigate. When he entered the dark cave he stopped at the sight of the motionless figures lying in front of him. Then, slowly, it dawned upon him that their lives had been taken and each youth had breathed his last before the king had even entered the cave.

The Ashaab-e -Kahf had lived to teach the world many lessons. One of the greatest being the possibility of resurrection. If the Almighty Allah can bring the people of the cave back to life after three centuries without a sign of aging or tiredness, then surely he can gather the bodies and souls of every deceased being in this world on the Day of Judgement to answer for their every move in this transitory world.

NOTE: In some narrations it has been said that the king and the townspeople all entered the cave whilst the Ashaab-e -Kahf were alive. After meeting and sitting with the group they left and the youths died immediately afterwards.

(Allah knows best)

This was a brief account of the Ashaabe- Kahf. With regards to the location of their cave we now present in the following pages a translated piece from Mufti Muhammad Taqi Uthmaani's kitaab 'Jahaane- Deedah'

The Cave

The location of the cave of the 'Ashaab-e-Kahf' has been an issue of much conflict amongst the Ulamaa (scholars) and researchers. Where is the cave situated in which Ashaab-e- Kahf slept for over 300 years? Some researchers have reported it to be in the city Ephesus, in Turkey. Some have named a cave in Spain to be the cave of Ashaab-e-Kahf, and others have proclaimed it to be in Jordan, Syria or Yemen. But a Jordanian researcher, Muhammad Tayseer Brother Zibyaan, who was the editor of the magazine, 'Ash-sharee'ah', arrived in Pakistan in 1976, where he visited Darul-Uloom in order to make the acquaintance of my father (Mufti Shafi (R.A)). Here he stated with great determination and full confidence that this cave has at present been discovered on a mountain near Amman. He further stated, " I have written an article to verify this." In view of the proof and evidence he presented at that time, it seemed conceivable that the cave of the Ashaab-e-Kahf is most probably situated there.

Brother Zibyaan has now passed away, but has safely stored away his results of the investigations he carried out in a book called ' Location of Ashaab-e-Kahf's Cave', published by Darul Ii'tisaam.

When Did This Incident Take Place?

After relating briefly the incident of Ashaab-e-Kahf, the Qur'an also states that the people of that time decided to construct a mosque (on this site) in regard to Allah's Ta'aalaa's devotees.

According to the Holy Qur'an's usual pattern, it does not state the historical or geographical details, as to which period or to where this incident took place. Therefore, commentators and historians have disclosed their different views on the basis of historical narrations.

Most researchers are inclined towards the fact that this incident took place some time after the divine ascension of Eesa (A.S) from 100 to 300 A.D. At that time, in this region, there was the reign of an idol worshipping Nabti king. But the effects of the Christian religion, which started off in Palestine, were gradually advancing towards this region.

These youngsters became devotees of this religion on the basis of these very effects. Then, in the period in which these auspicious souls were absorbed in deep sleep, the followers of Christianity gradually freed this region from the Nabti rulers, and succeeded in forming their own rule. The citizens here also accepted Christianity.

It is known from some narrations, that after learning about Ashaab-e-Kahf, the reigning king arrived at the cave to visit them, but found them deceased. There is no mention of them being deceased in other narrations.

This same incident has been narrated in some Christian narrations with little difference. It has been stated that the very first detailed narration of this incident was written in an article in the year 521 A.H. by an Iraqi soothsayer named Yaqoob. This article was written in Syriac, then it was translated into Greek and Latin. According to him, this incident took place in Ephesus in Asia (Minor) in the year 250 A.D. There were seven people of the cave, and after spreading the word of Allah Ta'aalaa's complete power, returned to sleep in the cave. (Britannica, printed in 1950)

Because Yaqoob Sarooghi stated that they 'returned to sleep' alot of people hold the belief that Ashaab-e-Kahf are still living, and will arise again near Qiyaamah.

It has been narrated in some Christian sources that this incident took place near the city Ephesus in Turkey (the Islamic name for Ephesus is Tarsoos). A cave in that city has said to be the cave of Ashaab-e- Kahf. Maybe the reason for Muslim commentators and historians at having named the place of Ashaab-e- Kahf in Ephesus is on the basis of these Christian sources.

A narration by Abdullah Ibn Abbaas (R.A) from Tafseer Ibn Jareer is :

' The cave of Ashaab-e-Kahf is situated near 'Ila' in Jordan.' Many scholars of today have given preference to the fact that this cave is situated in Jordan on the basis of this narration, and other evidence. Hadhrat Moulana Hifz-ur-Rehman Sahib Syoharwi (R.A) has written a detailed account on this subject in Qasasul-Qur'an and in the light of the relevant historical geographical proof has proclaimed it right that the cave is actually in Jordan. Hadhrat Moulana Sayyad Suleman Nadawi (R.A) has stated in Ard hul-Qur'an that the old city of Parra in Jordan is the 'Raqeem.'

My honourable father, Hadhrat Moulana Shafi Sahib (R.A), and Moulana Abul-Kalam Azaad are also inclined towards the cave being in Jordan.

The result to their research is that the actual name of the famous historical city 'Parra' was ' Raqeem The Romans changed the name to Parra, and this cave is situated somewhere near here.

But, in 1953 Brother Zibyaan somehow came across the fact that there is a certain cave in Oman, situated on a mountain, in which are some graves and corpse, and that there is also a mosque on this site. Hence, he set out in search for this cave with one of his companions. But because this was somewhat off the common path they had to cover some kilometres of rough land, but were finally successful in reaching the cave. Brother Zibyaan reports:

' We were standing in front of a pitch black cave which was situated on a far away fallow land on a bare mountain. It was dark to such an extent that we found it difficult to enter. A shepherd let us know that there were some graves inside the cave containing old bones. The opening of the cave was in the south and there were two pillars on both sides, which had been made from a large rock. Suddenly my eyes fell on the carvings on the two pillars. Some Byzantine inscriptions were visible. The cave was covered by stones and debris. At a distance of about 100 metres, there was a small village named 'Rajeeb'.

Brother Zibyaan continued his research and approached the department of archaeological findings. Finally, an archaeologist named Rafiq Dajani Sahib, concluded after a lot of research that this is in actual fact the cave of Ashaab-e-Kahf.

Hence, in 1961 they started their excavation and research, and continued to discover such evidence which proved this conclusion right. The following are a few of these :

1. The opening of this cave is in the south, and the following ayah justifies this :

'And thou mightest have seen the sun when it rose move away from their cave to the right, and when it set go past them on the left, and they were in the cleft thereof.'(Surah Kahf)

The location of this cave is such that the sunshine never enters it at any time, but passes from the left and right when the sun sets and rises. And there is a spacious hollow inside the cave where the wind and light reach easily.

2. It has also been mentioned in the Qur'an that the villagers had in mind to construct a mosque on top of this cave. Accordingly, after removing the debris and rocks, a mosque was discovered directly above the cave, which had been constructed from old Roman style stone. Archaeologists have said that the mosque was made from stone and originally a place of worship in a Byzantine form, and was converted into a mosque in the time of Abdul Malik Ibn Marwaan.

The polytheist King due to whose tyranny and oppression the Ashaab-e- Kahf sought shelter in the cave was, according to the theory of modern day researchers, Tarajaan, who remained ruler from 98 till 117 A.D. It is a well known fact that he used to subject opposers of idolatry to severe hardships. It has been authenticated by history that in 106 A.D Tarajaan conquered the region of east Jordan and constructed the stadium of Amman.

According to modern day researchers, the king during whose reign the Ashaab-e-Kahf stirred was called Theodosius and he lived in the beginning of the 5th century.

Upon the initial discovery of the cave, many coins were found scattered within, of which several are indeed from Tarajaan's era which greatly supports the belief that this is the very cave of the Ashaab-e-Kahf.

The Holy Quran has termed the Ashaab-e-Kahf as 'Ashaab-e-Kahf and Raqeeem'. **What is Raqeeem?** Various opinions have been stated in its commentary, but the opinion of modern day researchers is that 'Raqeeem' is the name of the village in which these people originally resided. The cave is situated at a total 100 metre distance from this point, in a small village called Rajeeb. It is the opinion of Rafiq-ad-Dajani that this is an altered name form of Raqeeem, because the Bedouins of this area pronounce the 'qaaf' as 'jeem' and the 'meem' as 'baa', therefore, the ruling body of Jordan, later officially titled this village 'Raqeeem'. Several early scholars of geography have also indicated the village of Raqeeem as being situated near Amman at one time, therefore, the renowned geographer Abu Abdullah has stated in his kitab, 'Ahsanut-taqaasim-fee-maarifatil-aqaaleem' : Raqeeem is a city in east Jordan close to Amman, in which a cave has been constituted together with several human corpse which are not altogether devoid of flesh.

Apart from this, Allaamah Yaqoot Hamawee (R.A) has also issued forth a statement in a commentary based upon Raqeeem :

'In the suburbs of Damascus there is an Arabic state called 'Balqaa', and within it dwells a place close to Amman, which these people regard as that of Kahf and Raqeeem.'

Brother Zibyaan (R.A) has made several statements, from which it can be apprehended that the Muslims of the earlier eras believe the certain cave belonging to this area to be the very cave of Ashaab-e-Kahf. It has been narrated in regard to Hadhrat Ubada Ibn Saamit (R.A) that Hadhrat Siddique Akbar sent a convoy to the Roman emperor. During this journey, on the route leading to Syria and Hijaz, he encountered a mountain named 'Jabal-ur-Raqeeem' in which there was a cave containing several corpse, not totally devoid of flesh. In a commentary of Tafseer-e-Qurtubi it has also been narrated in regard to Hadhrat Abbas that he too encountered this cave and declared it to be the very cave of Ashaab-e-Kahf.

In Futooh-hush-Sham, Waqidee has narrated a lengthy account in relation to Hadhrat Saeed Ibn Aamir. Hadhrat was despatched to Syria for participation in jihad, whilst proceeding along the way he forgot the route. After wandering about fruitlessly, he reached the mountain Raqeeem, and after careful scrutiny perceived it to be that of the Ashaab-e-Kahf. He informed his companions of his find and stated that this is the cave of the Ashaab-e-Kahf. Therefore, they performed prayers within it and entered the city of Amman.

However, in the case of such an ancient incident it is very difficult to arrive at a final conclusion in regard to the correct site. But there is no doubt in the fact that up till this moment in time, out of the several sites the cave has been rumoured to be located in,

together with the large amount of circumstantial evidence discovered in relation to the cave, there is no evidence present to this extent in regard to any other cave.

Brother Zibyaan has even compared this cave with the cave of Ephesus and this comparison further confirms the concept.

This cave is situated seven miles south of the city Amman and the central highway that stretches from Aqabah until Amman is at a distance of three kilometres away from it. We reached this place at approximately nine o' clock in the evening. A road has now been constructed to enable cars to reach the peak of the mountain. After leaving the car, one ascends a little, to an expansive area in which there are several pillars belonging to an old fashioned construction. After crossing this area is the mouth of the cave and on its floor is a door post constructed out of broad stone.

To enter the cave one must descend approximately two steps. Upon reaching this stage the cave is divided into three sections. One section stretches straight from the mouth in a northward direction, a second section branches off towards the east on the right hand side, and a third section branches off towards the west from the left hand side. In the eastern and western sections are eight constructed graves resembling coffins. In a grave in the eastern section there is also a small hole. If one peers into the hole, a human corpse can be clearly seen. If it is dark the attendant of the cave lights a candle and the inner view can be clearly observed.

But the section that stretches straight to the north from the south is mainly flat and it is Brother Zibyaan 's opinion in regard to this, that this is the 'Fajwah' referred to in the Quran. When the excavation and the clearing work commenced in 1961, according to Rafi-ad-Dajani a jaw of an animal was discovered lying around with one incisor and 4 molars intact. According to the thoughts of Brother Zibyaan this was the jaw belonging to Ashaab-e-Kahf's dog.

Furthermore, hereupon this site a great number of coins belonging to the Roman era, Islamic era, Ottoman era, together with a clay bowl, a pearl necklace, a copper comb and rings were also discovered lying scattered around. All of these things have now been gathered and placed on display in a cabinet and maintained within the northern wall of the cave which we have observed ourselves.

In the Eastern section of the cave is a small tunnel ascending upwards which resembles a chimney that expels smoke. This tunnel enters and leaves through the roof of the cave, a boulder was perceived to be buried in the upper opening of this tunnel.

Usama Ibn Munkiaz, a general belonging to Sultan Salah-uddin Ayubee's army, coincidentally writes in his kitab 'T'tibaar', ' That I together with 30 horsemen entered this cave and performed prayers here, but there was a narrow tunnel that we did not enter.'

Brother Zibyaan is of the opinion that this is that very passage.

After the cave was cleaned out and examined, several passages of writing were discovered on the walls in Greek and 'Kufic' but the writing was not legible.

On exit from the cave, a round patch can be seen in the nearby area. The attendant has disclosed that, at the time of the discovery of the cave, the trunk of an olive tree was flourishing. Rafiq Ad dajani has stated that this olive tree is one belonging to the era of the bedouins, and nearby is a cave with a roof. When the excavation and clearing out initially commenced, the nearby elderly folk reported that this olive tree was until twenty years ago in bloom and they used to consume its produce.

The walls of an ancient mosque together with its niche can be clearly noticed, elevated several feet above the cave. At the time Brothers Zibyaan and Rafiq-ad-Dajani initially reached the cave, the mosque could not be noticed. After the excavation and the clearing out of the cave the mosque was unveiled.

This mosque is 10 metres in length and 10 metres in width. During the time the excavation work was being undertaken, four pillars were discovered fashioned in the mode of the Roman era and several copper coins were also discovered from the era of the Roman emperor Justin (517-527). A small chamber, equivalent to one and a half metres, was also revealed whose roof was probably employed for the call to prayer. Several clay jugs were also discovered nearby which were probably used to perform ablution. An inscription was also perceived here, and it is evident from its inscript that this mosque was renovated in the time of 'Kamaarwiya', son of Ahmed Ibn Touloon (A.D 895). The experts have deduced from this entire collection that in the beginning, the Romans built a place of worship on this site and during the Islamic reign (possibly in the time of Abdul Malik Ibn Marwaan) it was converted into a mosque but the Muslims did not supplement its length or width.

At this time, the Jordan department of ancient relics and the department of property focused specific attention with regard to this cave's preservation. In addition, a new mosque was built nearby, an easier route was constructed for the comfort of visitors and notices were installed inside the cave.

However, in any case, the venture to this present era's great Quranic revelation is one of life's most memorable experiences.

(Jahaane-Deedah)

