STORIES FROM THE QUR'AN

SERIES 29

THE YOUTHS IN THE CAVE

The Story of the Companions of the Cave According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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إِذْ أَوَى ٱلْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى ٱلْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا۟ رَبَّنَآ ءَاتِنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا

"[Mention] when the youths retreated to the cave and said, "Our Lord, grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance."."

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:10

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who sent down the Book to His servant and placed no crookedness in it. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whom his Lord taught to say “in sha Allah” for every matter yet to come, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

May Allah make us and our young people like the youths of the cave: firm in tawhid, covered by mercy, and guided to right conduct. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook does not depict any human being or animal. It shows the **scenery** of a **cave mouth on a rocky hillside**, with **morning sunlight** slanting across the rocks without entering the cave.

The scene is taken from the words of Allah: ***"you would see the sun when it rose, inclining away from their cave on the right"*** (18:17). The Qur'an does not name the location of the cave, so the cover does not depict any actual site.

The cover does not depict the youths, their dog or any figure. The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = archaeological note; blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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THE YOUTHS IN THE CAVE

In Series 28, we saw the disciples who became ***supporters for Allah***. This series takes us to a group of ***youths*** who chose to leave their people for the sake of tawhid and took refuge in a cave — and Allah made them a ***sign*** for all mankind.

The story opens with a question: ***"Or have you thought that the companions of the cave and the inscription were, among Our signs, a wonder?"*** It is as if Allah says: this story is wondrous, but the creation of the heavens and the earth is more wondrous still. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:9

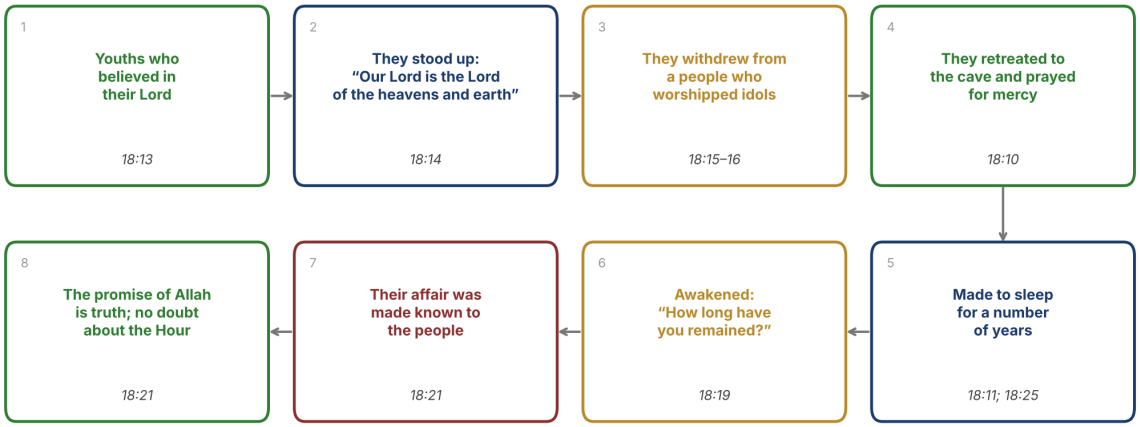


Figure 1: The flow of the story of the Companions of the Cave — from the faith of the youths to the proof of the resurrection.

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in the Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com.

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A WONDROUS STORY

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:10

إِذْ أَوَى ٱلْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى ٱلْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا۟ رَبَّنَآ ءَاتِنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

[Mention] when the youths retreated to the cave and said, "Our Lord, grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:10

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:11

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰٓ ءَاذَانِهِمْ فِى ٱلْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

So We cast [a cover of sleep] over their ears within the cave for a number of years.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:11

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:9–12 — THE SUMMARY BEFORE THE DETAILS

First: The cave and al-Raqim. ***Al-Kahf*** is a cave in a mountain. As for ***al-Raqim***, the commentators differ: some say it is the name of a valley or place, and some say it is ***an inscribed tablet*** recording their names and story — since ***raqim*** means something written. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:9

Second: A supplication when every road is closed. ***"Our Lord, grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance"***. They did not ask for wealth or victory — only ***mercy*** and ***guidance***.

Third: The story is summarised first. Verses 10–12 tell the whole story briefly: they went to the cave, prayed, were made to sleep, and were awakened ***"that We might show which of the two factions was most precise in calculating what [extent] they had remained in time"***. Then verse 13 onwards gives the details. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:12

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YOUTHS WHO BELIEVED

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:13

نَّحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِٱلْحَقِّ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَٰهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾

It is We who relate to you, [O Muhammad], their story in truth. Indeed, they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:13

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:14

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا۟ فَقَالُوا۟ رَبُّنَا رَبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُوَا۟ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ إِلَٰهًا ۖ لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ إِذًا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾

And We made firm their hearts when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never will we invoke besides Him any deity. We would have certainly spoken, then, an excessive transgression."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:14

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:13–14 — FITYAH: STEADFAST YOUTHS

First: A true story. ***"It is We who relate to you, [O Muhammad], their story in truth"*** — not an invented tale, and not one mixed with additions.

Second: They were young. ***"Indeed, they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance"***. Ibn Kathir notes that the young are quicker to accept the truth than the old who are steeped in the religion of their forefathers. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:13

Third: Hearts made firm. ***"And We made firm their hearts when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth"***.

Fourth: The honour of an obedient youth. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ named the youth who grows up in worship among the seven whom Allah will shade:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 660

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي خُبَيْبُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ »

سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لاَ ظِلَّ إِلاَّ ظِلُّهُ الإِمَامُ الْعَادِلُ، وَشَابٌّ نَشَأَ فِي عِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ، وَرَجُلٌ قَلْبُهُ مُعَلَّقٌ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ، وَرَجُلاَنِ تَحَابَّا فِي اللَّهِ اجْتَمَعَا عَلَيْهِ وَتَفَرَّقَا عَلَيْهِ، وَرَجُلٌ طَلَبَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ مَنْصِبٍ وَجَمَالٍ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ، وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ أَخْفَى حَتَّى لاَ تَعْلَمَ شِمَالُهُ مَا تُنْفِقُ يَمِينُهُ، وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ خَالِيًا فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Seven people Allah will shade in His shade on the Day when there is no shade but His: a just leader; a youth who grew up in the worship of his Lord; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for the sake of Allah, meeting and parting for His sake; a man who is called by a woman of rank and beauty, and he says: Indeed I fear Allah; a man who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand spends; and a man who remembers Allah in private and his eyes overflow with tears."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Bashshar, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar, from Khubayb ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from Hafs ibn 'Asim, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on one who sits in the mosque waiting for the prayer, Hadith No. 660. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 1031).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:660

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RETREAT TO THE CAVE

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:16

وَإِذِ ٱعۡتَزَلۡتُمُوهُمۡ وَمَا يَعۡبُدُونَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ فَأۡوُۥٓاْ إِلَى ٱلۡكَهۡفِ يَنشُرۡ لَكُمۡ رَبُّكُم
مِّن رَّحۡمَتِهِۦ وَيُهَيِّئۡ لَكُم مِّنۡ أَمۡرِكُم مِّرۡفَقٗا ١٦

[The youths said to one another], "And when you have withdrawn from them and that which they worship other than Allah, retreat to the cave. Your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy and will prepare for you from your affair facility."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:16

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:15–16 — WITHDRAWING FOR THE SAKE OF RELIGION

First: A clear argument. ***"These, our people, have taken besides Him deities. Why do they not bring for [worship of] them a clear authority?"*** Shirk has no proof at all.

Second: The greatest injustice. ***"And who is more unjust than one who invents about Allah a lie"***.

Third: Withdrawal when religion is threatened. ***"And when you have withdrawn from them and that which they worship other than Allah, retreat to the cave"***. The scholars explain that withdrawing from people is prescribed when one fears trial in one's religion. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:16

Fourth: A narrow cave, a vast mercy. ***"Your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy"***. They left a wide city, and Allah spread out His mercy for them in a narrow cave.

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THE SUN AND THE DOG AT THE ENTRANCE

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:17

وَتَرَى ٱلشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَت تَّزَٰوَرُ عَن كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ ٱلْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَت
تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ ٱلشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِى فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ ءَايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ مَن يَهْدِ ٱللَّهُ
فَهُوَ ٱلْمُهْتَدِ ۖ وَمَن يُضْلِلْ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُۥ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾

And [had you been present], you would see the sun when it rose, inclining away from their cave on the right, and when it set, passing away from them on the left, while they were [laying] within an open space thereof. That was from the signs of Allah. He whom Allah guides is the [rightly] guided, but he whom He leaves astray - never will you find for him a protecting guide.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:17

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:18

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ أَيْقَاظًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ ۚ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ ٱلْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ ٱلشِّمَالِ ۖ وَكَلْبُهُم
بَٰسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِٱلْوَصِيدِ ۚ لَوِ ٱطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمُلِئْتَ
مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ﴿١٨﴾

And you would think them awake, while they were asleep. And We turned them to the right and to the left, while their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance. If you had looked at them, you would have turned from them in flight and been filled by them with terror.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:18

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:17–18 — ALLAH'S SUBTLE CARE

First: Protected from the light. ***"you would see the sun when it rose, inclining away from their cave on the right, and when it set, passing away from them on the left"***. The sunlight did not fall directly on their bodies, while the air still reached them. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:17

Second: All of it a sign of Allah. ***"That was from the signs of Allah"***. And the verse closes with a reminder: ***"He whom Allah guides is the [rightly] guided"***.

Third: Turned over. ***"And you would think them awake, while they were asleep. And We turned them to the right and to the left"***. The commentators mention its wisdom: so that their bodies would not be worn away by the ground. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:18

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Fourth: The faithful dog. ***"while their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance"***. The Qur'an mentions the dog without a name or colour — see the Israiliyyat table. And Allah made them awe-inspiring: ***"If you had looked at them, you would have turned from them in flight"***.

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"HOW LONG HAVE YOU REMAINED?"

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:19

وَكَذَٰلِكَ بَعَثْنَٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوا۟ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا۟ لَبِثْنَا
يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۚ قَالُوا۟ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَٱبْعَثُوٓا۟ أَحَدَكُم بِوَرِقِكُمْ
هَٰذِهِۦٓ إِلَى ٱلْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنظُرْ أَيُّهَآ أَزْكَىٰ طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُم بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ
وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿١٩﴾

And similarly, We awakened them that they might question one another. Said a speaker from among them, "How long have you remained [here]?" They said, "We have remained a day or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord is most knowing of how long you remained. So send one of you with this silver coin of yours to the city and let him look to which is the best of food and bring you provision from it and let him be cautious. And let no one be aware of you."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:19

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:19–20 — THE MANNERS OF THE CAUTIOUS

First: The first question. ***"How long have you remained [here]?"*** They answered: ***"We have remained a day or part of a day"***. Then others said: ***"Your Lord is most knowing of how long you remained"*** — leaving knowledge to Allah.

Second: The best and purest food. ***"let him look to which is the best of food and bring you provision from it"***. The commentators explain "the best" as the purest and most lawful. Even in danger and hunger, they still chose what is lawful. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:19

Third: Gentle and cautious. ***"and let him be cautious. And let no one be aware of you"***. They thought the oppressive people were still in power: ***"Indeed, if they come to know of you, they will stone you or return you to their religion"***.

Fourth: Religion is worth more than life. ***"And never would you succeed, then - ever"***. What they feared most was not death, but losing their faith.

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THE PROMISE OF ALLAH IS TRUTH

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:21

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَعۡثَرۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ لِيَعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ وَعۡدَ ٱللَّهِ حَقّٞ وَأَنَّ ٱلسَّاعَةَ لَا رَيۡبَ فِيهَآ إِذۡ يَتَنَٰزَعُونَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ أَمۡرَهُمۡۖ فَقَالُواْ ٱبۡنُواْ عَلَيۡهِم بُنۡيَٰنٗاۖ رَّبُّهُمۡ أَعۡلَمُ بِهِمۡۚ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ غَلَبُواْ عَلَىٰٓ أَمۡرِهِمۡ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيۡهِم مَّسۡجِدٗا ٢١

And similarly, We caused them to be found that they [who found them] would know that the promise of Allah is truth and that of the Hour there is no doubt. [That was] when they disputed among themselves about their affair and [then] said, "Construct over them a structure. Their Lord is most knowing about them." Said those who prevailed in the matter, "We will surely take [for ourselves] over them a masjid."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:21

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 18:21 — A PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

First: The purpose of their discovery. ***"And similarly, We caused them to be found that they [who found them] would know that the promise of Allah is truth and that of the Hour there is no doubt"***.

Second: When people disputed. This happened ***"when they disputed among themselves about their affair"***. Allah answered their dispute with a living proof: a long sleep, then waking again. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:21

Third: Two views about a building. Some said: ***"Construct over them a structure. Their Lord is most knowing about them"***, while ***"those who prevailed in the matter"*** said: ***"We will surely take [for ourselves] over them a masjid"***. The verse reports what they said; it does not command it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself forbade taking graves as places of prostration (Sahih al-Bukhari 1330).

Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:21

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HOW MANY WERE THEY?

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:22

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًۢا بِٱلْغَيْبِ ۖ
وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ قُل رَّبِّىٓ أَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِم مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ۬
فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَٰهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِم مِّنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

They will say there were three, the fourth of them being their dog; and they will say there were five, the sixth of them being their dog - guessing at the unseen; and they will say there were seven, and the eighth of them was their dog. Say, [O Muhammad], "My Lord is most knowing of their number. None knows them except a few. So do not argue about them except with an obvious argument and do not inquire about them among [the speculators] from anyone?"

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:22

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 18:22 — MANNERS TOWARDS THE UNSEEN

First: Three human opinions. Three, the fourth their dog; five, the sixth their dog — ***"guessing at the unseen"***; and seven, the eighth their dog.

Second: The third view is not criticised. Ibn Kathir notes that Allah described the first two views as ***guessing***, but did not say so of the third — so it is closer to the truth. Yet Allah still closes with: ***"My Lord is most knowing of their number. None knows them except a few"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:22

Third: Do not argue without knowledge. ***"So do not argue about them except with an obvious argument and do not inquire about them among [the speculators] from anyone"***. This is the foundation of this series' method: we stop where revelation stops.

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SAY "IN SHA ALLAH"

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:23

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَاْىْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾

And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:23

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:24

إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱذْكُر رَّبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَهْدِيَنِ رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

Except [when adding], "If Allah wills." And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:24

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:23–24 — ENTRUSTING THE FUTURE TO ALLAH

First: A lesson in the middle of the story. ***"And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow"*** **—** ***"Except [when adding], "If Allah wills"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:23

Second: If you forget. ***"And remember your Lord when you forget [it]"***. Whoever forgets should say it when he remembers.

Third: The story of a prophet. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ told what happened when Prophet Sulayman عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ did not say it because he forgot:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5242

حَدَّثَنِي مَحْمُودٌ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ طَاوُسٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ دَاوُدَ ـ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلاَمُ ـ لأَطُوفَنَّ اللَّيْلَةَ بِمِائَةِ امْرَأَةٍ، تَلِدُ كُلُّ امْرَأَةٍ غُلاَمًا، يُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ الْمَلَكُ قُلْ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ. فَلَمْ يَقُلْ وَنَسِيَ،

فَأَطَافَ بِهِنَّ، وَلَمْ تَلِدْ مِنْهُنَّ إِلاَّ امْرَأَةٌ نِصْفَ إِنْسَانٍ ». قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « لَوْ قَالَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمْ يَحْنَثْ، وَكَانَ أَرْجَى لِحَاجَتِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: **"Sulayman son of Dawud, peace be upon them both, said: Tonight I will certainly go round to a hundred of my wives, and each of them will give birth to a boy who will fight in the cause of Allah. The angel said to him: Say, in sha Allah. But he did not say it, for he forgot. He went round to them, and none of them gave birth except one woman, who gave birth to half a human being."** The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Had he said in sha Allah, he would not have failed, and it would have been more hopeful for the fulfilment of his wish."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Mahmud ibn Ghaylan, from 'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani, from Ma'mar ibn Rashid, from 'Abdullah ibn Tawus, from his father, Tawus ibn Kaysan, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on a man saying: I will go round to my wives tonight, Hadith No. 5242. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 1654).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5242

Fourth: A prayer for nearer guidance. ***"Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct"***.

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THREE HUNDRED YEARS, AND NINE MORE

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:25

وَلَبِثُوا۟ فِى كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَٰثَ مِا۟ئَةٍ سِنِينَ وَٱزْدَادُوا۟ تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾

And they remained in their cave for three hundred years and exceeded by nine.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:25

SURAH AL-KAHF 18:26

قُلِ ٱللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا۟ ۖ لَهُۥ غَيْبُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ أَبْصِرْ بِهِۦ وَأَسْمِعْ ۚ مَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِۦ مِن وَلِىٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِى حُكْمِهِۦٓ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

Say, "Allah is most knowing of how long they remained. He has [knowledge of] the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth. How Seeing is He and how Hearing! They have not besides Him any protector, and He shares not His legislation with anyone."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/18:26

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 18:25–26 — KNOWLEDGE BELONGS TO ALLAH ALONE

First: The period stated by revelation. ***"And they remained in their cave for three hundred years and exceeded by nine"***. Many commentators explain that 300 years by the solar reckoning is about 309 years by the lunar reckoning. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 18:25

Second: Yet knowledge remains with Allah. ***"Allah is most knowing of how long they remained. He has [knowledge of] the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth"***.

Third: No partner in His rule. ***"They have not besides Him any protector, and He shares not His legislation with anyone"***. A story that began with youths rejecting shirk closes with an affirmation of tawhid.

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THE VIRTUE OF SURAH AL-KAHF

The surah that carries this story has virtues mentioned in authentic Hadith. First, as protection from the greatest trial:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 809

وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاذُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، عَنْ سَالِمٍ، بْنِ أَبِي الْجَعْدِ الْغَطَفَانِيِّ عَنْ مَعْدَانَ بْنِ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ الْيَعْمَرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَنْ حَفِظَ عَشْرَ آيَاتٍ مِنْ أَوَّلِ سُورَةِ الْكَهْفِ عُصِمَ مِنَ الدَّجَّالِ

«

TRANSLATION:

Abu al-Darda' رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whoever memorises ten verses from the beginning of Surah al-Kahf will be protected from the Dajjal."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from Mu'adh ibn Hisham, from his father, Hisham al-Dastuwa'i, from Qatadah, from Salim ibn Abi al-Ja'd al-Ghatafani, from Ma'dan ibn Abi Talhah al-Ya'mari, from Abu al-Darda' رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Prayers of Travellers, chapter on the virtue of Surah al-Kahf and Ayat al-Kursi, Hadith No. 809.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:809

The link is clear: the youths of the cave were saved from the trial to their religion in their time, and whoever memorises the opening verses of this surah is protected from the trial of the Dajjal at the end of time. Second, its recitation brings tranquillity:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5011

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ خَالِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرٌ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ، عَنِ الْبَرَاءِ، قَالَ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يَقْرَأُ سُورَةَ الْكَهْفِ وَإِلَى جَانِبِهِ حِصَانٌ مَرْبُوطٌ بِشَطَنَيْنِ فَتَغَشَّتْهُ سَحَابَةٌ فَجَعَلَتْ تَدْنُو وَتَدْنُو وَجَعَلَ فَرَسُهُ يَنْفِرُ فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحَ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ فَقَالَ « تِلْكَ السَّكِينَةُ تَنَزَّلَتْ بِالْقُرْآنِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Al-Bara' رضى الله عنه said: A man was reciting Surah al-Kahf, and beside him was a horse tied with two ropes.

A cloud covered him and kept coming closer and closer, and his horse began to shy away. In the morning he came to the Prophet ﷺ and told him about it. He said: **"That was al-sakinah (tranquillity) which descended because of the Qur'an."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Amr ibn Khalid, from Zuhayr ibn Mu'awiyah, from Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i, from al-Bara' ibn 'Azib رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chapter on the virtue of Surah al-Kahf, Hadith No. 5011. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 795).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5011

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WHAT THE QUR'AN DOES NOT TELL

The story of the Companions of the Cave is adorned with many added tales. The Qur'an itself forbids us to inquire about them among the speculators (18:22). Following Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (Series 1), we do not add outside details.

THE POPULAR STORY AND WHAT REVELATION SAYS

THE POPULAR STORY	WHAT THE QUR'AN AND AUTHENTIC HADITH SAY
The names of the youths and the name of their dog.	The Qur'an names neither the youths nor the dog. The popular names come from reports of the People of the Book.
The name of the tyrant king and the name of their city.	Not mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith.
The colour of the dog and where it came from.	The Qur'an only says "their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance" (18:18).
The story of Quraysh asking through Jewish rabbis as the reason this surah was revealed.	Reported by Ibn Ishaq; its chain does not reach the level of sahih. We do not build an argument on it.
The exact location of the cave.	The Qur'an does not mention it. Several places in Turkey, Jordan and Syria are claimed to be the cave.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: THE CLAIMED SITES

On the slope of **Mount Panayır (Pion)** near Ephesus (Selçuk, Turkey), a cave-and-church complex linked to the tale of the "Seven Sleepers" was excavated by the **Austrian Archaeological Institute in 1926–1928**. The excavation uncovered hundreds of graves from the **5th and 6th centuries CE** and inscriptions naming the seven youths — evidence that the site was a pilgrimage centre from Byzantine times (Miltner, 1937; Di Marco, 2023).

At **al-Rajib**, near Amman (Jordan), a cave with carved tombs and a mosque built above it was excavated by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in the 1960s, and is now known as **Kahf Ahl al-Kahf** (Di Marco, 2023).

Claim not included. The claim that any of these sites is the cave mentioned in the Qur'an is **not included**. Studies note that many sites are claimed to be the cave, but **none has been proven archaeologically** — and the Qur'an itself does not name its location.

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MERCY FOR THOSE WHO SEEK REFUGE

The story of the Companions of the Cave is not a story about sleep, but about ***faith that chooses***. A group of youths chose Allah over their people, a narrow cave over a wide city — and Allah made that choice a sign recited until the Day of Resurrection.

THE COMPANIONS OF THE CAVE ACCORDING TO REVELATION

	What Revelation Says	Lessons
Who were they?	"Youths who believed in their Lord" (18:13)	A youth who grew up in worship (Sahih al-Bukhari 660)
Their number	"My Lord is most knowing of their number" (18:22)	Do not argue over what brings no benefit
Length of sleep	300 years, and nine more (18:25)	"Allah is most knowing of how long they remained" (18:26)
Purpose of the story	"That they would know that the promise of Allah is truth" (18:21)	A proof of the resurrection
For us	Say "in sha Allah" (18:23–24; Sahih al-Bukhari 5242)	Recite and memorise al-Kahf (Sahih Muslim 809)

Figure 2: The Companions of the Cave according to the Qur'an and authentic Hadith — what revelation says and its lessons.

LESSONS FROM THIS STORY

First: Allah's creation is more wondrous than this story. (18:9).

Second: Ask for mercy and guidance when every road is closed. (18:10).

Third: Allah honours youths who believe. (18:13; Sahih al-Bukhari 660).

Fourth: Shirk has no proof at all. (18:15).

Fifth: Save your religion even if you must leave everything. (18:16, 20).

Sixth: Choose what is lawful even in hardship. (18:19).

Seventh: The resurrection is true. (18:21).

Eighth: Stop where revelation stops. (18:22, 26).

Ninth: Entrust every plan to the will of Allah. (18:23–24; Sahih al-Bukhari 5242).

Tenth: Protect yourself with Surah al-Kahf. (Sahih Muslim 809; Sahih al-Bukhari 5011).

CONCLUSION

The supplication of the youths was short, yet complete: ***"Our Lord, grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance."*** Each of us has our own "cave" — moments when we stand alone for holding to the truth.

May Allah spread out His mercy for us in that "cave", and protect us from every trial. Amin.

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In sha Allah, the series **Stories from the Qur'an** will continue with the next story — with the same method: the Qur'an, authentic Hadith, and solid archaeological findings only.

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Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an. https://tafsir.app/tabari/18/9

Al-Qurtubi, al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an. https://tafsir.app/qurtubi/18/21

HADITH AND COMMENTARIES

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ADDITIONAL HADITH CITED IN THE TEXT

Sahih al-Bukhari 1330 (the prohibition of taking graves as places of worship). https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1330

Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (neither believe nor disbelieve the People of the Book). https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4485

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

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CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

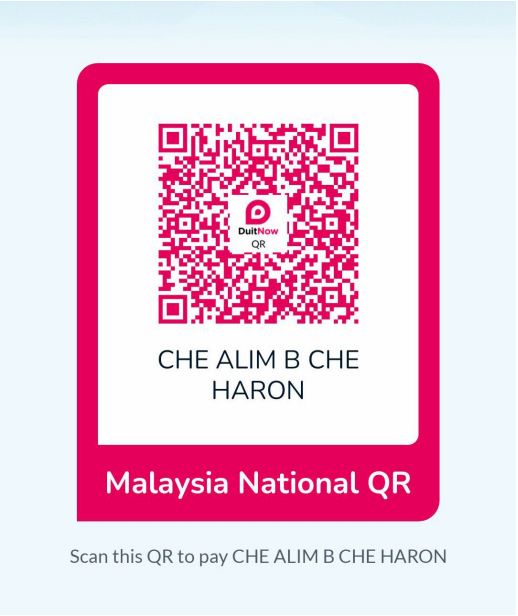
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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