



THE COMPANIONS OF THE CAVE

After Hazrat Isa's (Alaihis Salaam) ascension towards the skies, the condition of Christians worsened miserably. People started worshipping idols and started compelling others to do the same. Especially one of their kings named Decius (Daqiyanos) was so cruel that if anyone refused to worship idols, he would kill them.

The companions of the cave (Ashaab-e-Kahf) were the esteemed people of the city of Ephesus and were the respected courtiers of the king. But these people were true believers and were extremely fed up of idol worshipping. In order to safeguard their faith and after having enough of King Decius' cruelties, they ran away from his court. They took refuge in a cave in a nearby mountain and went to sleep. They remained in this state of sleep for a period of more than three hundred years.

When Decius searched for them and came to know about their presence in the cave, he became extremely furious. He stirred his wrath and rage by passing an order to barricade the cave with a stone wall, so that the captives may die there and the cave turns into a grave for them. However, the person who was delegated to execute this task by Decius was a very pious and a faithful person. He engraved the names of the companions of the cave, their number, and their whole incident on a slate and after placing it in a copper box, he buried it in the foundation of the wall that he erected. Likewise, he preserved a similar slate to this one in the royal treasury too.

After a few days, the king Decius died and kingdoms kept changing until a very kind-hearted and just king, named 'Badrus' sat on the throne of the kingdom. He ruled the country for sixty eight years with great glory. During his reign, religious sectionalism began and some people started refusing the resurrection after death and the Day of Judgment. Seeing such state of his people caused the king a lot of pain and grief. As such, he confined himself in a house and started praying extremely humbly in the court of Almighty Allah with tearful eyes saying, "Oh Allah, reveal such a sign that people start believing in the resurrection after death and on the Day of Judgment."

This invocation of the king was accepted. Coincidentally, a shepherd selected the same cave as a shelter for his goats, and brought the wall down. Just after the wall fell down, the people were terrified to such an extent that those who brought the wall down ran from that spot in a state of trembling. The companions of the cave woke up from their sleep by the command of Allah Ta'ala and started exchanging greetings (Salaam) and engaged in talking to each other. They then performed their Ṣalaah and when they felt hungry, they said to one of their companions 'Yamleekha', "Go to the bazaar and get some food. Also, secretly find out what Decius intends to do about us."

After coming out of the cave, Yamleekha went to the market. He was astonished to see that Islam was spread everywhere and people were openly reciting the Kalima of Hazrat Isa (Alaihis Salaam). After seeing all this, Yamleekha was amazed and exclaimed with astonishment, "Oh Allah! What is happening here? In this city, it was a crime to even take the name of Islam. How and from where has this revolution come today?" Afterwards, he went to a bakery to get food and gave a coin of the time of Decius to the baker. This coin was no longer in use and there was no one alive who could recognize this coin either. The shopkeeper became suspicious, thinking that perhaps the possessor of this coin had discovered some old treasure. Therefore, the shopkeeper

handed him over to the authorities. They began interrogating him about the treasure and said, "Tell us, where is the treasure?" Yamleekha said, "There is no treasure. This is our currency." The authorities said, "How shall we believe this coin is yours? This coin is three hundred years old and centuries have passed since this coin was in use. This coin is no longer used and you are still young. So tell us clearly so this myth can be solved."

After hearing this, Yamleekha said, "You tell me, how is the king Decius?" The authorities said, "Today, there is no king with this name on the face of the earth. Yes, hundreds of years ago there was an evil-hearted and unjust king with this name, who was an idol worshipper." Yamleekha stated, "It is a matter of only yesterday that we fled due to his fear to safeguard our faith and our lives. My companions are in a nearby cave. You people come with me. I will make you meet them." Therefore, the authorities and leaders of the city reached near the cave in large numbers.

The companions of the cave were waiting for Yamleekha. When there was a delay in his return, they presumed that Yamleekha may have been arrested. When they heard a loud noise of people coming from the entrance of the cave, they thought that perhaps the army of Decius had arrived for their arrest. Therefore, these people sincerely engaged in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ala and repentance. The authorities discovered the copper box when they reached the cave. They took the slate out and read its contents. They discovered that the names of the companions of the cave were written on it, and it was also mentioned that they are a group of true believers who have taken refuge in this cave to safeguard their religion due to the fear of Decius. Therefore, upon coming to know about this news, Decius barricaded this cave with a wall to confine them. The author further wrote on the slate that, "I have mentioned these facts with the intention that whenever the cave may open, people become aware of what the companions of the cave went through."

The authorities were stunned to read the account written on the slate. These people informed King Badrus about the event. Immediately, King Badrus rushed to the cave along with his courtiers and the distinguished people of the city. The companions of the cave came out of the cave, embraced the king and revealed their entire story. King Badrus fell into prostration and thanked Allah Ta'ala that his invocation was accepted. Almighty Allah had revealed such a sign that strengthened everybody's belief about the resurrection after death. The companions of the cave prayed that Allah Ta'ala protect the king and his kingdom. The companions of the cave said greetings, went back inside the cave and went to sleep. Allah Ta'ala gave them death in the same state. King Badrus made timber coffins and placed the sacred bodies of the companions of the cave inside them. Almighty Allah infused such a dignity in the hearts of the people about the companions of the cave that no one had the courage of going near the cave's entrance. This is how Almighty Allah preserved the bodies of the companions of the cave. After this, King Badrus constructed a Masjid at the entrance of the cave, appointed an annual day, and asked people to visit it on that day like an Eid day.

Allah has mentioned the account of the companions of the cave in the Holy Qur'an saying, "Did you know that the people of the cave and people close to the woods were Our exceptional signs? When the young men took refuge in the cave and said, "O our Lord! Grant us mercy from yourself, and provide guidance for us in our affair." We then thumped upon their ears in the cave for a number of years (meaning put them to sleep). We then awakened them to see which of the two groups more accurately tells the period of their stay there. We relate to you their story with

truth; they were some young men who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance. [*Surah 18, Verses 9-13*]

When there was a conflict of opinion amongst people regarding the number of companions of the cave, then Allah Ta'ala revealed the following verse, "Now they will say, they are three and the fourth one is their dog, and some will say they are five and the sixth one is their dog without seeing, guessing at random, and some will say, they are seven and the eighth one is their dog. Say you, "My Lord knows well their number, none knows them but a few, so debate not about them, but the discussion to the extent outwardly expressed, and ask not to any man of the Book about them. [*Surah 18, Verses 22*]

It has been narrated by Hazrat Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Abbas (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) that, "I am amongst those few people who know the number of the companions of the cave," adding that "the number of companions is seven and the eighth was their dog." [*Tafseer Saawi*]

Regarding the number of days that the Ashaab-e-Kahf remained asleep for, Allah Ta'ala mentions in the Holy Qur'an, "And they stayed in their cave for three hundred years and nine more." [*Surah 18, Verses 25*]. When this verse was revealed, the pagans said that they are aware about the Ashaab-e-Kahf's stay in the cave for three hundred years but they do not know about the nine year period. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "You people are counting on the basis of solar years whereas the time mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is according to the lunar years. At the end of every one hundred solar years, there is an addition of three lunar years." [*Tafseer Saawi*]

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to seek knowledge and to understand the message and teachings of the Holy Qur'an, Ameen.

[*Compiled from Aja'ibul Qur'an Ma' Ghara'ibul Qur'an by Shaikh-ul-Hadith Hazrat Allamah Abdul Mustafa A'zami Rahmatullah Alaih*]