

Moses and Khidr (AS)¹

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In the name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

Two divine books are mentioned in the Holy Quran, the Torah and the Gospel (Old and New Testaments). In addition to these two, the Holy Quran also mentions Abraham and Moses (AS)'s scriptures: **“Most surely, this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham’s and Moses’s”**². But we have not received any collected scripture from Abraham aside from some words the succeeding prophets retold from him. Even in the Holy Quran, these two books are said to have problems, meaning that the Torah and the Gospel had been misrepresented during the events and upheavals of ages.

Very few religious laws are stipulated in the Gospel, as among words Jesus Christ (AS) said is: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the earlier prophets’ scriptures; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”³ Hence, in comparison with the Torah, there are few jurisprudential laws in the Gospel, and although both the Torah and the Gospel have borne some deviations, I have always recommended reading them- at least in order to compare them with the Holy Quran- and then you will see in these books that they are mostly biographies of the prophets, especially the Gospel which is similar to the prophets’ biographical narratives. However, there are stories in the Quran too, such as the stories in the surah of Al-Kahf (The Cave) that now I am going to talk about. But the style of story-telling in the Quran as it states is: **“We tell you stories in a highly desirable fashion”**⁴. Some exegetes pronounce this decent phrase in Arabic as the meaning turns into “the best of stories”⁵, but the stories God tells cannot be either better or worse. All the stories God has told in the Quran are fine and fascinating. Besides, the whole surah of Al-Qasas (The Storytelling) is about one single story. Therefore, we cannot say one of its stories is better than the others. In Arabic, “al-qisas (القِصَص)” is the plural of “story” but “al-qasas (القَصَص)” means “storytelling”. Hence, in this verse He (God) states: **“We tell you stories in a highly desirable fashion”**. This is we; humans, who discriminate things in favor of ourselves. But to God, everything is desirable. He wants the best result for us from this

¹ This article has been transcribed based on two different speeches; the first part was made on July 19, 2007, and the second, on June 20, 2004. They have been edited as one single article due to the same topic areas. Please find the Farsi version in *Irfan-e-Iran (Mysticism of Iran)*, edited by Dr. Seyed Mustafa Azmayesh, Haqiqat Publishing, 2007, No. 31 & 32, pp. 5-22.

² The Quran, Al-Ala (The Most High), 18 & 19: إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ

³ Matthew 5:17.

⁴ The Quran, Joseph, 3: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ

⁵ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ

story.

If you compare the stories in the Quran with the stories in the Torah and Gospel, you will see that the stories of the Quran are brief and abridged. God has maintained the theme and the spiritual abstract of each story to demonstrate that the purpose of storytelling in the Quran is not just telling stories but attracting attention to the inner self and the spiritual warnings, whereas the existing Torah and Gospel are totally composed of stories together with explanations and descriptions. There is no doubt that most of the religious laws of Moses (AS) had been stated in the Torah and, later on, other Jewish religious books such as Talmud were published which is a reference of Jewish religious laws. It would have been great if all words of Jesus and Moses (AS) had been mentioned in the Torah and Gospel, but unfortunately, many of their words were removed or distorted. In addition to other aspects, the Quran is better than these books also in this aspect. The Quran is the only divine book in which all the laws and orders of God and all the educational instructions of the Prophet are stipulated and have been protected and immune from any censorship and distortion. Of course, the Jews do not believe in the divinity of the Torah as we do in the Quran; as we believe the Quran is the very word of God, they believe the Torah is divine because it contains their prophet's words. Just like the Gospels as the Christians believe they were written by some humans but inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Many of the laws in the Torah were distorted, because it was not collected, written down and available for public- unlike the Quran. Moreover, it was kept hidden by rabbis and Jewish leaders and if other people wanted to know about the laws, they would have to ask them. It was a pretty normal thing but the questions and answers were not entirely based on truth and facts. Rabbis changed many laws to satisfy their own personal taste and desires. This way, this divine book was actually monopolized by a few certain people and the others were considered untrustworthy. Therefore, after the Jews had been attacked and after all the events they had gone through, the Torah was damaged as well, but later on, they found a chance to collect and edit it.

An example of imposing personal taste on the provisions of the Torah by rabbis is when a member of noble and aristocratic families had violated orders or a law of the Torah, rabbis would have mitigated the punishment of the offenders and at times, they would have completely changed the related law. For example, it is said that a woman and a man who belonged to Jewish royal families and also were both married committed adultery. The rabbis, on the one hand, were not willing to implement the harsh stoning penalty on them as it was stipulated in the Torah for this crime, and on the other hand, they did not want to acquire notorious reputation by disobeying the laws of the Torah. Hence, they said: "We are from Medina so we have to obey the government of Medina. Let us ask Muhammad who is the governor and whatever he says we will obey." The rabbis hoped that he would be lenient and let the adulterers go. So they went to ask the Prophet (PBUH). By the time, of the decent surah of Al-Maeda (The Table), some verses were revealed to him in relation to this case.⁶ So he said to them that God had sent them the Torah and in this case, He had issued the stoning penalty that they would have to decide in accordance with it⁷. The rabbis did not want to disclose this law as they had kept it hidden, so they were not satisfied with this verdict. In the meanwhile, Muhammad (PBUH) had an impulse of afflatus that prompted him to assign Abdullah Bin Suriy'a who was one of the most reliable

⁶ The Quran, Al-Maeda, 41-50: يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزُنكَ الَّذِينَ

⁷ See the Torah, Deuteronomy , 22, for the stoning penalty

rabbis as an arbitrator between him and them. The Prophet asked for Abdullah Bin Suriy'a and said to him: "I need you to swear to God, Moses and the Torah and tell me whether or not God has mentioned the stoning penalty for adultery in the Torah". Bin Suriy'a answered: "Yes, and I swear to God, if you had not wanted me to swear to God, Moses and his Torah, I would have not disclosed it to you and I would have kept this verdict hidden". So, when the Jews criticized Bin Suriy'a why he had revealed the law of the Torah, he said: "Muhammad wanted me to swear, and if I had not been afraid of telling lies and then of being punished by God, I would have not told the truth".⁸

This law was of the secrets that became disclosed. There were other secrets, too, that they did not reveal. Take for instance the stories of the fellows of Al Kahf (The Cave), Moses and Khidr (AS) and Dhul-Qarnayn mentioned in the surah of Al Kahf of which the rabbis and priests had been aware but the people had not, because they had been hidden just like other secrets. The reason of revealing the surah of Al Kahf, as the thinkers say, was because unbelievers of the Quraysh tribe sent a couple of agents to the rabbis and priests to learn about some questions to which the Prophet Muhammad could not reply in order to test him and see whether the subjects and ideas he talked about were from God or there were other people who taught him those things. So they told them: "Ask Muhammad about the stories of the fellows of Kahf, Moses, he who Moses was expected to follow, and he who traveled east and west of the world. If he answers in accordance with what we know, it will be obvious that he is right and God teaches him so, because we never tell anybody these secrets". Of course, it is widely known that there had not been any impulse of afflatus for 40 days and after this period, there came the surah of Al Kahf and the Prophet publicized and talked about all these three stories.⁹

The point in this subject matter that may catch the attention from the very beginning is that there were other stories too, but why the rabbis and priests hid them? Perhaps, it was because each of these stories had mysteries that if they had been publicized, they would have provoked the Jews and Christians into criticizing and demonstrating against their religious leaders.

In the story of Kahf, some young men who were monotheists and belonged to royal families did not dare to express their own ideas because they lived in the time of a cruel king. In addition, they were sometimes forced to behave in contrast to their own beliefs and they did not know what to do. So they ran away and left all their governmental positions for the sake of God. This story would have caused people to criticize their Christian or Jewish leaders who had been obeying the heartless and cruel kingdom by the time. They might have said: "If the fellows of Kahf did the right thing, then why are you behaving otherwise?" From the viewpoint of mysticism, this story shows that if your life is at stake in where you live due to worshipping God, you have to either risk your life or to emigrate therefrom- as the Prophet (AS) and the Muslim Muhajirun did- but you shall never worship anything other than God. This emigration from one's self is the first milestone in the path toward Allah.

⁸ After this event, Abdullah Bin Suriy'a asked the Prophet a couple of questions and the Prophet replied to them all correctly. When Bin Suriy'a found answers to all his questions, he admitted the Prophet's authenticity and converted to Islam. Immediately, although the rabbis had known him as a knowledgeable man, they stated: "Mohammad has bribed Abdullah Bin Suriy'a too, and we cannot trust him anymore."

⁹ The fellows of Kahf, Moses and Khidr, and Dhul-Qarnayn

The story of Moses and Khidr describes the next stage of this path. This step is the step of finding Khidr or the Teaching Master. The place to meet him is in Majma-ul-Bahrayn (The Confluence of the Two Seas), denoting someplace toward the materialistic life at one side, and toward the spiritual life at the other. He has dominance over the two seas. To follow Khidr, the follower should be spiritually faced toward God as well, and simultaneously, holding on to the human and materialistic aspect with which they live in this world. In Majma-ul-Bahrayn, Khidr will take your hand but he specifies a condition: in case you need to follow him and learn things, you should not criticize him and complain about anything. He teaches you that everything you see on the surface has a meaning in disguise that you are not aware of. If Khidr damages and scuttles a ship in the sea, this is better than a superficially healthy one that you would like:

Should Khidr break the ship in the sea
There are plenty of blessings in this, surely¹⁰

This story has shown to us that Moses could not be promoted by himself. Despite owning the religion, and the prophetic position, he was sent to someone else to be instructed so that he could be able to attain that transcendental rank. As a matter of fact, Khidr has no other duties other than teaching the travelers on the path of Allah (how to move on). This story unfolds that Sharia (religious laws) and Tariqa (tasawuf/mysticism/sufism) must be practiced simultaneously. God tells our Prophet the same thing: **“You are only a warner, and beware there is a guide for every tribe (every generation)”**¹¹. By the time, in addition to the role of warning, the Prophet had the role of a guide, as the following Imams after His Holiness did.

But Jewish laws were so strict and austere, and the Jews were so drawn into the Sharia superficially and skin-deeply that were distracted from Tariqa which is the real meaning and the spirit of the divine laws. This story pointed out that there had been Tariqa too, beyond the Sharia that they were practicing, meaning even Moses had to have a teacher too; a spiritual teacher. Tariqa is the cicerone. The rabbis did not want the people to find it out because in that case, what Jesus said about their words and actions- totally based on a skin-deep and superficial religion; Sharia without the spirit of Tariqa,- would come true.

The story of Dhul-Qarnayn was also the same. He, too, served the people on the will of God, such as fortifying a rampart against the invasion of Gog and Magog. He labored and worked hard all the time. Perhaps this very factotum-like manner would be an excuse in favor of people to criticize their religious leaders why they did not behave like Dhul-Qarnayn and why they did not set their main goal to serve the creatures of God. From the mysticism viewpoint, the story of Dhul-Qarnayn talks about the third stage of God’s path in which God grants His guardian the inherent dominance and kingdom, as He established Dhul-Qarnayn in the east and west of the world and moved him to and from east and west and taught him the ways. He states in the Quran: **“Surely, We established his power in the land for him and granted him the way to access all things, so he followed the way (that Allah showed)”**.¹²

Due to these reasons, they had kept these three stories hidden from people and the

¹⁰ Masnavi-I Ma'navi, Book I, 237, corrected by Towfiq Sobhani, Rozaneh Publishing, 1999:

گر خضر در بحر کشتی را شکست صد درستی در شکست خضر هست

¹¹ The Quran, Al-Rad (The Thunder), 7: **أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ**

¹² The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 84-85: **إِنَّا مَكِّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا**

Prophet revealed these very stories to people. Even now they are not mentioned in the existing Holy Bible. But the story of fellows of Kahf is mentioned in the other Christianity references. To protect their selfish interests, they hid these stories. They, especially the rabbis, protected their own interests rather than practicing and enforcing the divine decree; their own interests and not necessarily in favor of the Jewish tribe. That is they cared only for their own power and superiority. If they had guarded the interests of the Jewish tribe, the Jewish tribe would not have been subjected to these attacks and problems, so to speak.

However, as I have said earlier, the existing Torah and Gospels have been respected by Muslims, first, because these books are in the names of the prophets we approve of. Second, they were written by those in whom the prophet of that time trusted. Obviously, the authors never claimed that they spoke or wrote in behalf of God, or that these words were revealed to Jesus by God, because it is obvious that they are narratives.

Here, among these three stories, we will pay more attention to the story of Moses and Khidr. Of the verses in the Quran which have mentioned the necessity of mysticism (Tariqa) and its conditions in detail are verses relating to Moses and someone- **“...one among our servants...”**¹³- who is Khidr, in the opinion of the exegetes. There is a consensus among Muslims that words in the Quran must not be disarranged, even for a single conjunction. There are many verses in which if a single letter is interchanged by another, apparently there will be no or a slight difference in the meaning, but no one is permitted to do so, such as substituting a single conjunction (و) with another (ف). If they do, they have insulted the Islam intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, in these stories and also other ones in the Quran, every single word and letter must be taken into consideration, as nothing is useless and of no account. About the spokesperson of this divine word, meaning the Prophet (PBUH), the Quran says: **“He speaks not out of his desire, but he speaks whatever is revealed to him by the afflatus”**¹⁴. As Mevlana says:

Although the Quran is from the Prophet’s mouth
He who believes not it is by God is impious¹⁵

Some people at the moment behave like the rabbis and are not willing to tell the mystical truth of this story due to some reasons. Therefore, they make the spiritual point and the mysticism of this important story unimportant and they simply ignore it.

All of you know the story in detail but I am reminding some noticeable points in brief:

Majority believes that the “Moses” mentioned in this story is Moses the Prophet. Once, Moses (AS) said to a righteous man who was accompanying him: I am assigned by God to go to Majma-ul-Bahrayn (The Confluence of the Two Seas) to meet a servant of God. This way, he

¹³ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 65: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا

¹⁴ The Quran, An-Najm (The Star), 4-5: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

¹⁵ The Masnavi-i Ma'navi of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi (Mevlana), book 4, 2112:

گرچه قرآن از لب پیغمبر است هر که گوید حق نگفته کافر است

took that righteous man with him. The exegetes believe this man to be Joshua, son of Nun; a disciple to Moses (AS) who became his successor later on. In this story he is entitled “the righteous man”. Also in the story of Kahf, the fellows are entitled as plural “the righteous men”: **“Indeed, they were some righteous men who believed in their Lord”**¹⁶. In Islam, Ali (AS), too, has been entitled **“There is no righteous man like Ali, there is no sword like Zulfiqar”**¹⁷. All these can be as evidence to see who the real chivalrous and righteous man is. Anyway, Joshua went with him and they took some food which was dried fish. After they had traveled a long distance, Moses (AS) said to the righteous man (Joshua): “let us eat the food as we are tired and hungry.” Joshua apologized and answered: “While we were sitting on a rock on the way, I forgot about the fish, and Satan caused me this forgetfulness, also, the fish revived miraculously and jumped into the sea”.¹⁸ Moses said: “We must go back to that place quickly because it was there I was looking for”.¹⁹ When they got back there, they met Khidr.²⁰ Then Moses asked Khidr to let him accompany and follow him.²¹ Khidr accepted him on some conditions.²² Moses went with Khidr and after this point, the righteous man (Joshua) has not been mentioned in the Quran. Khidr scuttled a boat somewhere on the sea. Moses protested. Later on, Khidr explained: **I**²³ decided to damage the boat so that the cruel enforcer could not confiscate it on the sea:

To release it from the tyrant
Khidr broke down the ship

Be broken, for the broken will be saved
Be in need (of God), when in need, it is safe²⁴

Then they encountered a child, Khidr killed him. When Moses questioned, Khidr explained later: “That child was an evil one who would cause his righteous parents to take the blasphemers’ way. **We**²⁵ decided to kill and annihilate him and God will grant the parents a righteous child instead”. Here, Khidr stressed **“We decided”**, whereas previously he had said **“I decided”**. So they moved on until they happened to see a broken wall. Khidr fixed the wall

¹⁶ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 13: إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ

¹⁷ لا فتى الا على لا سيف الا ذوالفقار

¹⁸ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 63: إِذْ أَوْيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْخُبُوتَ وَمَا أَنسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا

¹⁹ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 64: قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبِغُ فَارْتَدَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا

²⁰ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 65: فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا

²¹ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 66: قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَيْكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَ مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا

²² The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 70: (He said: If you want to follow me, then do not question me about anything until I myself speak to you about it) قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُخْبِرَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

²³ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 79: فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَّلَكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا

²⁴ The Masnavi-i Ma'navi of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi (Mevlana), book 4, 2756-2757:

خضر کشتی را برای آن شکست تا تواند کشتی از فجار رست
چون شکسته می رهد، اشکسته شو امن در فقر است اندر فقر رو

²⁵ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 81: فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا

without asking for a wage and later he explained about this act: “**God decided**²⁶ to maintain that wall because it belonged to two little orphans and there was a treasure hidden under it. The will of God has been exerted to protect the treasure until they become adults. That was why I fixed it.”

The story indicates that even prophets were not exempted from practicing and they were trying to improve spiritually. The difference is, God orders them directly. Therefore, God directly ordered Moses: “Go to Majma-ul-Bahrayn to meet a servant of Ours. Follow him and learn from him”. But God does not speak to us directly. He tells our Prophet to say to his people: “**You are only a warner, and beware that there is a guide for every generation**”²⁷, you give them warning; you people should find your own guide. Who is the guide and what are his characteristics? The guide must have the characteristics God has told about Khidr. First, “**a servant of Ours**”²⁸, and he confesses to serving God. Second, “... **whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves**”²⁹, he has learned knowledge that God has granted him, not the worldly sciences. Of course, there is no doubt that the worldly sciences are useful for living but there is another science which is above all. Sheikh Najmuddin Kubra has been entitled “The Manufacturer of Saints” in mysticism. It has been said that only 12 men were initiated by him and due to his attractiveness, power and spiritual training, they achieved perfection in a short while and were assigned by Sheikh to guide people. It means, after the initiation, all the 12 men traveled spiritually and found the true knowledge. Therefore, this science cannot be worldly because one cannot learn worldly sciences in a short time, quite the contrary; they have to practice and struggle for a long time. But if God wills “... **whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves**”, He will grant that true knowledge in a moment. Of other characteristics of the guide is that we have to find him in Majma-ul-Bahrayn. Majma-ul-Bahrayn means the confluence of worldly and otherworldly essences, the materialistic life and the spiritual life. One might reach the highest ranks and become complete but might not be able to complete anyone else. The guide must be aware of both the surface and the depth of perceptions. One of the manifestations of the surface is Sharia which is necessary for all the incomplete and the complete practitioners to be familiar with and put it into practice.

Another point in this story is Joshua’s forgetting to tell Moses (AS) about reviving the fish. The secret is, on his inner path, Joshua had not reached a position to be able to serve Moses and did not deserve to accompany him, so he forgot about the fish reviving. Besides, Joshua did not know that a characteristic of that servant is that he is located in Majma-ul-Bahrayn and it is the confluence of the two seas, one is the sea of life and the other is the sea of non-existence and death. These two never mingle but in Majma-ul-Bahrayn. Here, the fish can go back from the sea of non-existence and death to the sea of life (because it had been dead). Without any doubt, the fish here is the symbol or the secret of the follower’s heart which had been dead before meeting Khidr and when it is provided with the guidance of Khidr, it will come alive and revive. In this story, the dead fish and its reviving matter is told symbolically and mysteriously. Take what the Quran states for instance: “**Acknowledge Allah and his messenger when they call on you to**

²⁶ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 82: فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا

²⁷ The Quran, Al-Rad (The Thunder), 7: إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

²⁸ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 65: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا

²⁹ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 65: عَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا

that which gives you life".³⁰ Apparently we are bodily alive, but heeding this divine call makes us alive spiritually. Because of this, the fish came back to life. About Saint Simon Peter; the successor of Jesus (AS), and his brother Andrew; who also was an apostle, it is told in the Gospel that when Jesus first met them while they were fishing in The Sea of Galilee³¹. He said to them: "Follow me so I will make you hunters of people". What Jesus meant was people's hearts. Jesus (AS) made two spiritual fishermen out of the two simple fishermen so they could revive the hearts of those in need of God.³²

Joshua did not know what the purpose of that journey was. He just served Moses and whatever Moses ordered he obeyed. For this reason, he deserved to accompany Moses until the place where he forgot the fish and left it. When they came back and Moses followed Khidr, Joshua did not go with them any longer and the Quran mentions only Moses and Khidr from this point. On his spiritual path, Joshua went as far as he found out that Majma-ul-Bahrayn was where Khidr was (is) staying at and could (can) revive the dead, and that is Khidr the Guide. Thereafter, Joshua did not have the capability to go further as the ranks are different in the spiritual path. For example, in weightlifting, one can lift weights as heavy as his ability allows. Prophets have different capability levels as well; such as what Khidr says to Moses at the end of this spiritual journey: **"He said: This shall be separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience"**³³. But our Prophet achieved the rank in which when Gabriel accompanied and ushered him in the Ascension and showed him the heavens, they reached someplace where Gabriel pointed out to the Prophet: "Take this way". The Prophet asked: "Why are not you going with me?" Gabriel answered: "If I take one step further, my wings and feathers will blaze".³⁴

Should I transgress by a strand of hair
Light of epiphany burns my entire feather³⁵

This story indicates that the Prophet's mental and spiritual power is higher than that of Gabriel's; the archangel who assisted all prophets and was also revealed to them. Moses (AS) had the capability to accompany Khidr but Joshua did not. However, it was earlier mentioned that in spite of all the efforts Moses (AS) had made, he could not be patient until the end of the journey and Khidr said to Moses (AS): **"This shall be separation between me and you"**. Accordingly, Joshua could not persist in the journey in the first place. Therefore, it is unclear what happened to Joshua after this point; nothing heard from him. For this reason, he (Joshua) remembered the fish revived after they had passed Majma-ul-Bahrayn. This forgetting is different from other normal ones. So where the Quran quotes from Joshua: **"I forgot about the**

³⁰ The Quran, Al-Anfal (Spoils of War), 24: اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ

³¹ Also Kinneret, Lake of Gennesaret, or Lake Tiberias

³² Matthew 4: 18-20 & Mark 1: 16-18.

³³ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 78: قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

³⁴ Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 18, Beirut, Dar-ol-Ehia El Toras Publishing, 1983, P. 382, Chapter 3: لو دنوت أنملة

لاحترق

³⁵ Collection of Sa'di, Collected by Mazahir Mosaffa, Tehran, Rozaneh Publishing, 2005, The Bustan (The Orchard), P 158: 84:

اگر یک سر موی برتر برم فروغ تجلی بسوزد برم

fish”³⁶, there is a meaning in it. Why did not God tell Moses and Joshua that it was Majma-ul-Bahrayn in order to prevent them from passing it, while it was God who told Moses to go there? Joshua’s forgetting was because his capability to accompany Moses (AS) had been until Majma-ul-Bahrayn and after that, to walk and cross the worldly and materialistic sea to the sea of spirituality he did not have the capability yet. That was why he forgot about the fish and was not aware of what was happening. So, he took this forgetting for granted. Here, we come to an understanding that none of the Quranic phrases is pointless or aimless.

After Moses and Khidr started their journey, for three times or three stops, the Quran relates all the wrongdoings to men not to God. In the Quran, God states: **“(O men!), whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from your self”**³⁷. It is like someone’s hand is trembling, the hand trembles, but he does not. His spirit is not happy with this trembling but the hand goes against the will of spirit and continues shaking. The same relation is between a sinful man and God, as He states: **“Surely Allah is not in need of you (your good deed); and He does not like when blasphemy nears His servants”**³⁸, just like when the spirit is not happy with the hand trembling. That is why some sages and mystics say that blasphemy is potentially determined by but not pleasing to God. When Khidr wanted to scuttle the boat, he said: *“I decided”*. Later, he explained why he had done that damage. He explained: “I did it because I did not want that tyrant to arrest the owners of the ship and commit violence”. When he killed the child, the killing was done by Khidr, but he mentioned himself together with God because God wanted to grant those parents a righteous child instead of that child. Here, he said: *“We decided so”*. Is it a kind of polytheism to say *“God and I decided so”*? No, it is not. There is an idiomatic phrase in Farsi which literally says: He takes something in with hand and at the same time pushes it out with leg³⁹. He (God) relates the wrongdoing side to His creature but sends the blessing from His own side. Because of this, this saying so is not polytheism. It is a job-sharing policy managed by God. It is like He orders His servant: “You seemingly do the damage, and then I will fix it”:

You go on stuttering and stammering
God Almighty will correct everything⁴⁰

In the end of the journey, when the wall was falling down and they fixed it without expecting anything in return, here Moses protested; Khidr explained later: “There was a treasure under the wall which belonged to two little orphans. God wanted to protect that treasure for them. If the wall had fallen down, the treasure would have been found by people and they would have stolen it”. So he said: *“God decided so”*. Although, fixing the wall had been done by Khidr and Moses, but Khidr totally negated authority of their own. It was the last level of which Moses did not have the tolerance.

³⁶ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 63: فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْخُوتَ

³⁷ The Quran, An-Nisa (Women), 79: مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنَ نَفْسِكَ

³⁸ The Quran, Az-Zumar (The Troops), 7: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ

³⁹ One pretends he does not have anything to do with the subject matter but at the same time he pretends he does.

⁴⁰ The Masnavi-i Ma’navi of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi (Mevlana), book 4, 344:

همچنین اشکسته بسته گفتنیست حق کند آخر درستش کو غنیست

From another viewpoint, we can infer that in these three stages, Khidr wanted to gradually show Moses how the entire world-dominance of God works. This level cannot be achieved unless one reaches the “fanā'-fi-Allah” (Dissolved in God/Nirvana). That was why Khidr related doing the first event to himself as Moses was in the lowest level, the second event to God and himself, and the third, to God only. The highest level or point of the mysticism path is that the follower sees no influence in the universe other than that of God’s.

In this story, there are not only varieties of hints but also some instructions for us. The most important instruction for us is that it tells: Find your own guide. But where? In Majma-ul-Bahrayn, where the life and the afterlife, and the outermost and innermost selves meet, find the complete guide who can complete you. Another point is when some Joshua accompanies some Moses; there must not be any forgetfulness and inattentiveness. In case this forgetfulness is out of one’s will, God will forgive and return him to the first stage, but will not allow him to accompany (the guide) anymore. Even if, (it is assumed impossible), Joshua had gone further along with Moses, even for two steps, he would have been devastated, flared up. Of the other points is, when accompanying the divine guide, we must not protest against what we lack knowledge of. We must obey the order, until God, out of kindness, teaches us the meaning of it.

Sultan Ali Shah; His Holiness, wrote a thorough version of this story in the exegesis of Bayan-os-Sa’ada and then His Holiness Reza Ali Shah, translated it (from Arabic into Farsi) and also added some clarity to publish a book titled “The Holy Quran and the three mysterious mystical stories”⁴¹. This book is recommended for further reading.

⁴¹ 3rd Edition, Tehran, 1986.