

ALI 531: THEMES FROM  
SURA 18: AL-KAHF (The Cave)

*Aayaat 18:82-98*

CLASS 3 – 17 MARCH 2020

Lecturer: Dr Husein Khimjee

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I always begin my classes with the recitation from Sura al-Fatiha.  
Let us recite this Sura before we begin our Class:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ  
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ  
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ  
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۝

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Alhamdulillah last week we discussed the *Asbab an Nuzul* of Surah al-Kahf, we discussed the guidance the Surah reveals in its total of 110 Aayaat (Verses).
- In discussing the main points of the Surah, we learned the Surah protects us from the *Fitna of Dajjal* from the four Trials.
- These are:

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Dajjal will appear before day of judgement with the 4 trials:
- He'll ask people to worship him and not Allah: **trial of faith.**
- He'll trial people with the “knowledge” and news he gives them: **trial of knowledge.**

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- He will control huge parts of the earth: **trial of power.**
- He will be given powers to start/stop rain and tempt people with his wealth: **trial wealth.**

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Now since we have only three classes in this course, we are not discussing in great detail all the 110 Aayaat.
- This course asks us to discuss only three topics revealed in this Sura and the guidance we can derive from them.
- These three topics to be discussed in this course are:

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- 1. The As-haab of the Cave and the Guidance derived from them – Ayyat 9 – 26 (Guidance on the Trial of Faith)
- 2. Lessons derived in the revelations about Nabi Musa (as) and Nabi Khidr (as) – Aayaat 60-82. (Guidance of the Trial of Knowledge)
- 3. The account of Dhu al-Qarnayn Aayaat 83-98. (Guidance on the Trial of Power).

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Of these three topics, we have already discussed the first two topics about the As-haab (COMPANIONS) of the Cave (Aayaat 9-26), lessons derived in the revelations about Nabi Musa (as) and Nabi Khidr (as) and the guidance derived– Aayaat 60-82. and the Guidance derived from them.
- Today we will InshaAllah discuss the account of Dhu al-Qarnayn Aayaat 83-98. (Guidance on the Trial of Power).



# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

- They ask thee concerning Dhu al Qarnayn. Say "I will rehearse to you something of his story." (18:83)
- Who was Dhu alQarnayn?

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- We are told in our sources that *Dhu alQarnayn* has several meanings like “one who is born twice”, or “two different eras”
- Our sources tell us that he was not a prophet but was a very powerful king and Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala raised him and gave him enough powers to bring about some justice in the vast parts of our earth. He was given the opportunities to establish power against very turbulent people in different parts of the earth.
- We are told he could have been Alexander the great or even Darius or someone else. But whoever he was, he was a righteous man who ruled with proper justice.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Qarn itself means animal horn, also means a long time.
- Some theories also suggest the two ends of hair braided like two horns
- Ruler of the East and the West
- Two horns on his hat
- Our 5<sup>th</sup> Imam said he was not a prophet but a righteous man Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala loved. He enjoined his people for piety, people had knocked one side of his head, he disappeared,, returned, people knocked other side and so known as Dhu al-Qarnayn.
- Some point to verse in Taurat 46:11, or the statue of Cyrus showing crown with two horns. Al-Mizan believes was Cyrus.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا

- Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends. (18:84)

فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا

- One (such) way he followed, (18:85)

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Imam `Ali (as) in his Du`a Mashlul says “*O He Who helped Dhu al-Qarnayn against the tyrannical kings (to overcome them)!*”
- Imam Ali (as) also said that Dhu al-Qarnayn is the “one who has the sign of kingdom and prophecy”, and who is aware of every thing so that he recognizes the right from wrong; and Allah caused the cities and hearts to be submitted to him. (see al-islam.org quoting from *Nur ath-Thaqalayn*)
- We are also told that Dhu al-Qarnayn and Solayman (Solomon) were two believers who governed the earth, and Nebuchadnezzar (Bukht-un-Nasr) and Namrood were two disbelievers who governed the earth, too.
- The sources also tell us that the power which Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta`ala) gives to His saints, (such as Solayman, Yusuf, and some believers) is for using it in Allah’s way.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Tafsir commentaries tells us that concerning the good servants of Allah, the Qur'an says:
- “(They are) those who if We establish them in the land, will establish prayer and pay the poor-rate and enjoin right and forbid wrong and unto Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs” (22:41)
- Tafsir commentaries also tells us that Qur'an also criticizes those who use their power alongside the way of evil, where it says:
- “Have they not considered how many a generation We destroyed before them, whom We had established in the earth...?” (6:6)
- They used to misuse their power and government and for their sins were destroyed and fresh generations were raised.

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

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

- Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water: near it he found a People: We said: "O Dhu al Qarnayn! (thou hast authority) either to punish them, or to treat them with, kindness." (18:86)
- In this Ayat we are told that Dhu-Qarnayn went on his journey as far as possible to the last flourished part, no flourished land after that.

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

- He said: "Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back to his Rabb; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before). (18:87)



# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

وَأَمَّا مَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءٌ الْحَسَنَىٰ وَسَنُقُولُ لَهُ ۖ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا

- " But whoever believes, and works righteousness he shall have a goodly reward, and easy will be his task as we order it by our command." (18:88)
- We see clearly he was not like Firaun who claimed himself to be God (see 79:24). He laid clear stress on the final judgment will be from Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala, he was laying the rule of faith and righteousness in the life of this world. Sources tell us that this is a wonderful spiritual lesson we learn from this episode.

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ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا

- Then followed he (another) way. (18:89)

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطَّلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُم مِّن دُونِهَا سِتْرًا

Until when he came to the rising of the Sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun (18:90).

- This is the second episode. This was the journey to the East “came to the rising of the sun”

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كَذَلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا

- (He left them) as they were: We completely understood what was before him. (18:91)
- We can see clear sense of understanding and justice in Dhu al-Qarnayn's rule. People here lived a simple life in perhaps a very hot climate. He did not complain about their primitiveness and was not arrogant or even intolerant.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Sources tell us about the Aayat “Then he followed (another) course.”
- Sources tell us that Dhu al-Qarnayn continued his journey until when he reached the last flourishing point of that land, where there was no mountain, no tree, and no building.
- As Imam Baqir (as) and Imam Sadiq (as) said, people here did not know how to build a house, nor did they know how to sew. The sun was shining upon them directly and without any barrier, in a manner that their faces had become black. (Nur ath-Thaqalayn commentary)

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Commentaries continue to tell us that the Aayat says:
- “Until when he reached the rising-place of the sun, he found it rising upon a people for whom We had appointed no shelter therefrom. When the Sun was too hot for them, they used to go underground to get some shed. Dhu al-Qarnayn guided them and taught them to live in peace.
- “So (it was), and We encompassed in knowledge whatever was with him.”
- In other words, Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala admires the actions of Dhu al-Qarnayn and He shows that He is pleased with his deeds.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا

- Then followed he (another) way (18:92)

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا

- Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them a people who scarcely understood a word. (18:93)

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا

- They said: "O Dhu al Qarnayn! the Gog and Magog (people) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou might erect a barrier between us and them?" (18:94)



# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Commentators explain that the Arabic word /xiraj/ means ‘the thing which come out of the earth’, and /xarj/ is applied for ‘what comes out of the wealth’.
- The commentators and historians, attaching to the existing relationships, say that the objective meaning of Gog and Magog is the very tribes of Mogul and TaTar. Commentaries also tell us that yajooj (gog) and majooj were wild tribes and were causing incursions on the other side of the mountain were people were industrious and skilled
- An Islamic tradition, narrated from Amir-ul-Mu’Mineen Ali (as), denotes that he said Dhu al-Qarnayn found a people who told him:
- “The Gog and Magog tribe are behind this mountain. They attack at the season of harvest and plunder all the corns and fruits or destroy them. Shall we assign a yearly tribute in order that you might erect a barrier?”
- This communication of theirs with Dhu al-Qarnayn might be done through some signs, nods, winks or any other mute sign, because, at least, they did not understand the language of Dhu al-Qarnayn. (see tafsir commentary in al-islam.org website).

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا

- He said: "(The power) in which my Rabb has established me is better (than tribute): help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them: (18:95)

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

ءَاتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ أَنفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ ءَاتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا

- "Bring me blocks of iron." At length when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain— sides, he said "Blow (with your bellows)." Then when he had made it (red) as fire he said: "Bring me, that I may pour over it molten lead." (18:96)

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

فَمَا اسْتَطَعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا

- Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig through it. (18:97)
- Imam Sadiq (as) in a tradition said:
- “Precautionary dissimulation can be a barrier between you and your opponents which is not climbable, or penetrable.”<sup>10</sup>
- But, in answer to them, Dhu al-Qarnayn said such like:
- “He said: ‘(the power) in which my Rabb has established me is better (than your tribute), so help me with strength (of men). I will make a barrier between you and between them’.”
- Then, Dhu al-Qarnayn ordered them as follows:

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- “‘Bring me pieces of iron’...”
- When the pieces of iron were made ready, he issued the order of arranging them over each other.
- The verse continues saying:
- “...Until, when he had leveled up (the gap) between the two cliffs...”
- The third order Dhu al-Qarnayn issued was that they should bring some material from wood and the like of it to be burnt, and put them in both sides of the barrier, and by means of what they had with them, they would blow in the fire, so that the pieces of iron became red and rather melted.

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- The verse, concerning Dhu al-Qarnayn's order, says:
- "...he said: 'Blow!' Until, when he had made it (as) fire..."
- By that way, in fact, Dhu al-Qarnayn wanted to join the pieces of iron into each other in order to make a solid barrier. By that amazing design, he did the same thing that is practically done today by welding.
- Finally, he issued the last order as follows:
- "...he said: 'Bring me molten copper to pour thereon'."
- Thus, he overlaid that iron collection, the barrier, with a cover of copper in order to protect it from penetration of weather and decay. He made such a barrier, at last, that the Gog and Magog could not climb and they were not able to make a hole in it either.

# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّي فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا

- He said: "This is a mercy from my Rabb: but when the promise of my Rabb comes to pass, He will make it into dust; and the promise of My Rabb is true." (18:98)
- Dhu al-Qarnayn was not greedy. He was a truly righteous ruler and claimed all credit not for himself but just that he was discharging his duty as a ruler. The True Gratefulness belongs to Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala.

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## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- How beautifully he turns their attention to Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala. Commentators tell us truly that it was Allah who provided the means by which they could be helped.
- There are lessons to be learned from this episode that we should take all precautions to protect ourselves from misfortunes and from evil; but protection is not complete until and unless we seek help and Grace from Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala.
- The Lesson also is the clear realization that in the end, when the Day of Appointment (Qiyamat) arrives, everything will crumble to dust.
- The True faith must show clear belief in the Aakhirat.



# سُورَةُ الْكَهْفِ

## SURA 18: AL-KAHF

- Commentaries tell us that:
- Godly men believe that their successes are because of the Mercy of Allah, and they never become proud. Of course, the Mercy and Rabbship of Allah are connected to each other. Saintliness of work and effort, stability of the action, people's cooperation, administratorship and industry, and high goals are all a collection of Divine Favours.
- Thus, here, Dhu al-Qarnayn, who was a godly man and had fulfilled a very important accomplishment, did not boast of his action nor did he hold those people under obligation in the same way that the tyrant usually do, but with the utmost courtesy he treated, and:
- “He said: ‘This is mercy from my Rabb...’”
- Dhu al-Qarnayn implied that if he had such a knowledge by which he could perform an important action like that, it was from the side of Allah, and his power as well as effectiveness of his word, were from Him, too.
- Then he added this meaning that they should not think that their barrier was eternal, but when the promise of Allah comes, it will be made level with the ground and He will change it into an even land, because the promise of Allah is always true.

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- Commentary in al-Islam.org continues to tell us that:
- In this statement, Dhu al-Qarnayn points to the distraction of the world and its disturbance at the threshold of Resurrection.
- There are many instructive points in this story, the which, in fact, form the essential aim of the Qur'an. Some of them are as follows:
- 1. The first lesson that this story teaches us is that no work is possible to be fully done in this world without its means. Therefore, Allah gave the means of success to Dhu al-Qarnayn.
- 2. No government can embrace the victory but with encouraging the helpful people and punishing the evildoers. This is the very principal which Dhu al-Qarnayn utilized. Ali-ibn-Abitalib (as), in his famous command to Malik-i-Ashtar, which is a consistent instruction for action in governing a country, says:
- "...The virtuous and the vicious should not be in equal position before you, because this means dissuasion of the virtuous from virtue and persuasion of the vicious to vice."<sup>11</sup>

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- 3. A difficult duty is never fit for a godly just government, and it was for this very reason that Dhu al-Qarnayn, after declaring that he would punish the unjust and reward the righteous a good recompense, he added:
  - “...we will assign easiness for him by our command”,
  - so that the righteous could be able to do it willingly and eagerly.
- 4. A vast just government cannot be heedless unto the differences and varieties of the life of people and their different conditions.
- 5. Dhu al-Qarnayn did not leave out even the group of people who, as the Qur’an says, could not understand a saying, and by any possible means, he listened to them and removed their difficulty.
- 6. Security is the first and the most important condition of a safe social life. It was for the same reason that Dhu al-Qarnayn undertook the most labourous works to provide it with them.

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- 7. Another lesson which can be learnt from this historical event, is that the main owners of social pain must take part in performing their own affairs, because their effort will surely be affective.
- Principally, an action which proceeds with the participation of the affected peoples both helps their innate talents to appear and they value the resulting consequence and try to protect it, because they have themselves participate in its construction.
- However, it makes clear that even a nation in the state of being retarded can practically prove such an important and marvelous development when they apply a right design and is properly administered.
- 8. A leader who has total faith in Allah Subhanahu wa Ta`ala does the Shukr of Allah for His Blessings . One of the concepts which is found frequently in the Qur'an is that one of most basic statements of the divine prophets is that they demand no wage or wealth from people for their invitation to truth.

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- 9. To secure the affairs from any point of view is another lesson of this Qur'anic story.
- 10. Howsoever powerful, vigorous, clever, wealthy and authoritative a person may be, and can afford great works, he must never boast and become proud. This is also another lesson that Dhu al-Qarnayn taught.
- 11. Every thing will be vanished, and the firmest and strongest buildings of this world will finally be destroyed even though they are built from some massive iron and steel.
- This is the last lesson of this event, a lesson for all those who imagine that this world is eternal, and practically try to amass wealth and earn ranks so unconditioned and greedily that as if there is no death and destruction.

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- The major source and study of this lecture is studied from some commentaries of the Qur`an and from al-islam.org website.
- For detailed study, from among other sources, also please visit:
- [www.al-islam.org](http://www.al-islam.org); and other sources like “The Holy Qur’an: with English translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait” by S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali; and other commentaries of the Qur’an.