

**Yasir Qadhi (2020). Lessons from Surah al-Kahf. Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd. 240 pp<sup>(1)</sup>.**

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Life is about tests. Everyone has to encounter multi-faceted tests within their lives. Being rich or poor, able or disabled, and knowledgeable or mediocre are not binary categories which inform whether someone is superior to the other, but are rather tests for us whether we are among the failures or the successful in the Afterlife. Surah al-Kahf (Chapter 18) is one of the important surah which bring our focus on the importance of the many tests mankind are given. Shaykh Yasir Qadhi unpacked the surah by highlighting the four important tests or fitnah, alerting mankind or Muslims in particular to open their minds on the reality of the contemporary world.

As an American Muslim who first graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree, has 10 years of Islamic studies in the renowned Islamic University of Madinah, and currently an expert in Islamic theology, his knowledge on both religious and worldly matters are worth emulating. Yasir Qadhi later continued his journey for knowledge in Yale University, furthering his studies, and was awarded his doctoral certificate. With such background, he has gained exposure on Islamic studies from both the Islamic and Western culture.

In a standard fashion, he began his book (Lessons From Surah al-Kahf) <sup>3</sup>mentioning the time-frame of when the surah was revealed (within the first to fourth year of da'wah in Makkah), the importance of memorizing the first 10 verses to gain protection from Allah against the Antichrist, and the blessings of reciting the surah, especially weekly, in order to bless oneself with Nur or shine from Allah SWT. In the process, he also explains how Surah al-Isra' is related to this surah. The test of fitnah in the surah concerns four tests, the test of religion or aqidah, wealth and family, knowledge and status, and lastly power and prestige. The important ideas in Surah al-Kahf have already been discussed by

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many scholars and writers of different outlooks such as Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni (born 1930), Imran N. Hosein (born 1942), Mufti Menk (born 1975), and Nouman Ali Khan (born 1978). However, the main takeaway message that Shaykh Yasir Qadhi wants us to learn is as follows.

First, the Quran is the source of our protection, and when we are persecuted, we should seek refuge from Allah SWT by bringing ourselves towards the Quran. Surah al-Kahf (The Cave) is an analogy of the Quran; this is referenced from the seven people believed to be followers of Jesus AS who sought refuge in a cave in the story of The Cave of The Seven Sleepers. One of the questions that he wanted to deal with was about the Muslims who are living in non-Muslim countries at the time of persecution. According to him, if the persecutions mean that the Muslims are not allowed to practice Islam or are forced to worship idolatries, and they have the financial means to move to another country, then there is an obligation for them to migrate or seek refuge from another place, just like the Seven Believers. It is important, according to him, not to go in detail over the story of the Seven Believers, and Allah SWT mentioned in the last portion of one of the verses of the Surah (Quran, 18:22). Explanations on the incident are little. And any discussions over it should only be on the surface.

Second, the stories of either the two brothers, cousins, or companions over the test of wealth should merit our attention, especially when Rasulullah SAW is reported to say that an important test of his ummah is their wealth. It is clear that many people fail this sort of test when they become arrogant, thinking that the wealth that they either inherited or gathered is a sign of Allah's blessings upon them instead of a test. In the Surah, Allah informs us of how arrogant one of the brothers were when they entered his garden (Quran, 18:35). One should understand that not only are there four important stories relating to fitnah in this Surah, but messages which are similar to sermons exist in between the four stories generally.

The third is regarding the story of Musa AS and Khidr AS, in which important dimensions of discussions are given. According to Shaykh Yasir Qadhi, one should not be deluded by their imagination of the stories of Khidr, believing that such figure could be immortal. After all, according to Shaykh Yasir Qadhi, such assumption is not within the teachings of Iman in our religion. Khidr was a mortal being, a contemporaneous of Musa, who was not only blessed with worldly knowledge, but also the aspect of metaphysical knowledge. What is important, according to him, is to understand that our knowledge and status can blind us to the fact that we should humble ourselves in front of Allah SWT, and everyone we meet in this world have things which we can learn from. In short,

knowledge can be obtained from anyone, and the best form of knowledge is knowledge that can make us be humble in front of Allah SWT.

The last part of the parable in the Surah concerns power and privilege. The story of Zulkarnain and the Gog and Magog is mentioned. These two beings have been discussed by many; some even relate Zulkarnain to Alexander the Great, and the story of Gog and Magog with many elements of inventions and incidents. While such stores may inquisitively create curiosities, experts should be the ones to deal with such stories. The important lesson which we should take from this story concerning the test of power and privilege is to make sure that we should be responsible when authority is given to us. This applies to the authority in settings such as a father in a family, an educator in a classroom, a boss in an office, and of course the authority of a leader in a nation.

The last two verses, 109 and 110 should not be glossed over for the simple reason that the benefits of understanding these two verses are tremendous. While verse 109 informs us of the infinite vastness of Allah's Knowledge, the last verse of Surah al-Kahf informs us that we should have the ability to follow the footsteps of Rasulullah. After all, he was also a human being (except that God's Words were revealed through him), and his role was to teach us Tawḥīd, Risalah, Ākhirah, and Sharī'ah.

Followers of Shaykh Yasir Qadhi may already be familiar with his lectures on Surah al-Kahf on YouTube. Hence, reading his books should be a smooth process. His ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written should be tapped by every Muslims and others who are interested in Islamic knowledge. Hence, it is not only important to read his books such as this, but also to follow his hundreds of lectures on YouTube.