

## The Meaning of Sabab as the Reason for the Victoriousness of Dhul-Qarnayn

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### Abstract

In the light of the fact that the Qur'ān is connected to the divine knowledge, this article examines the exegetic opinions and the definitive religious realities, and compares and analyzes them in order to decode the mysterious references made by the Qur'ān to the unmatched victoriousness of Dhul-Qarnayn in designing and founding the infrastructure of a magnificent civilization with a highly developed management and technology. The unique management of Dhul-Qarnayn in his crossing over the globe, opposition to oppression, promotion of justice, technological skill in the construction of a dam, domination over enemies, the creation of an enduring security for the citizens, and finally, the processing of a monotheistic cultural system are the goals that are mentioned in the Qur'ān 18:84-98. All these goals are fulfilled outstandingly due to Dhul-Qarnayn's adherence to a reality called "sabab." From the viewpoint of the majority of exegetes, the paramount instance of sabab is "knowledge or its instances or results," based on which this mysterious character could achieve all those successes. Accordingly, this article specifically inspects the story of Dhul-Qarnayn and some other prophets of God who – based on the qur'ānic verses – relied on knowledge to significantly contribute to the excellence of the magnificent civilizations of their own eras. Then, it is concluded that to revive the glory of the civilization of the early centuries of Islam and to achieve a civilization appropriate to the advanced culture of Islam, Muslims have no way other than embarking upon various types of science and producing knowledge. In the light of the foregoing points and the verses and narrations that depict Imām Mahdī's government and civilization, we might claim that the multifaceted character of Dhul-Qarnayn is an illustration of the complete, comprehensive, and impeccable character of Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) in the End of Days.

### Keywords

Civilization, Imām Mahdī's government, Dhul-Qarnayn, Sabab, Knowledge, Qur'ān.

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## **Introduction**

One of the main issues that has always attracted the thinkers in the domain of reason and thinking, especially in the realm of humanities, is the identification of the factors that affect the movement of the society to growth and excellence or decay or degradation. Consequently, we face a variety of different opinions and viewpoints of the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, philosophers, and sociologists.

However, what has attracted the Muslim thinkers the most is the noble Qur'ān's verses and teachings in this regard. These are the teachings that were put into practice by Muslims in the early centuries of Islam to establish a magnificent civilization, one which shined for centuries at the height of glory, power, and development in various sciences such as literature, philosophy, and medicine. This profound change was only because of the highly accurate guidance provided by the Qur'ān, which repeatedly emphasized in different forms in many verses that the movement of the society and history is based on rules and laws. It taught its followers that the blissfulness and affliction, brilliance and decline, and growth and decay of the nations and civilizations were caused by some factors that developed in the society, and no ascension or degradation was without reason or haphazard, nor it would be in future. It stipulated that in this realm, accidents, chance, or luck have no role, and it outspokenly asserted: "... Allāh does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts. But when (once) Allāh willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect" (Qur'ān 13:11).

The Qur'ānic verses, Islamic narrations, and scientific rules and achievements in all domains clearly express this reality that a foundational, precise, and wonderful order governs all elements of the world of existence – from atoms to huge celestial bodies and their interrelationships – and there are rules governing the individual and collective lives of the humans as part of the world of existence. These are called "sunnatullāh" by the Qur'ān.

There are some verses in the noble Qur'ān that deem industry and material advancements in a society as favorable issues. Following these verses, the human understands that he should achieve developments in this domain in order to achieve a desirable state of life. For instance, God talks about Prophet David in the Qur'ān and says: "It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will ye then be grateful?" (Qur'ān 21:80). This is the same coat of mail that is talked about in other verses: "We bestowed Grace aforetime on David from ourselves: "O ye Mountains! Sing ye back the Praises of Allāh with him! and ye birds (also)! And We made the iron soft for him;

(Commanding), "Make thou coast of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armour, and work ye righteousness; for be sure I see (clearly) all that ye do" (34:10-11).

It is also said about Dhul-Qarnayn: "... and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends" (Qur'ān 18:84). According to the opinion of the majority of exegetes, any industry might be considered as the instance of sabab, because it says at the beginning of the same verse "Verily We established his power on earth..." (ibid.). It was because of this that he could make a huge and historical dam with special features.

A little attention to these verses shows that at least part of the knowledge intended by these verses is the same as natural knowledge.

On the other hand, it can be said that there are many verses in the Qur'ān that call the human to think about the quality of creation and its wonders. In these verses, phrases such as "didn't you see?", "don't they observe?", "and look...", "don't you think?", "tell travel on the land," and "is there anyone who accepts the advice?" call the human to broadly use the material and spiritual aspects of the divine creatures in order to attain his perfection. Certainly, a considerable part of this path relies exclusively on the application of sensory and natural sciences.

### **Statement of the problem**

One of the informative stories of the Qur'ān is the story of Dhul-Qarnayn, which can be examined from various angles. One of these angles is the examination of the specific skills of Dhul-Qarnayn in various issues such as his wonderful travelling ability, extensive ability in the establishment of justice, technological capabilities, the provision of stable security for the citizens of his society, and reliance on the foundational teachings of monotheism and resurrection to create a divine culture that is appropriate to a divine civilization<sup>1</sup> that aims at taking the human to his true perfection. These are all the requirements of the establishment, development, consolidation, and management of a stable trustable civilization. This set of knowledge is given in the Qur'ān 18:83-98:

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1. With civilization we mean a set of material and immaterial human achievements in a certain area, country, or age, or an advanced or orderly intellectual and cultural mode in any society that is represented in the advancement in society, art, and the social and political institutions. Another meaning of civilization is having advanced and perfected institutions, organizations, achievements, culture, skill, and behavioral manners (Anwarī, 2003: the entry *civilization*; citizenship, getting used to city dwellers' manners, the cooperation of the people of a society in the social, economic, religious, political, and suchlike issues; Mu'īn, 2007: the entry *civilization*).

“(83) They ask thee concerning Zul-qarnain. Say, ‘I will rehearse to you something of his story.’ (84) Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends. (85) One (such) way he followed, (86) Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water: Near it he found a People: We said: ‘O Zul-qarnain! (thou hast authority,) either to punish them, or to treat them with kindness.’ (87) He said: ‘Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before). (88) But whoever believes, and works righteousness, he shall have a goodly reward, and easy will be his task as We order it by our Command.’ (89) Then followed he (another) way, (90) Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun. (91) (He left them) as they were: We completely understood what was before him. (92) Then followed he (another) way, (93) Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word. (94) They said: ‘O Zul-qarnain! the Gog and Magog (People) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightest erect a barrier between us and them?’ (95) He said: ‘(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute): Help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them: (96) Bring me blocks of iron.’ At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, He said, ‘Blow (with your bellows)’ Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said: ‘Bring me, that I may pour over it, molten lead.’ (97) Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig through it. (98) He 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.’”

### **The meaning of tamkīn**

What does “tamkīn” to God mean?

This word originates from the root word “makana” that means residing with authority, and brings about some effects such as magnificence, highness, reign, power, intensity, easiness, and staying at a place (Muṣṭafawī, 1982, vol. 11: 151).

Moreover, with regard to the interpretation of this word in the foregoing verse, it is suggested:

“God brought earthly and heavenly means and instruments under his control. For example, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful (a) that God had brought clouds under his control. He got on the clouds and went wherever on the earth he wanted. Then he descended there, owned it,

dominated it, and took measures for its interests. He was [also] given a light due to which the night and the day were the same to him” (Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 6: 757).

Undoubtedly, there is an obligatory relationship between Dhul-Qarnayn’s makānat, ability, power, and dominance and his possession of “sabab”: “Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the asbāb to all ends.”

Then, what is the real meaning of “sabab”?

In the wonderful story of Dhul-Qarnayn, the word “sabab” is used to mean mystery, cause, and reason of Dhul-Qarnayn’s ability and dominance over the earth and its inhabitants and is repeated four times in the Qur’ān 18:84, 85, 89, and 92, in the indefinite mode “sababan.” The linguistic context of the verses might suggest a close and meaningful relationship between this word and Dhul-Qarnayn’s makānat and abilities. It seems that by the correct understanding of this word (sabab) and its role in the foregoing story, we can find the source of some of Dhul-Qarnayn’s abilities.

Due to the role and status of Dhul-Qarnayn as – at least – one of the symbols of successful government management in the noble Qur’ān, if we can find some of the secrets of his success in the management of the various problems of the citizens, we can use these secrets and techniques in the process of the establishment of the qur’ānic civilization or at least the revival of the magnificence of the bright Islamic civilization in the early centuries of Islam, and give in an illustration of a positive, bright future in this regard.

### **The literal meaning of Sabab**

The literal meaning of sabab is rope (Farāhīdī, 1989, vol. 7: 203). The plural form of the rope that is used to ascend the date palm is called asbāb. It is noted in the Qur’ān “... let them mount up with the ropes and means” (Qur’ān 38:10). This is used to refer to the verse “Or have they a ladder, by which they can (climb up to heaven and) listen (to its secrets)?” (Qur’ān 52:38). Finally, any instrument is called sabab (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991: 392).

Similarly, Ṣiḥāh, Qāmūs, and Aqrab take its first meaning to be rope and its second meaning to be instrument. Ibn Athīr says: Any instrument is metaphorically called sabab (Qurashī, 1993, vol. 3: 206).

### **The meaning of sabab from the viewpoint of the exegetes**

All in all, the exegetes have suggested the following opinions about God’s intention of the sabab that He gave to Dhul-Qarnayn:

“The special knowledge through which one can do everything and achieve his goals” (Ibn Abī Ḥātam, 1998, vol. 7: 2382; Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 6:

756; Suyūfī, 1984, vol. 4: 247; ‘Ayyāshī, 1960, vol. 2: 342; Baghawī, 1999, vol. 3: 212);

“Knowledge and understanding” (Ibn Jazī Gharnāfī, 1995, vol. 1: 473);

“The means of doing deeds” (Suyūfī, 1984, vol. 4: 247);

“Ma‘ānī Wujūh” (Sulmī, 1991, vol. 1: 40);

“A way to undertake holy struggle against the disbelievers” (Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. 7: 88);

“Residences and lands” (Suyūfī, 1984, vol. 4: 247);

“Knowledge in different languages” (Ibn Kathīr Damishqī, 1998, vol. 5: 171);

“Control over clouds” (ibid.);

“The knowledge of asbāb and different ways of the different parts of the earth” (Muqātil b. Sulaymān, 2002, vol. 2: 600);

“Whatever people need” (Baghawī, 1999, vol. 3: 212);

“Whatever kings need to conquer cities and fight their enemies” (ibid.);

“A way to achieve prophethood” (Fakr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 21: 459; Nayshābūrī, 1995, vol. 4: 458);

“Whatever Dhul-Qarnayn needed to reform his kingdom” (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 21: 459).

However, the specification of the generality of the verse is different from its appearance and such a specification is not possible but through evidence. Therefore, it can be said that the meaning of the verse is that since God had given Dhul-Qarnayn the means of everything, whenever he intended something he got close to it and achieved it (ibid.). Moreover, the “bestowment of the sabab of everything” means that Dhul-Qarnayn was given the necessary means that are usually used by people to achieve their important goals of life, including intellect, knowledge, faith, physical ability, ample assets and army, expansive lands, good management, accurate administration, strength, power, armed forces, human power, material facilities, and all material and immaterial means and ways to achieve his great goals (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 13: 360; Makārim Shīrāzī, 2000, vol. 9: 350).

In addition to the story of Dhul-Qarnayn, the word sabab has been used in three other qur’ānic verses in its plural form, with the possible meanings of “stairs and ways, doors, and ties and connections”:

In the Qur’ān 38:10, “asbāb” is taken to mean stairs and ways through which one can go up to the skies (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 17: 184). God uses sarcasm and denial in this verse and says: “Or have they the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all between? If so, let them mount up with the ropes and means (to reach that end)!”

Moreover, in the Qur’ān 40:36, the word asbāb is interpreted as the ways and doors of the sky. In this verse, the Pharaoh asks Hāmān to make him a

tall building so that he might get to the ways and doors of the skies (Muqātil b. Sulaymān, 2002, vol. 3: 713; Maḥalī, 1995, vol. 1: 474; Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 21: 198).

It seems that only in the Qur’ān 2:166 the word *asbāb* is not stipulated as knowledge, and rather, it is interpreted as ties and connections through which the human connects with his relatives and others (Qurṭabī, 1986, vol. 2: 206; Kāshānī, 1954, vol. 1: 94; Sabziwārī Najafī, 1986, vol. 1: 192). Some have taken its general meaning (i.e. any instrument or tool) into account (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 1: 408). With regard to this verse and in the light of the multiple inner meanings that exist in the verses on the one hand and the eternity of the qur’ānic verses on the other hand, we cannot reject that the theme of this verse includes the means of communication such as telephone, telegraph, the Internet, and the auditory and visual media in general. The reason is that the means of communication used by the present-day relatives and family members are suchlike technologies.

#### **The relationship between following sabab and the achievement of knowledge and technology**

Reflecting on the statements of the exegetes and the received narrations on the meaning of *sabab* in the story of Dhul-Qarnayn and also considering the Qur’ān 38:10 and 40:36, it gets evident that the highly emphasized point in the stances taken by the majority of exegetes from the early days of Islam until now is their consensus on the reality of “ilm” (knowledge) and its role in empowering and equipping Dhul-Qarnayn and his evident domination of the earth. This point is the recurrent theme in their opinions. The careful examination of the text of the verses, narrations, and exegetic opinions, it gets clear that Dhul-Qarnayn’s *ilm* is the same general knowledge that involves the divine knowledge as well as the humanities and natural sciences. Moreover, a little reflection shows that in fact, all connotations mentioned as the possible meanings of *sabab* in this verse are the instances of knowledge or its consequences, and in a way originate from it. With regard to intellectual implications, too, the verses on the identity of Dhul-Qarnayn in the noble Qur’ān unnaturally repeat the word *sabab* (in four verses), and connect his constant adherence to these *asbāb* in his acts – formulated as “*atba’a sababan*” and “*thumma atba’a sababan*” – with the story of making the dam as a symbol of Dhul-Qarnayn’s ability in the application of technology in the civilization domain and the use of natural forces to promote people’s wellbeing and security as a strategic infrastructure of a civilization.

#### **The relationship between following sabab and achieving the goals**

Another important and thought provoking point in Dhul-Qarnayn’s story is the concomitance between following *sabab* and achieving the goals, which is

highly emphasized by the linguistic context of the verses. The qur'ānic verses significantly emphasize Dhul-Qarnayn's use of sabab to achieve his goals in his three travels to the west, the east, and the God and Magog lands.

“One (such) way he followed ... until, when he reached the setting of the sun ...” (Qur'ān 18:85-86);

“Then followed he (another) way, (90) Until ... when he came to the rising of the sun” (Qur'ān 18:89-90);

“Then followed he (another) way, Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains” (Qur'ān 18:92-93).

What is this sabab and what relationship exists between following sabab and Dhul-Qarnayn's achievement of his high goals?

In the light of the opinions of exegetes, especially those narrative interpretations closer to the revelation time, that have generally taken sabab to be knowledge as well as the numerous narrations that have done so, *asbāb* used by Dhul-Qarnayn – at least those mentioned in the foregoing three verses – to achieve his goals have been the instances of knowledge or its consequences. If we accept this opinion, the relationship between maturity and Dhul-Qarnayn's achievement of his goals can be better defined. These goals include cases such as travelling to the east and west of the earth, opposition to oppression, promotion of justice, rewarding the righteous, taking it easy with the believers and the righteous, allowing people to take part in different issues, building a dam (which was the symbol of his technological and civil abilities as a divine government), dominating the enemies, creating stable security for the citizens, using strategies to develop a cultural system based on religious education, and teaching monotheism and resurrection lessons to people. These are goals stipulated in the Qur'ān 18:84-98.

These few verses truly express a brief story of Dhul-Qarnayn's life and explicate the foundations for the establishment, consolidation, and development of a civilization based on a religious culture and doctrine which was equipped with the most advanced technologies of its time.

With regard to intellectual concerns, it is clear that it is only in the light of wisdom that we can achieve the means for the establishment, enhancement, and development of a real civilization. Today this fact is clearer. But what seems to be more important is the specific emphasis by the Qur'ān on the role of the application of means that were used by Dhul-Qarnayn to dominate the world and do wonderful deeds. These means are considered by the majority of exegetes to be knowledge.

Although this study intends to explicate the role and position of knowledge in the illustration of a future civilization based on the qur'ānic and narrative teachings about the mysterious story of Dhul-Qarnayn, we

might reflect upon some other verses and examine the conducts of some characters and prophets who had worldly magnificence and outstanding civilization such as Prophet Solomon, Prophet David, and Saul (a) to achieve similar indications on the role of knowledge in the growth and consolidation of societies and civilizations. For example, God presents knowledge and power as the reasons for the superiority of Saul and his selection as the ruler and commander of his nation: “Allāh hath Chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: Allāh Granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allāh careth for all, and He knoweth all things” (Qur’ān 2:247); it is interesting that God takes this selection a result of His own knowledge and development abilities: “Allāh careth for all, and He knoweth all things.”

The Qur’ān also starts the story of prophets Solomon and David (a) with the bestowment of specific knowledge (‘ilmān): “We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon” (Qur’ān 27:15). It also mentions understanding, the power to rule and judge correctly, and the control over mountains and birds as the results of this bestowment of knowledge and wisdom: “To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge; it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises, with David: it was We Who did (all these things)” (Qur’ān 21:79). God also attributes David’s (a) armor-making technology to Himself: “It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will ye then be grateful?” (Qur’ān 21:80).

Similarly, the teaching of the birds’ language to Solomon (a) “... We have been taught the speech of birds ...” (Qur’ān 27:16), equipping him with anything “...and on us has been bestowed (abundance) of all things” (ibid.), and the wonderful abilities of one of his pupils stemming from his possession of a part of ‘ilm al-kitāb “One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said: I will bring it thee before thy gaze returneth unto thee” (Qur’ān 27:40) all emphasize the unique role of “‘ilm” in his successes and his control over every means and causes.

### **The necessity of mobilizing all facilities and opportunities to promote monotheistic culture**

One of the valuable teachings of Dhul-Qarnayn’s story is his use of all material and immaterial opportunities to explain the relationship between the phenomena with the Creator of the world of existence and the divine management and Unity, and to point out the ultimate station of existence and resurrection. For instance, when God let him choose if he wanted to treat a tribe in the west with intensity or punishment or with kindness and grace, he

explained them his policy toward the punishment of the oppressors to make them know this fact that his reward and punishment system is not the end of affairs; rather, the more intense divine punishment awaits the offenders: “He said: ‘Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before)’” (Qur’ān 18:87). Similarly, when “between the two mountains” a tribe complained about Gog and Magog and asked for the establishment of a defensive barrier, Dhul-Qarnayn quickly pointed out the divinely power of God as the source of his scientific and practical abilities and says: “(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute) ...” (Qur’ān 18:95). Moreover, at the end of the dam construction, which is made by him and with the help of people, Dhul-Qarnayn uses the excitement and emotional effects appeared in people by his awesome technology of dam-making to preach monotheism and Resurrection: “Dhul-Qarnayn said, ‘This barrier is a blessing from my Lord but when His promise comes to pass He will level it to the ground; His promise always comes true.’” (Qur’ān 18:98). Dhul-Qarnayn repeatedly mentioned God’s name and his grace and punishment at the beginning, middle, and end of his project and taught the audience of the Qur’ān that any material and spiritual growth, development, and perfection should be tied to the name of God. The remembrance of God should be the basis of all individual and social activities and the ultimate outcome of any material and spiritual success. A civilization made with such a culture is the qur’ānic civilization.

#### **Answering a doubt about the “role of science as the source of the creation and perfection of civilization”**

A doubt might be posed that due to the divinity of the source of knowledge, wisdom, and ability of the divinely characters and the worldliness and humanness of the human sciences, we might not use the role of prophets and divine characters in the establishment, development, and consolidation of the civilizations pointed out by the noble Qur’ān and other religious and divine texts as the role model of the establishment and development of civilization by the normal human beings. This can be answered in the following manner.

Firstly, the plans and general guidelines of divine religions and books in general and the noble Qur’ān in particular essentially entail the qualities of inclusion and attribution and are not limited to the prophets themselves and their specific era. When the Qur’ān repeatedly emphasizes the role of knowledge in the growth and perfection of the human and human society, such an emphasis regards all humans.

Secondly, although it is true that the trust we have in the divine teachings and knowledge – if they are not distorted – is not applicable to the human

sciences, it should be noted that there exists a sound, undistorted, and trustable Scripture such as the noble Qur'ān and numerous narrations. Moreover, the human sciences are not all non-trustable. Rather, with regard to the natural sciences, we might achieve real and trustable advancements relying on trustable means, as the present-day human civilization has paved this same way. Concerning the humanities (such as social, philosophical, political, cultural, and suchlike sciences), we might base these sciences on the clear principles and frameworks of the undistorted and trustable divine sciences such as the Qur'ān to greatly reduce the shortcomings, weaknesses, and the possibility of distortion in them.

Thirdly, knowledge has a neutral essence and follows its own specific logic. Accordingly, if the correct logic that dominates knowledge and learning is observed, the way to scientific growth and development is open, although numerous verses and narrations as well as reason rule that religiosity, having perfect qualities, and avoiding sins greatly remove the obstacles of human reason, understanding, and perceptions and pave the way for the understanding of realities: "... If ye fear Allāh, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong)..." (Qur'ān 8:29). Similarly, Imām 'Alī (a) says: "Most of the deficiency of intelligence occurs due to the flash of greed" (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: 219). This means that if a civilization appears due to religiosity, servitude, and yielding to Allāh and moves ahead in its development this way, it will get to its goals quicker and in a more trustable manner:

When piety chains the two hands of carnal desires  
God opens the two hands of intellect  
The dominating desires will come under your control  
When intellect leads and serves you  
(Mawlawī, 1995, section three: verses 1832 onward).

**Civilization of Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance): the complete version of the material and immaterial architecture of Dhul-Qarnayn**

The clear outcome of various narrations and some qur'ānic verses about the government, society, and civilization made by Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) can be compared to the character, performance, and victories of Dhul-Qarnayn – of course in a more expansive and profound manner.

It is narrated in a tradition from Imām Ṣādiq (a): "Verily Dhul-Qarnayn was the righteous Servant of God who was appointed by God as His proof to His Servants. He invited people toward God and ordered them to piety, but they cut one of his horns and he disappeared, in a way that people asked if he had died or moved somewhere else. After a while, he came back to his

people and they cut his second horn. Of course, there is one among you who follows his conduct who has been placed on the earth by God, has been given a sabab of everything by Him, and has been given the ability to reach the east and west. God will revive Dhul-Qarnayn's sunna in a member of my progeny; He will take him to the east and west of the world up until there remains no mountain or land trodden by Dhul-Qarnayn which is not trodden by him. God will show the treasures and mines of the earth to him, and will take away his fear by His own power until he fills the world with justice, as it was filled with oppression" (Baḥrānī, 1995, vol. 3: 662).

It is noted in another narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a): "The sublime Allāh permitted Dhul-Qarnayn to choose between a peaceful and a wild cloud. He chose the peaceful cloud that was void of thunder; if he had chosen the wild cloud, it would not have been given to him, because God has saved it for the Riser [Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance)]" (ibid.: 663).

There are many suchlike narrations that clearly resemble Dhul-Qarnayn to Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) or vice versa, or resemble their conditions (Majlisī, 184, vol. 12: 178).

But an interesting indication that supports the stance taken in this article is the emphasis put by the narrations about Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) on the scientific abilities of the Savior of the End of Days and the role of the maturity and perfection of sciences in the material and spiritual development, prosperity, and perfection of the blissful human of the End of Days period. For example, it is narrated in a narration from Imām Bāqir (a): "When our Riser arises, God will put his hand on the heads of the Servants so as to bring together their intellect and complete their wisdom" (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 1: 25).

It is narrated in another tradition from Imām Ṣādiq (a): "Knowledge is 27 letters, and what has been brought by all prophets is only two letters of it, and people are familiar with only those two letters. When our Riser arises, he will bring out the other 25 letters, will spread them among people, will attach those two letters to them, and will promote the whole 27 letters among people" (Majlisī, 1984, vol. 52: 336).

## **Conclusion**

1. The noble Qur'ān narrates the story of a successful ruler and manager called Dhul-Qarnayn, who relies on "certain means" in a specific way to achieve successfully the material and spiritual goals needed to manage the society.
2. In the story of Dhul-Qarnayn, the word sabab is repeated four times in the course of eight verses as the reason for his unique abilities for the

wise management of the society as well as the industrial, military, and cultural innovations (as the requirements of a true civilization).

3. The linguistic context of the verses clearly emphasize the specificity of the role of “sabab” in the wonderful deeds of Dhul-Qarnayn, and such as a perception is not based on esoteric interpretation based on the esoteric meanings of the qur’ānic verses.
4. As almost all early and later exegetes have taken “sabab” to be knowledge or have considered knowledge as at least one of the main meanings of sabab, we might contend that at least one of the main reasons for Dhul-Qarnayn’s victoriousness and successfulness is his possession of certain knowledge. This stance is also emphasized by the Qur’ān. The interpretation of sabab as knowledge is highlighted by the narrations and intellect, too.
5. At the beginning, middle, and end of his deeds, Dhul-Qarnayn referred to the Creator of the world as the source of his material and immaterial power and the ultimate reference of the existence. He attributes all his scientific and practical capabilities, successes, and abilities to God, and this way, fills the society with cultural and spiritual preaching.
6. In order to revive the Islamic civilization or to establish a religious civilization based on the qur’ānic teachings that is materially functional and authoritative and can spiritually pave the way for the human growth and perfection, we might rely on knowledge – either material and natural or divine and monotheistic knowledge – as the key element and means. Such a civilization will not be entangled with the destructive weaknesses of the present-day human civilization (which is void of theoretical support and is merely based on the natural and human sciences). The reason is that the human who makes this civilization actually suffers from a lethal disease called “ignorance and lack of knowledge about the true source of knowledge (i.e. the Omniscient God).”
7. In the light of the aforementioned signs suggested in the verses and narrations about the society and civilization made by Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) and his attributes as well as what has been said about Dhul-Qarnayn, we might claim that the civilization-making character and attributes of Dhul-Qarnayn reflects the complete, comprehensive, and impeccable character of Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance).

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