

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

13th Taraweeh, Ramadan 1447 Hijri

Summary of Verses 18:75-21:50

Sura Al-Kahf (The Cave) (Verses 18:75-110)

(The story of Musa (AS) and the wise man continues from the 12th Taraweeh summary)

The wise man again reminds Musa (AS) of his promise of patience, and Musa apologizes.

And yet, if we think about it, Prophet Musa's reactions aligned with the teachings of Islam, which state that when we see someone doing something wrong, we must speak out against it, even if we cannot stop it with our hands. The sage was also right. His knowledge of the future, which Allah had blessed him with and that guided his actions, was beyond Musa's understanding.

The two incidents perplexed Musa because he could not understand or justify the sage's seemingly cruel and senseless acts. The third incident is different. Here, the roles are reversed in that Musa wanted to exact some sort of revenge, whereas the sage took the moral high ground of doing good despite confronting the indifference and hostility of the people of the town to their thirst and hunger.

"So they moved on until they came to the people of a town. They asked them for food, but the people refused to give them hospitality. There they found a wall ready to collapse, so the man set it right. Moses protested, "If you wanted, you could have demanded a fee for this." (18:77)

The wise man tells Musa after the third incident: *"This is the parting between me and you. I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience. (18:78)*

He then reveals the reasons behind his mysterious actions. He damaged the boat to save it and the people on it from a cruel king. He killed the boy because he was faithless and wicked and would have tormented his righteous parents if he had continued to live. *"As for the youth, his parents were people of faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude to Allah."* (18:80) This seemed even crueler than scuttling a boat but the sage knew, blessed with the knowledge that Allah gave him, that the youth could be a potential parricide. Notice the use of the word "we." Even though the wise man's capital punishment of the youth could seem like an unjustifiably cruel act, the word "we" suggests perhaps that he was not acting on his own but was inspired by a Higher Authority to remove a public scourge.

"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience." (18:82)

So what is the 'rush'd' here, and what are the lessons? Perhaps it is that we cannot judge others' intentions, no matter how knowledgeable or spiritually advanced we think we are. Even if the transcendent reality beneath manifest reality is beyond our understanding, we must never stop seeking knowledge. Life offers many perspectives, but we must reverently recognize that the ultimate Truth belongs to Allah alone.

Unfortunately, many exaggerated stories have developed around the unnamed sage, whether he was a prophet or not. This highlights our inability to truly understand the essence of Quranic verses, as we often focus on tall tales and distracting details that lack sanctity in the Divine Book. We must be cautious of such misguided tendencies.

In the allegory of Zul-Qarnain, we learn that worldly life, power, and wealth do not have to conflict with spirituality as long as we remain mindful of Allah and gratefully recognize His blessings. *"They said: 'O Zul-Qarnain! The Gog and Magog (also referred to in 21:96) do great mischief on earth. Shall we render you a tribute so that you might erect a barrier between us and them?' He said: 'The power in which my Lord has established me is better than tribute. Help me, therefore, with strength and labor. I will erect a strong barrier between you and them.'"* (18:94-95)

Unlike the wealthy man and his gardens, Zul-Qarnain recognizes that human work is temporary and that time will eventually turn all achievements into dust. When the barrier is constructed and Gog and Magog cannot climb or burrow through it, Zul-Qarnain said: *"This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust, and the promise of my Lord is true."* (18:98) Truly wise individuals understand that only the active consciousness of Allah (SWT) can save us from hardships and the arrogance that comes with success.

Perhaps the most intriguing of Zul-Qarnain's encounters was with the people *"for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun."* (18:90) Did he try to bring "modernity" to them, teach them how to attain a "higher standard of living?" No, *"... He left them as they were"* (18:91) To avoid disturbing their peace and harmony, Zul-Qarnain used technology to save people from Gog and Magog but left the primitive, innocent people unclothed

as they were. He balanced progress with tradition and drew strength from the past without being tied to it. Zul-Qarnain's example teaches Muslims to face modernity by blending tradition with the modern age. Who are these Muslims? They are the ones who do not dwell on the past but draw strength, courage, hope, honor, compassion, and sacrifice from it to improve the present and future. They recognize the power of tradition and lessons of history to guide the present and future without abandoning Ijtihad, which is the practice of independent thinking and reasoning.

There is another profound lesson we can learn from the example of Zul-Qarnain: religion and science are complementary rather than opposed. Yes, there will always be secularists and rationalists who see religion as a burden on civilization, and there will always be theologians who criticize science as something that has taken away meaning from life. However, Zul-Qarnain demonstrated that such a divide is silly and unreasonable. He is deeply spiritual, always recognizing Allah's mercy and thanking Him for his good work. At the same time, he uses his God-given talents in science and technology to help people overcome their struggles. He sees no conflict between reason and religion. Science focuses on the factual aspects of the natural world, while religion addresses transcendent questions of purpose and meaning. One deals with the "how," and the other with the "why." Both can work together to enrich our material and spiritual lives. There are theologians in Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and other faiths who find in the theory of evolution evidence of God's magnificent self-disclosure, and many scientists whose research prompts them to explore deeper questions about life—"Why are we here? Why do we suffer?"—which lie outside the scope of science. The unexplored space between faith and reason, between the sacred and the secular, invites open-minded people to seek spiritual and scientific truths. They see no conflict in recognizing that the universe is full of wonder and mystery that may surpass human understanding. Can

insights of this kind flourish if scientists and spiritual seekers nurture this uncharted territory with humor and humility?

There is a strong link between *ilm* (knowledge) and *taqwa* (mindfulness of Allah at all times, reflected in good deeds). One without the other is weak. If someone only understands what is intellectually correct without anything in their heart motivating them to do good deeds, their knowledge won't help them. On the other hand, a false sense of *taqwa* without *ilm* can be pointless. This is shown in verses (18:103-104): *"Say, (O Prophet), 'Shall we inform you of those who will lose the most in terms of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought they were gaining good through their actions.'"*

The virtues and rewards of good deeds are made clear: *"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds, their abode will be the Gardens of Paradise, wherein they abide eternally. They will not desire any change from it ..."* (18:107-108)

In this life, we are constantly searching and longing, but all such pursuits will end, and an unimaginably better life will begin for those blessed with *Jannatul Firdous* in the Hereafter.

We aspire to meet our Creator in a state of hope and grace. The concluding verse of Sura Kahf indicates not only the human qualities of the Prophet (s.a.w) but also how best to meet the Creator: *"Say: 'I am but a man like yourselves. The inspiration has come to me that Your God is One God. Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him do righteous deeds, and in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner.'"* (18:110)

(Sura Maryam is a Makki Sura)

Sura Maryam (Mary) (Verses 19:1-98)

(Context: Maryam is the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran. Three Prophets of 'Bani Israel' – Zakariya, his son Yahya, and Isa (AS) – whose lives overlapped - are mentioned in this Surah, as they are also referenced in Surah al-Imran revealed in Madinah (3:35-41). Prophet Isa (AS) is the last prophet of '*Bani Israel*.' '*Bani Israel*' means 'Children of Israel.' The Hebrew word 'Israel' translates to '*Abdullah*' in Arabic, meaning 'Servant of Allah.' It was the title given to Prophet Yaqub, son of Prophet Ishaq, one of the two sons of Prophet Ibrahim, the other being Prophet Ismail.) The birth of Isa, son of Maryam, is preceded by the birth of Yahya, son of Zakaria. Both are extraordinary events. Allah is the originator of the laws of cause and effect and, therefore, is not bound by these laws. He says "Be" and it "Is." An example: Zakariya asks his Lord in anguish how he can have a son in old age, and Allah responds: "... *That is easy for me. I did indeed create you before when you were nothing!*" (19:9)

When childbirth drives Maryam to the trunk of a palm tree and she cries out in pain, "*a voice cried to her from beneath the palm tree: 'Grieve not! For your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you.'*" (19:24)

What follows next is profoundly instructive: "*And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm tree. It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you.*" (19:25)

Even a woman in labor is told to try to get what she needs.

If we want Allah's blessings and aim to reach our goals, we need to put in some effort, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem.

Note also how precise Divine Words are. Maryam is instructed to shake the palm tree *toward* herself. If she were to give the tree a general shake, fresh

ripe dates would be scattered as they fell. Shaking it *toward* herself ensured that the dates fell around her, within easy reach.

In defending his mother's innocence and integrity, Prophet Isa (AS) emphasizes his human nature and his gratitude toward the One true God: *"He said: 'I am indeed a servant of Allah. He has given me revelation and made me a prophet. He has blessed me wherever I go and has commanded me to observe prayer and give charity for as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother, not overbearing or haughty. So, peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again!'"* (19:30-33)

The story of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his multiple encounters with idol-worshippers highlights the long struggle between Islam and polytheism. Ibrahim (AS) asks his father four separate times to abandon paganism, but his father threatens to stone him. Ibrahim severs ties with his father and his people to find comfort with his Lord. In return, Allah rewards Ibrahim. *"... We bestowed on him Ishaq and Yaqub, and each one of them We made a prophet."* (19:49)

Other prophets are mentioned - Musa, Harun, Ismail, Idris - who enjoined prayer and charity and spoke the Truth to their people: *"Those were some of the prophets on whom Allah bestowed His Grace, of the children of Adam, and of those whom We carried in the Ark with Noah, and of the children of Ibrahim and Israel whom We guided and chose. Whenever the Signs of Allah, the Most Gracious, were rehearsed to them, they would fall down in prostration and be in tears."* (19:58)

One notable aspect of Sura Maryam is that, out of its 98 verses, 72 end with the same two Arabic letters that have the sound of 'ya,' creating a

captivating rhythm. Another is the repeated appearance of the word 'Rahman' (Most Kind and Loving) a total of 16 times.

- *"She said, 'I seek the Rahman's protection from you if you are really God-fearing.'" (19:18)*
- *"So eat and drink and rejoice, and should you meet anyone, say, 'I have today vowed to the Rahman that I shall not speak with anyone.'" (19:26)*
- *"O my father, do not worship Shaitan, for he has rebelled against Allah, the Rahman." (19:44) (Pleading of Ibrahim (AS))*
- *"O my father, I fear a scourge will fall upon you from Allah, the Rahman." (19:45)*
- *"... Whenever the revelations of the Rahman are recited to them, they fall prostrating and weeping." (19:58)*
- *"Gardens of eternity which the Rahman has promised His servants ..." (19:61)*
- *"From each group, We shall drag out those most rebellious against the Rahman." (19:69)*
- *"Say, 'whoever goes astray, the Rahman will bear long with them ...'" (19:75)*
- *"Has he been made aware of the unknown, or has the Rahman given him a promise?" (19:78)*
- *"The day when We shall gather the righteous in multitudes before the Rahman." (19:85)*
- *"None shall have the benefit of intercession except those with permission from the Rahman." (19:87)*
- *"They said, 'The Rahman has begotten a son!'" (19:88)*
- *"That they should ascribe a son to the Rahman ..." (19:91)*
- *"... when it does not become the Rahman to beget a son." (19:92)*

- *"All that is in the heavens and on the earth shall return to the Rahman in submission."* (19:93)
- *"The Rahman shall bestow love on those who believe and do good."* (19:96)

According to scholars, the word '*Rahman*' (Merciful in a general sense, like "Allah is the Owner of vast mercy") is exclusive to Allah, meaning it is reserved for Allah alone. For example, if a Muslim is named '*Abdur Rahman*,' we must call him by his full name '*Abdur Rahman*,' not just '*Rahman*.' The same applies to '*Abdullah*,' which cannot be shortened to '*Allah*.' On the other hand, '*Rahim*' (Merciful in a more specific sense, like "Allah is the Owner of mercy that encompasses His entire creation") is one of Allah's attributes that can be used as a Muslim's name. Therefore, calling someone '*Rahim*' is acceptable. Also, note that '*Ar-Rahman*' is mentioned 57 times in the Quran across 18 Suras. Allah knows best.

(Sura Ta-Ha is a Makki Sura)

Sura Ta-Ha (Verses 20:1-135)

The theme of this Sura is the guidance Allah has offered humankind through His prophets. Most of the verses refer to Prophet Musa (AS) and emphasize that the fundamental truths inherent in all revealed religions are the same.

The Sura begins with Allah assuring His prophet (s.a.w) that *"We have not sent down the Quran to you to be a reason for your distress but only as an admonition from Him Who created the Heavens and the earth ..."* (20:2-3)

Then the story of Prophet Musa begins, a story suffused with symbolism and spirituality: *"Has the story of Musa reached you? Behold, he saw a fire, so he said to his family, 'you wait, I perceive a fire. Perhaps I can bring you some burning brand or some guidance at the fire.'* But when he came to the fire, he was called, '*O Musa, Indeed I am your Lord. Take off your shoes. You are*

in the sacred valley of Tuwa. I have chosen you. Listen, then, to the inspiration. Indeed, I am Allah. There is no god but Me. So serve only Me. And establish regular prayer for My remembrance. Surely the Hour is coming. I have kept it hidden for every soul, to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor. Therefore, do not let those who do not believe and follow their own lusts divert you from your mission, lest you perish."
(20:9-16)

This divine encounter is followed by Allah (SWT) showing Musa some of His miracles. The subsequent dialogue reveals the deeper truth that lies beneath what might seem ordinary to us.

"And what is that in your right hand, O Musa?" (20:17)

Allah is all-knowing, so He certainly knows the answer. We can suppose that Musa is right-handed and, as a shepherd, carries a staff to help keep his flock organized and fed. But we must remember that when the Divine Teacher asks seemingly simple questions, they open doors in reflective minds to deep insights.

"He (Musa) said: 'This is my stick, whereon I lean, and wherewith I beat down branches for my sheep, and wherein I find other uses.' (Allah) said: 'Cast it down, O Musa!' He (Musa) cast it down, and behold! It was a snake, moving swiftly. Allah said: 'Grasp it, and fear not, We shall return it to its former state. And press your hand to your side. It will come forth white and shining, without any disease, that We may show you some of Our Signs.'" (20:18-23)

What was just an ordinary stick in Musa's hand becomes another reality by Allah's command. Allah meets us at our level as an expression of His profound empathy, helping us see beyond the literal into the transcendent. He assists us in connecting the exterior with the interior, the visible and the hidden, when we sense His All-Encompassing Knowledge and Power.

Allah commands Musa to take on his new mission as a Prophet:

"Go to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds." (20:24)

Musa asks for more help from his Creator: *"O my Lord! Expand my breast, ease my task for me, and remove the impediment from my speech, so they understand what I say. And give me a helper from my family, Harun, my brother. Add to my strength through him, and make him share my task, that we may continuously celebrate Your praise, for You are Ever Seeing."* (20:25-35)

Allah responds to Musa's supplication: *"Granted is your prayer, O Musa!"* (20:36). Allah reminds Musa of the favors He bestowed on him earlier, as when he was saved as a boy after being thrown into a river. Allah then informs Musa that He has prepared him for his prophetic mission, and he and his brother are to go and confront Pharaoh. *"But speak to him softly, in the chance that he may heed your warning or fear Me."* (20:44) When Musa still expresses fear, Allah tells him, *"Fear not, for I am with you. I hear and see everything. So, go both of you to him and say, 'Indeed we are messengers sent by your Lord. Send forth, therefore, the children of Israel with us and afflict them not. We have come from your Lord with a Sign, and peace to all who follow the guidance. It has been revealed to us that punishment awaits those who reject and turn away.'"* (20:46-48)

When Musa and Harun delivered the message, *"Pharaoh said, 'Who, then, O Musa, is the Lord of you two?' Musa replied: 'Our Lord is He who gave to each his form, then guidance.'"* (20:49-50)

The stage is set for the battle between Truth and falsehood, between the ephemeral and the eternal.

The profound truth that describes all human beings is this:

"From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time." (20:55)

Duas are the essence of *ibadah* or worship. We should memorize and frequently recite verse (20:55) - *Minha' Khalaqna'kum Wafi'ha' Nu'eedukum Waminha' Nukhrijukum Ta'ratan Ukhra* - to remind ourselves that we come from the earth, that we will return to the earth, and that we will be raised from the earth on the Day of Judgment.

(It is important to remind ourselves from time to time that some of the good things that happen to us may be the result of Duas that our loved ones, especially parents and grandparents, made for us that Allah accepted. Such remembrance can also lead to grace and gratitude. As the 18th-century author George Eliot wrote: "... for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on un-historic acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.")

Prophet Musa's encounter with Pharaoh and his band of magicians offers contrasting and timeless lessons for tyrants and for those who seek guidance with humility. (See (7:109-125) in the 7th Taraweeh summary.) As soon as the magicians realized that they were engaged in mere trickery whereas Musa (AS) had brought the Truth from his Lord, the scales fell from their eyes: *"So the magicians fell into prostration. They said, 'We believe in the Lord of Harun and Moses.'"* (20:70)

Not so the arrogant. *"Then Pharaoh pursued them with his forces, but the waters completely overwhelmed them and covered them up. Pharaoh led his people astray instead of leading them aright."* (20:78-79)

The humble recognize the truth when they see it and seek knowledge that will bring them closer to Allah. They say, just as the Prophet (s.a.w) was instructed by Allah to say, *"... O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge."* (20:114)

The battle between good and evil is eternal, but Allah will give victory to the righteous in due time who fight for truth against tyrants whose weapons are injustice and violence: *"Do they see how many generations We have destroyed before them? They can still walk amidst the ruins of their dwellings. Surely in this are signs for people endued with understanding."* (20:128)

The importance of prayer is emphasized: *"... celebrate the praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting. Yes, celebrate for part of the hours of the night and at the sides of the day ..."* (20:130)

We are reminded not to strain our eyes with longing for things that others have and not to be swayed by the splendor of the worldly life *"through which We test them"* because *"... the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring."* (20:131)

A recurring theme in this Sura is the contrast between awareness and forgetfulness, between attentiveness and heedlessness. If we understand our obligations to Allah, we will stay on the Straight Path. Conversely, if we forget our duties and ignore His guidance, we become easy targets for shaitan.

(Sura Anbiya is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Anbiya (The Prophets) (Verses 21:1-50)

The Quran often reminds us of the stories of ancient prophets who preached the same core truth of the Oneness, Uniqueness, and Transcendence of

Allah. They demonstrate the ongoing and inherent unity of all revealed religions.

Those who are spiritually empty are asked to ponder the origin of the Universe and use their logic and reason to shed their unbelief: *“Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one unit of creation before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”* (21:30)

In discussing the hydrological cycle and its vital role in supporting life on Earth, the fertility of soil, the unique properties of fresh and seawater, river courses, underground springs and aquifers, and most importantly, the aquatic origin of life, the Quran places water at the forefront of natural phenomena on our planet.

The study of water brings together nearly all branches of natural sciences. We examine its properties as a solvent in chemistry, but understanding its molecular structure involves knowledge of quantum physics. Water is a simple molecule that scientists have studied extensively for centuries: two hydrogen atoms connected at a 104.5-degree angle from a central oxygen atom, forming a V-shape. This unique shape and the extraordinary physical and chemical properties—such as its forms as steam, liquid, and ice—lead to significant consequences. For example, ice's lower density causes it to float, lakes in winter freezing from the top down rather than the bottom up, which allows aquatic life near the bottom to survive, and contributes to the evolution of life itself. From the water cycle that nourishes the Earth to the protoplasm that forms the foundation of every living cell, water is the essence of life, embodying both the macrocosm and microcosm. Recently, scientists have created two new forms of ice under extreme low temperatures and high pressure: amorphous ice, which consists of a jumble

of molecules with unique properties. One form is high-density amorphous ice, denser than water, and the other is low-density amorphous ice, less dense than water. Though amorphous ices are not found on Earth, they exist in outer space, comets, interstellar clouds, and icy worlds like Europa, a moon of Jupiter. This only demonstrates that water, a molecule without which life could not exist, still harbors scientific mysteries waiting to be uncovered.

Allah will test us through the inevitable encounters with both good and evil in our lives, as well as the ultimate reality of death. The body dies at death, not the soul. The two are reunited on the Day of Resurrection. The key point is that in our test-filled life on earth, both calamities and comforts will challenge us. Sometimes, wealth can pose more of a test to faith than poverty. In all these cases, we must prove our resilience to Allah, for it is to Him that we will ultimately return. *"Every living being shall taste death. And We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must you return."* (21:35) (Verses related to death are also found in 4:78, 6:162, 12:101, 23:99, 45:26, 56:60, 62:8, 63:10)

Allah's justice will encompass all actions great and small: *"We shall set up scales of justice for the day of judgment so that not a soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be no more than the weight of mustard seed, We will bring it to account, and enough are We to take account."* (21:47)

Who are the successful ones? *"In the past, we granted to Musa and Harun the criterion for judgment and a Light and a Message for those who would do right (the Muttaqin, that is, those who practice Taqwa). Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts (Yakhshauna, from Khashyat, those who fear the Lord by resisting the whispering of Shaitan), and who hold the Hour*

of Judgment in awe (Mushfiqun, from Ishfaq, those who are mindful of the consequences of their action on the Day of Judgment.)” (21:48-49)

Note the three kinds of positive fear, which are love for and constant awareness of Allah mentioned in these two verses. First in the hierarchy is *Taqwa*. Next is *Khashyat*. Finally, there is *Ishfaq*. Also consider that many thoughts, both good and bad, pass through our minds daily. The quality of these thoughts influences the development of good character. We are fallible human beings. Bad thoughts come to us from time to time. While it is true that we will be held accountable only for our actions and not for our thoughts, bad thoughts can be dangerous because they often turn into dark desires. If we don't combat these dark desires, they can turn into ambition and then into action. Once we act on these desires, they become habits, and before we know it, these habits enslave us! Our lives reflect our thoughts, which is why we must strive to have wholesome thoughts. So, while occasional bad thoughts are part of being human, it's important not to dwell on them. Instead, seek Allah's help to eliminate them by reciting "*Auzu Billahi Minash Shaitwanir Rajeem.*" (I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Shaitan.) With intention and effort, bad thoughts can be replaced by noble thoughts and ultimately thoughts of Allah's mercy and generosity.