

# The Historiography of *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* in The Perspective of *Tafsīr* and Astronomy (An Analytical Study of Q.S. Al-Kahf Verses 17 & 25)

**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the historiography of *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* through the perspectives of *tafsīr* and astronomy, with a particular focus on QS. *Al-Kahf* verses 17 and 25. It integrates classical *tafsīr* interpretations with modern astronomical knowledge to provide new insights into the story and its contribution to the understanding of history and science in Islam. This qualitative research employs a literature review approach. Primary data were obtained from classical and modern *tafsīr* works, including *Tafsīr al-Munīr* by Az-Zuhaylī, *Fath al-Bayān fī Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān* by Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, and *al-Shamarīkh fī ʿIlm al-Tārīkh* by al-Suyūṭī. Secondary data consist of modern astronomical literature and related scholarly works. Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques and hermeneutic interpretation to integrate *tafsīr* perspectives with astronomical understanding. The findings show that differences in the interpretation of the cave's orientation toward the sun (QS. *Al-Kahf*: 17) can be elucidated through astronomical analysis of the sun's movement across various latitudes. The study also reveals that the difference between 300 *shamsīyah* years and 309 *qamariyyah* years (QS. *Al-Kahf*: 25) reflects a sophisticated understanding of dating systems at the time. Furthermore, it finds that the use of the *qamariyyah* calendar in Islam has a strong astronomical foundation, in addition to well-known religious justifications. The integration of *tafsīr* and astronomical perspectives offers a more comprehensive understanding of the *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* narrative, demonstrating the harmony between the Qur'anic account and astronomical phenomena. This research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary *tafsīr* methodology and opens pathways for further studies in interpreting religious texts through scientific approaches.

**Keywords:** *Aṣḥābul Kahfi*, *tafsīr*, Islamic astronomy, historiography

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis historiografi *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* melalui perspektif *tafsīr* dan astronomi, dengan fokus pada QS. *Al-Kahf* ayat 17 dan 25. Studi ini mengintegrasikan pemahaman *tafsīr* klasik dengan pengetahuan astronomi modern guna memberikan wawasan baru terhadap kisah ini serta kontribusinya dalam memahami sejarah dan ilmu pengetahuan dalam Islam. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka. Data primer diperoleh dari kitab-kitab *tafsīr* klasik dan modern, termasuk *Tafsīr al-Munīr* karya Az-Zuhaylī, *Fath al-Bayān fī Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān* oleh Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, dan *al-Shamarīkh fī ʿIlm al-Tārīkh* karya al-Suyūṭī. Data sekunder meliputi literatur astronomi modern dan studi-studi terkait. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik analisis isi dan interpretasi hermeneutik untuk mengintegrasikan perspektif *tafsīr* dengan pemahaman astronomis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan interpretasi mengenai posisi gua terhadap matahari (QS. *Al-Kahf*: 17) dapat dijelaskan melalui analisis astronomi tentang pergerakan matahari di berbagai lintang. Studi ini juga mengungkap bahwa perbedaan antara 300 tahun *shamsīyah* dan 309 tahun *qamariyyah* (QS. *Al-Kahf*: 25) mencerminkan pemahaman yang maju terhadap sistem penanggalan pada masa itu. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa penggunaan sistem kalender *qamariyyah* dalam Islam memiliki dasar astronomis yang kuat, selain alasan religius yang telah dikenal. Integrasi antara perspektif *tafsīr* dan astronomi memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif terhadap kisah *Aṣḥābul Kahfi*, sekaligus menunjukkan keselarasan antara narasi Al-Qurʾān dan fenomena astronomis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan metodologi *tafsīr* interdisipliner dan membuka peluang bagi studi-studi lanjutan dalam memahami teks-teks keagamaan melalui pendekatan ilmiah.

**Kata kunci:** *Aṣḥābul Kahfi*, *tafsīr*, astronomi Islam, historiograf

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## Introduction

The story of the Aṣḥābul Kahfi, as recorded in the Qur'an surah Al-Kahf, has long been an object of discussion and contemplation among Muslim scholars. The narrative of a group of young men who slept in a cave for hundreds of years not only presents moral and spiritual values, but also invites interesting scientific questions, especially related to aspects of historiography and astronomy. In an academic context, there is anxiety regarding the proper interpretation of the verses that describe astronomical phenomena in this story, especially in QS. Verse 17 describes the position of the sun relative to the cave, while verse 25 mentions the duration of the young men's sleep. These two verses raise the question of how astronomical phenomena can be reconciled with the historical narrative presented in the story.<sup>1</sup>

This study aims to analyze the historiography of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in QS. Al-Kahf verses 17 and 25 through the integration of Tafsīr and astronomy perspectives. Specifically, this study will: (1) examine classical interpretations of the verses, (2) analyze astronomical phenomena potentially related to the narrative of the verses, and (3) explore the possibility of reconciliation between interpretive understanding and astronomical findings related to the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi. Through this interdisciplinary approach, it is hoped that the research can provide a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi, as well as bridge the dialog between religious tradition and modern science.

The following are some studies that are relevant to the author's research topic, which

provide a context and foundation for a deeper understanding of the issue being studied; Siti Istiqomah and Irma Runtianing, *The Story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in the Qur'an: A Comparative Study Between Tafsīr Al-Misbah and Tafsīr Ibn Kathir* (2022): The story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi is found in Surah Al-Kahf verses 9-26. Tafsīr Al-Misbah and Ibn Kathir both use the tahlili (analytical) method and agree that they entered the cave to defend their faith. Both also mention the number of Aṣḥābul Kahfi as seven people, eight with their dogs, and the length of their stay in the cave as 309 years. The difference is that Tafsīr Al-Misbah focuses on the adabī ijtimā'ī approach, while Tafsīr Ibn Kathir uses the bi al-ma'thūr approach. Ibn Kathir's interpretation is classified as classical, while Al-Misbah is a contemporary interpretation. They also differ in the explanation of the state of Aṣḥābul Kahfi while in the cave and when they woke up.<sup>2</sup> Rifqatul Husna, et al, *A Study of the Integration of the Qur'an and Science on the Sleep of Ashhabul Kahfi in Q.S Al-Kahf Perspective of Fakhruddin Al-Razi* (2023): The story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in the Qur'an describes the phenomenon of long sleep that seems to contradict common knowledge about sleep. However, modern research has revealed three factors that explain how the bodies of the Aṣḥābul Kahf remained intact during their long sleep. Allah deactivated the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) in their brains, appropriately regulated their exposure to sunlight, and periodically turned their bodies upside down. This explanation demonstrates the harmony between the Qur'ānic narrative and the findings of science, proving that seemingly impossible

<sup>1</sup> Tim Penyusun, *Waktu Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains*, Cet. I (Jakarta Timur: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an Badan Litbang & Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2013), 123.

<sup>2</sup> Siti Istiqomah dan Irma Runtianing Uswatul Hanifah, "Kisah Aṣḥābul Kahfi Dalam Al-Qur'an:

Kajian Komparatif Antara Tafsir Al-Misbah Dan Tafsir Ibnu Katsir," *JUSMA: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2022): 46-57, <https://doi.org/10.21154/jusma.v1i1.522>.

phenomena can be explained through complex scientific mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> Fatmah Taufik Hidayat, et al. The Concept of Al-Uzlah in the Story of Aşhābul Al-KAHF Approach to Maqasid Al-Qur'an Interpretation View of Ibn Āshūr (2023): The concept of al-Uzlah in defending faith is one of the main objectives (Maqasid) of the Qur'an. Uzlah is also relevant in modern friendships, where often convenience takes precedence over faith. Ibn Āshūr's Tafsīr At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr explains that one should prioritize religion over wealth or power. By fearing Allah and surrendering, one is less prone to making mistakes and remains persistent in one's endeavors, confident that they will bring the best results.<sup>4</sup>

## Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach to analyze the story of Aşhābul Kahfi from the perspective of Tafsīr and Astronomy. Primary data is sourced from classical and modern books of Tafsīr, while secondary data is obtained from contemporary astronomical literature. This research combines content analysis techniques and hermeneutic interpretation,<sup>5</sup> which focuses on QS. Al-Kahf verses 17 and 25.

<sup>3</sup> Rifqatul Husna, Faridatul Hasanah, dan Salih Abdulrahman Alsounsi, "Kajian Integrasi Al-Qur'an Dan Sains Atas Tidurnya Ashhabul Kahfi Dalam Q.S Al-Kahfi Perspektif Fakhrudin Al-Razi," *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2023): 161–83, <https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v22i1.327>.

<sup>4</sup> Fatma Taufiq Hidayat, Laila Sari Mashury, dan Miftahul Fikria, "Konsep Al-Uzlah Pada Kisah Aşhābul Al-Kahfi Pendekatan Tafsir Maqasid Al-Qur'an Pandangan Ibn Āsyūr," *Mozaic : Islam Nusantara* 9, no. 1 (2023): 55–68, <https://doi.org/10.47776/mozaic.v9i1.656>.

<sup>5</sup> Hermeneutics is the theory or philosophy of the interpretation of meaning. Derived from the Greek verb "hermeneuein", the term encompasses three main concepts: interpreting, interpreting and translating. As a

## Interpretation of Tafsīr Verses 17 and 25 in the Context of the History of Aşhābul Kahfi

Tafsīr is a discipline related to understanding and interpreting the Qur'an. Etymologically, the word "Tafsīr" comes from Arabic which means explanation or explanation.<sup>6</sup> This word is a masdar form of the verb "fassara-yufassiru-Tafsīran". The use of the word "Tafsīr" with the meaning of explanation can be found in Surah Al-Furqan. In terminology, scholars have various definitions of Tafsīr, but they agree on two main aspects: The Qur'an as the object of study and the main objective is to understand the content of the Qur'an. Al-Zarkasyi defines Tafsīr as the science of understanding the Book of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, explaining its meaning, and revealing the laws and wisdom contained therein. Meanwhile, Al-Zarqani argues that Tafsīr is the science that discusses the Qur'an in terms of understanding the intentions of Allah SWT in accordance with human abilities.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Tafsīr can be understood as a scientific effort to explore and understand the meaning, law, and wisdom contained in the Qur'an, with the aim of explaining the intention of Allah SWT in

discipline, hermeneutics provides a framework for understanding how meaning is formed and interpreted in various contexts, not only limited to written texts, but also various forms of human communication and expression. The goal is to uncover deeper meanings and understand the intent behind a message or phenomenon, making it an essential tool in people's efforts to understand the world around them. Lihat: Edi Mulyono, Dkk. *Belajar Hermeneutika Dari Konfigurasi Filosofis Menuju Praksis Islamic Studies* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2013), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Husain Al-Dzahaby, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, juz 1 (Qohirah: Maktabah Wahbah, 2003), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Dzahaby, 13.

accordance with the capacity of human understanding.<sup>8</sup>

Surah Al-Kahf is a Makkiyah surah, although there is some disagreement among scholars regarding its details. According to Tafsir al-Marāghī, the surah consists of 110 verses, with the exception of two verses that mention 'Uyainah ibn Hishn Al-Fazari, and contains 1,583 words and 6,554 letters.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the Marāḥ Labīd states that this surah has 111 verses and is entirely Makkīyah according to the popular opinion chosen by many scholars.<sup>10</sup>

In Ibn Kathir's interpretation, the terms "Al-Kahf" and "Ar-Raqim" in the story of Aṣḥābul Kahf have several interpretations. Based on several narrations, such as those by Ibn Abbas, 'Athiyah Al-'Aufi, and Qatadah, "Al-Kahf" refers to a cave where the youths took refuge, while "Ar-Raqim" is understood as the name of the valley near the cave.<sup>11</sup>

The background of the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi. It is mentioned that sins were rampant among the Christians, and their kings became despotic to the point of worshipping idols and forcing the people to do so.<sup>12</sup> King Daqyanus issued strict orders for idol worship and punished those who resisted. He tried to force a group of noble youths to worship idols and threatened to kill them. However, the young men remained firm in their beliefs. The king finally gave them time to reconsider, while he went to other cities to force the people to worship idols.<sup>13</sup>

The young men who refused to worship idols went to a cave near their city (Ephesus or Tarsus) on a mountain called Nicaeus.<sup>14</sup> They worshipped Allah there. When King Daqyanus found them, they were willing to die for their faith. There were seven of them. On the way to the cave, a shepherd with his dog followed them. Among the young men was a man named Tamlikha who bought food and drink and told them that Daqyanus was still looking for them.<sup>15</sup>

When Daqyanus returned to the city and sought out these young men to be killed or forced to worship idols, Tamlikha heard this news while secretly buying food. She told her friends, and they wept. Then Allah put them into a deep sleep. Daqyanus threatened the parents of the youths if they did not bring their children. The parents finally told him the location of the cave. Daqyanus went there and closed the cave door, intending to let them die inside.<sup>16</sup>

In the book Marāḥ Labīd li Kashf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd by Nawawi Al-Jawi, it is mentioned that the Aṣḥābul Kahfi fled from their king, Decius, and with them was a dog named Qitmir. According to Ibn Abbas, there were seven of them with the names Maxalmina, Tamlikha, Martunusy, Nainunusy, Sarbunusy, Dhu Nuwas, and Falestatiunus who was a shepherd. Whereas according to Ibn Mas'ud's narration, there were nine of them, and Ibn Ishaq recorded their names as Tamlikha, Maksalmina,

<sup>8</sup> Mohammad 'Ali Al-Shābūnī, *al-Tibyān fī 'Ulūmil Qur'ān*, Cet. I (Jakarta: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Islamiyah, 2003), 66.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmad bin Mustafā Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, Jilid 15 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' At-Turats Al-'Arabi, 1998), 113.

<sup>10</sup> Nawawi Al-Jawi, *Marah Labid li Kasyf Ma'na Al-Qur'an Al-Majid*, Jilid 1, Cet. I (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1997), 641.

<sup>11</sup> Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir*, Jilid 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), 65.

<sup>12</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, Edisi Kedua (Damaskus: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Mu'ashir, 1998), 220.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, 118.

<sup>14</sup> Kamal as Sayyid, *Kisah-Kisah Terbaik Al-Quran*, Cet. II (Jakarta: Pustaka Zahra, 2005), 511.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Maraghi, Ahmad bin Mustafā, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, Jilid 15, Halaman 118, Dar Ihya At-Turats Al-Arabi, Penerbitan, dan Distribusi, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Wahbah bin Musthafā Al-Zuhaylī, *al-Tafsir al-Munir fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Syarī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 2 (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'ashir, 1418), 220.

Mahsalina, Martunusy, Kasutunusy, Surusy, Yankarbusy, Batsusy, and Qalus.<sup>17</sup>

Some scholars, including Ibn Khalawayh, are of the opinion that the pronoun in “they will say” refers to the People of the Book and the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad. Meanwhile, al-Tha'labi narrates from Abu Bakr bin 'Ayyash that the pronoun refers to the Christians. Differences of opinion also arise regarding the number of cave dwellers, with the Yakobites mentioning three people plus their dogs, the Nestorians mentioning five people plus their dogs, and the Muslims mentioning seven people plus their dogs. Al-Qaffal also discusses the use of the letter “waw” in the phrase “and the eighth was their dog”, with some Arabic grammarians stating that it is a connective “waw”, while Ibn Khalawayh considers it a typical “waw” for the number eight in ancient Arabic.<sup>18</sup>

### Astronomical Studies on QS. Al-Kahf Verse 17: The Movement of the Sun and the Direction of the Cave

Abu Hayyan conveyed this opinion and attributed it to Abu 'Ali al-Farisi, who said: “Abu 'Ali said: 'The meaning of 'taqridhuhum' (cutting off from them) is to give them a little of its light then it soon disappears, like a loan that is returned. That is, the sun inclines in the morning and shines on them in the afternoon with a light radiance. It is said that if the sun did not touch their place at all, the air would become corrupt and what was in the cave would rot and they would perish. Allah Ta'ala orchestrated their affairs so as to place them in a place that was not so much exposed to the

sun that it became hot, yet also not completely blocked from the sun that it became rotten.<sup>19</sup>

Az-Zamakhshari said: “The meaning is that they were in shade all their days, the sun did not touch them either at sunrise or sunset, even though they were in a large, open place that should have been exposed to the sun. It is also said that the door of the cave faced north, so the sun rose on the right side of the cave and when it set it was on its left. Thus, the sunlight did not reach them at all, but the fresh air and cool breeze could still reach them.<sup>20</sup>

### Location of Aṣḥābul Kahfi Cave

Imam Ar-Razi in his commentary *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* discusses the different opinions about the time and location of Aṣḥābul Kahfi (Cave Dwellers). Regarding the time, there are several opinions: before Prophet Moses, between Prophet Jesus and Prophet Muhammad, or after Prophet Jesus. Regarding the location of the cave, there is a story about an expedition sent by Caliph Al-Watsiq, but the results are doubtful. Ar-Razi emphasizes that exact knowledge of their time and location cannot be determined by reason alone, but rather requires a valid nash (text), which currently does not exist. He also mentions the narration about Muawiyah who wanted to see the Aṣḥābul Kahf, but was forbidden by Ibn Abbas.<sup>21</sup>

Historians mention several opinions about the location of the cave. Some say that it was a valley near Ailah in Aqabah, south of Palestine. Some say near Ninewa in Mosul, northern Iraq. Others say it is in southern Turkey, which used to be Roman territory. All

<sup>17</sup> Nawawi Al-Jawi, 1417 H, "Marah Labid li Kasyf Ma'na Al-Quran Al-Majid", Jilid 1, Halaman 646, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah - Beirut, Edisi Pertama, 1417 H

<sup>18</sup> Syamsuddin Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an (Tafsir al-Qurthubi)*, Cet. II (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1964), 382.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad Al-Sharqawi, *Tafsir Mawdu'i Surat al-Kahfi*, Jilid 1 (Maktabah Asy-Syamilah Adz-Dzahabiyah, 2007), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Sharqawi, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghaib (At-Tafsir Al-Kabir)*, Jilid 10 (Kairo: Dar el-hadith, 2020), 194.

these opinions lack evidence. The cave is in a place that is not affected by the sun at sunrise and sunset. This means that they are not exposed to sunlight at either sunrise or sunset throughout the day, even though they are in a large, open space that should be exposed to sunlight.

According to Kuwait's Al-Arabi Magazine, Jordanian archaeologist Rafiq Al-Dajani claims to have discovered the location of Aṣḥābul Kahfi's cave. He studied the cave's crevices and the way sunlight enters. According to him, the cave has a hole facing southwest. If one stands inside the cave during the afternoon sun, the sunlight will lean to the right of the cave, penetrating strongly and illuminating the entire scene in front of it.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the place of the cave, Al-Qaffal narrated from Muhammad ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi that Caliph Al-Wathiq sent someone to investigate the cave of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in Roman territory. When he arrived, the cave keeper warned him not to enter. However, he entered anyway and saw the preserved bodies. He realized that it was just a trick, as the bodies were preserved with medicines that kept the bodies from decaying. Al-Razi argues that knowledge of the time and place of Aṣḥābul Kahfi is not something that can be achieved by reason, but only through revelation. Thus, it remains a mystery.<sup>23</sup>

### Opinions of Tafsīr Scholars on the Position of the Cave Door

In Tafsīr Ibn Kathir, the explanation of the direction of the cave where Aṣḥābul Kahfi was located is related to the position of the sun. Ibn Kathir explains that based on the Qur'anic verse that mentions the movement of the sun towards the cave, the door of the cave is

believed to face north. This can be seen from the information that when the sun rises, its rays deviate to the right, and when the sun sets, its rays deviate to the left, so that the sun's rays do not directly enter the cave. Ibn Abbas, Sa'id ibn Jubair and Qatadah interpreted the word "تجاوز" as "tilted" or "shifted", indicating that when the sun rises, its rays do not directly hit the cave, but gradually deviate from the right direction. Also, when the sun sets, its light only touches the left side of the cave. From this, Ibn Kathir concluded that the cave door was located in the northern direction, because if the cave door was in the east, the sunlight would not enter at sunset. If the cave door is in the south, the sunlight will not hit the cave either at sunrise or sunset. Similarly, if the cave door is in the west, the sunlight will enter only after the time of zuhr and remain in the cave until sunset. This conclusion is confirmed by knowledge of the movement of the sun and the position of other celestial bodies.<sup>24</sup>

Analysis of the cave's position and interaction with solar movement in tabular form, see Table.1.

Table. 1.

Factor	Explanation
Cave Door Orientation Facing north	According to the Tafsīr, the cave door faces north. This position allows sunlight to shine on the right side of the cave at sunrise and from the north at sunset.
Sunrise Direction Angled to the right (south) of the cave	The sun rises from the east, but its light moves to the right (south), so it does not enter the cave directly.
Sunset Sunlight Direction: Tilted to the left (north) of the cave	At sunset, sunlight tends to enter from the north of the cave entrance, indicating that the cave entrance faces east.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Sharqawi, *Tafsir Mawdu'i Surat al-Kahfi*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Ar-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghaib (At-Tafsir Al-Kabir)*, 194.

<sup>24</sup> Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir*, 94.

Sun Shift due to Precession: 1° every 71.6 years	The position of the sun shifts 1° every 71.6 years due to the earth's axial precession.
Shift over 309 years: 4.29° (309 years ÷ 71.6 years)	Over 309 years, the position of the sunlight entering the cave shifted by 4.31°.
Effect of Shift	This small shift does not drastically affect the direction of light entering the cave, but shows the change in the position of the rays over a long period of time.



Image 2. An illustration of the sleeping position of *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* inside the cave for 309 years

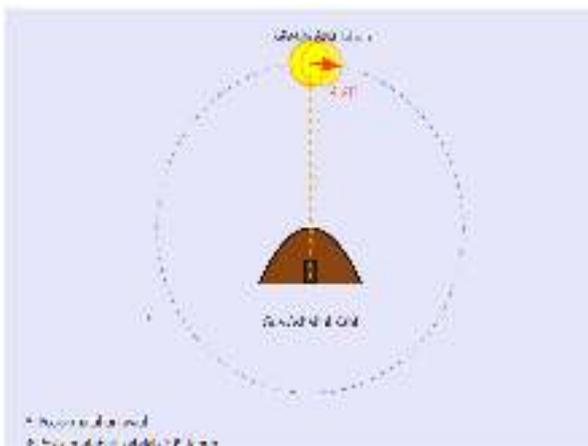
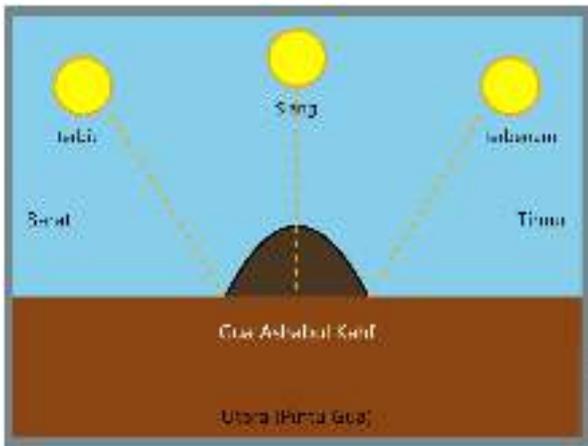


Image 1. The orientation of the cave in relation to the sun

### Duration of Sleeping Time of *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* in Tafsīr Verse 25

#### 1. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr

According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation, this verse is a direct information from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad about the length of time *Aṣḥābul Kahfi* stayed in the cave. Ibn Kathir explains that the 300-year period mentioned refers to the Shamsīyah (solar) calendar, while the additional 9 years make it 309 years in the Qamarīyah (lunar) calendar. This is because there is a difference of about 3 years between 100 Qamarīyah years and 100 Shamsīyah years.<sup>25</sup>

#### 2. Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī

In his commentary, Al-Qurṭubī cites the view of Adh-Dhahhak who explains that when the verse mentioning “three hundred” years was revealed, the question arose whether it referred to years, months, weeks, or days. Allah then revealed the affirmation that it refers to years. Moreover, An-Naqqash interpreted that the three hundred years referred to the Shamsīyah (solar) calendar.

<sup>25</sup> Katsir, 99.

When this information was conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad, an additional nine years were mentioned because the Prophet and the Arabs were more familiar with the Qamarīyah (lunar) calendar. The difference between the two calendars resulted in a time difference, and this additional nine years illustrates the difference that occurred between the calculations of the Shamsīyah and Qamarīyah calendars. Al-Ghaznawi also mentions that every 33 years, there is a difference of one year between the two calendars, which in 300 years results in an additional nine years or so.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Ibn 'Āshūr (At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr)

In his commentary At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr, Ibn 'Āshūr explains some important points regarding the verse that discusses the length of the Aṣḥābul Kahf's stay in the cave. He mentions that Christian historians estimate the duration of their sleep to be several centuries, and there is a view that the calculation starts from their death until the revelation of the verse. Ibn 'Āshūr also highlights that the Qur'ān's mention of the duration of time consisting of two reckonings, namely based on the Qamarīyah (lunar) and Shamsīyah (solar) calendars, reflects an adjustment between the Arab-Islamic reckoning tradition and the Romans from whom the Aṣḥābul Kahf originated. He cites Al-Suhaili's opinion that this story was already known in Christian history and was used as a time marker. Ibn 'Āshūr then relates this to the calendars used by the Jews and Quraysh, which used months for the Qamarīyah calendar and years for the Shamsīyah calendar. He explains the differences between the two types of calendars and shows how the Qur'ān's astronomical knowledge in this regard was a

miracle that was not widely known by the Arabs at that time.<sup>27</sup>

### 4. Faṭḥ al-Bayān li al-Qannūjī, Ṣādiq Ḥasan Khān

(وَلَبِثُوا) أَي أَقَامُوا (فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ) عَظُفٌ بَيِّنٌ لِثَلَاثِ مِائَةٍ، وَهَذِهِ السُّنُونَ عِنْدَ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ شَمْسِيَّةٌ، وَتَزِيدُ الْقَمَرِيَّةُ عَلَيْهَا عِنْدَ الْعَرَبِ تِسْعَ سِنِينَ، وَقَدْ ذَكَرْتُ فِي قَوْلِهِ (وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا) أَي تِسْعَ سِنِينَ، فَالْثَلَاثُ مِائَةُ الشَّمْسِيَّةُ ثَلَاثُ مِائَةٍ وَتِسْعَ قَمَرِيَّةٌ، وَفَرَى فِي السَّبْعَةِ بِالْإِضَافَةِ، وَعَلَيْهِ فَسِنِينَ تَمَيِّزٌ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ قَلِيلٌ، لِأَنَّ تَمَيِّزَ الْمِائَةِ الْكَثِيرُ فِيهِ الْإِفْرَادُ.

Meaning: “(And they remained) i.e. they stayed (in their cave for three hundred years) as an explanation for 'three hundred'. These years according to the People of the Book are solar years, and the lunar years according to the Arabs increase by nine years, as mentioned in His words (and they increased by nine) i.e. nine years. Thus, three hundred solar years are equal to three hundred and nine lunar years.<sup>28</sup>

### 5. Tafsiṣ Sha'rāwī

Shaykh Muḥammad Metwalli al-Sha'rāwī in his Tafsiṣ emphasizes the importance of the Qamarīyah (lunar) dating system in understanding the verse about Aṣḥābul Kahfi. He explains that the calculation of time in this verse uses the lunar-based Arabic system, which is considered more accurate for determining history. Al-Sha'rāwī highlighted the advantages of this system, including its use in calculating water in the marine world and its ease in marking the beginning of the month. He criticizes those who only understand the Shamsīyah (solar) reckoning without realizing the significance of the additional nine years mentioned in the verse. According to Al-Sha'rāwī, the mention of this addition shows the Qur'ān's thoroughness in conveying astronomical and historical information. He also cites the Jews' confusion over this additional nine years, emphasizing that Allah

<sup>26</sup> Al-Qurṭhubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an (Tafsir al-Qurṭhubi)*, 386.

<sup>27</sup> Ibnu 'Asyur, *At-Taḥrīr wa At-Tanwīr: Tafsiṣ Al-Ma'na As-Sadid wa Tanwīr Al-'Aql Al-Jadid min*

*Tafsiṣ Al-Kitāb Al-Majid*, Jilid 10 (Tunis: Ad-Dar At-Tunisiyah linnasyr, 1984), 301.

<sup>28</sup> Shiddiq Hasan Khan, *Faṭḥ al-Bayān fi Maqasid al-Qur'an*, Jilid 8 (Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-'Ashriyyah li at-Thiba'ah wa an-Nashr, 1992), 36.

calculated the history of the universe with the most accurate calculation, referring to the Qur'ānic verse about the 12 months of the year. Al-Sha'rāwī's explanation confirms the superiority of the Qamarīyah dating system in religious and scientific contexts, as well as the accuracy of the Qur'ān in conveying astronomical and historical information.<sup>29</sup>

### 6. Tafsīr Jalālayn

﴿وَلَبِئْسَ مَا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ﴾ بِالتَّنْوِينِ ﴿سِنِينَ﴾ عَظْفَ بَيَانٍ لِثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ وَهَذِهِ السَّنُونَ الثَّلَاثِمِائَةُ عِنْدَ أَهْلِ الْكَهْفِ شَمْسِيَّةٌ وَتَزِيدُ الْقَمَرِيَّةَ عَلَيْهَا عِنْدَ الْعَرَبِ تِسْعَ سِنِينَ وَقَدْ ذَكَرْتُ فِي قَوْلِهِ ﴿وَأَزْدَادُوا نِسْعًا﴾ أَي تِسْعَ سِنِينَ فَالْثَلَاثِمِائَةُ الشَّمْسِيَّةُ: ثَلَاثِمِائَةٌ وَتِسْعَ قَمَرِيَّةٌ.

This commentary explains the difference in time calculation between the Shamsīyah (solar) and Qamarīyah (lunar) calendars in the context of the story of the Aṣḥābul Kahf. The explanation emphasizes that the 300 years mentioned in the verse refer to the Shamsīyah calendar, which was used by the Aṣḥābul Kahf. However, when converted to the Qamarīyah calendar used by the Arabs, this number increases to 309 years. The commentator uses grammatical analysis to explain the structure of the verse, where the word "sinin" (years) serves as an 'atf bayan or explanation for "three hundred." The commentary also relates the addition of nine years to other verses that explicitly mention the addition. The mufasssirs say: The addition of nine years is based on the Qamarīyah calculation, whereas the Shamsīyah (solar) calculation is only 300 years.<sup>30</sup>

Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf explains the relationship between the three hundred years mentioned in the Qur'an and the additional nine years related to the length of time Aṣḥābul Kahfi stayed in the cave. Allah mentions in the verse that they stayed for three

hundred years plus nine years. When the Christians of Najran heard this verse, they understood that the three hundred years referred to their familiar calendar, but they did not understand the additional nine years. Allah then emphasized that only He knew the truth about the time they lived. Modern astronomical science provides an explanation that this difference is due to the difference between the Shamsīyah (solar) and Qamarīyah (lunar) calendars. The Shamsīyah calendar, which is about 365 days long, produces a time difference compared to the Qamarīyah calendar. In three hundred Shamsīyah years, there is a difference of about nine years when calculated by the Qamarīyah calendar, which explains the relationship between the numbers in an astronomical context.<sup>31</sup>

Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf in his book *Muslimun wa 'Ilm al-Falak* explains the difference between the solar year and the lunar year. He mentioned that the Qamarīyah year consists of about 354 days, while the Shamsīyah year consists of about 365 days. The time difference between these two types of calendars is about 10 days each year, and in 33 years there is a difference of almost a full year. Therefore, every 100 Shamsīyah years would result in a difference of three years in the Qamarīyah calendar. Thus, 300 Shamsīyah years would be equivalent to about 309 Qamarīyah years. This explanation shows that the Qur'ān, in mentioning the length of the Aṣḥābul Kahf's stay in the cave (300 years plus 9 years), is in accordance with the principles of modern astronomy, even though astrology was not known at that time.<sup>32</sup>

In the interpretation of the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi, Muslim mufasssirs and

<sup>29</sup> Mohammad Metwali Al-Sya'rawi, *Tafsīr Sya'rawi*, Jilid 7 (Mathaabi' Akhbaar Al-Yaum, 1991), 4501.

<sup>30</sup> Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti, *Al-Shamarikh fi 'Ilm al-Tarikh*, ed. oleh Anwar Mahmud Zanati, Jilid 1 (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1987), 97.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Mahmud Al-Sawwaf, *Muslimun wa 'Ilm al-Falak* (Jiddah: Dar al-Su'udiyah lil-Nashr, 1965), 79–80.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Sawwaf, 79–80.

historians are divided into two groups with different approaches. The first group, including Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Ali ibn al-Hasan Ibn Asakir, Muhammad ibn Ahmad Adz-Dzahabi, and Ali ibn al-Husain Al-Mas'udi, tends to present detailed narratives without strict verification, risking mixing elements of israiliyat and folklore. Meanwhile, the second group, represented by Ismail ibn Umar Ibn Katsir, Fakhr al-Din Muhammad ibn Umar Ar-Razi, Mahmud ibn Umar Az-Zamakhshari, Abdullah ibn Umar Al-Baidhawi, and contemporary scholars such as Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Qutb, and Muhammad Thahir ibn Ashur. They focus on aspects that are explicit in the Qur'an and Sahih Hadith, emphasizing the extraction of wisdom and the relevance of the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in the context of faith, while avoiding excessive speculation about details not mentioned in the primary sources.<sup>33</sup>

### 7. Roman History

The story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi in the Qur'ān, which mentions sleeping for 309 years, is often attributed to the period between the reigns of Emperor Decius (249-251 CE) to Theodosius II (408-450 CE). Although this historical time span is only 199 years, this difference can be explained through calendar conversion. 309 Qamariyah years is equivalent to about 300 Shamsiyah years used by the Roman Empire. However, there is still a difference of about 101 years, which suggests that this story may have symbolic significance or cover a longer period. This difference may mark spiritual and social changes that took place over several centuries, beyond the literal interpretation of the time mentioned in the story.<sup>34</sup>

Determining the exact chronology of the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi is still a subject of debate among historians. The majority of sources indicate that this event took place between the reigns of Emperor Decius (249-251 AD) and Emperor Theodosius II (408-450 AD). According to historian Edward Gibbon, the duration of the young men's sleep in the cave is estimated at 187 years, assuming they entered the cave in 249 AD and woke up around 436 AD. However, other accounts mention a longer period of sleep, around 196 years, with the awakening occurring in the 38th year of the reign of Theodosius II (around 445 or 446 AD). Some historians offer alternative interpretations of this chronology. Said b. Al-Batriq, for example, suggests that the awakening of the youth occurred in the 8th year of Theodosius II (c. 416 CE), implying a period of sleep between 165 and 167 years. Assemani, meanwhile, proposed two possible times of awakening: 425 CE or 437 CE, based on the Seleucid calendar. The Greek historian Photius states that the resurrection took place around 439 A.D.<sup>35</sup>

Based on Ibn Al-Athir's analysis in his book "Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh", the period of Aṣḥābul Kahfi is located in an uncertain era in the history of Roman kings. Ibn Al-Athir underlines the significant disagreements and contradictions in the historical records, especially regarding the chronology and duration of the reigns of the kings from the beginning of the Roman empire to the time of Constantine. He highlighted that At-Tabari, the foremost historian before him, did not even try to determine exactly during which king Aṣḥābul Kahfi lived. Ibn Al-Athir himself chooses to mention the story in the context of

<sup>33</sup> Ahmad Ali Al-Majdoub, *Ahlul Kahfi fī At-Taurat, Al-Injil, wa Al-Qur'an*, Cet. III (Kairo: Dar Mesiriyah Libanonyah, 1998), 70.

<sup>34</sup> Shalah Abdul Fattah Al-Khalidy, *Kisah-Kisah Al-Qur'an. Pelajaran dari Orang-Orang Dahulu*,

ed. oleh Judul Asli: Ma'a Qashashi as Sabiqin fī Al-Qur'an terjemahan oleh Setiawan Budi Utomo, Jilid-2 (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Al-Majdoub, 89-90.

events during the time of these kings, but still recognizes its uncertainty.<sup>36</sup>

### Astronomical Analysis

The following is an explanation of the percentage of 9 years out of 300 years in table form:

Table 2.

Number of Years	Calculation	Result
9 Year	$(9 \div 300) \times 100$	3%
300 Year	-	-

Explanation:

9 years is 3% of 300 years. This is obtained by dividing 9 by 300, then multiplying it by 100 to get the percentage. With this table, we can see that 9 years is 3% of 300 years.

Table 3. Comparative Table Analysis of Solar and Lunar (Urfi) Calendars 01

Aspect	Solar Calendar	Lunar Calendar	Difference
1 Year Duration	365,24 Day	354,36 Day	10,88 Day
Calculated period	300 Year	309 Year	9 Year
Total Days	109.572 Day	109.497,24 Day	74,76 Day
Equivalency	300 Year of Solar	309 Year of Lunar	-
Difference in Months	-	-	≈ 2,5 Month

In a comparison between solar (sun) and lunar (moon) calendars, there is a difference in the number of days in a year. The solar calendar, which is used in modern dating systems, has an average of 365.24 days per year. Meanwhile, the lunar calendar, which is based on the lunar cycle, has about 354.36 days per year. This difference is quite significant when calculated over a long period of time. For

example, 300 solar years have a total of  $300 \times 365.24 = 109,572$  days. Meanwhile, 309 lunar years have  $309 \times 354.36 = 109,497.24$  days. Although the difference in years between the solar and lunar calendars looks quite large (9 years), the calculation in days shows a difference of only about 74.76 days, or roughly 2.5 months.

This analysis shows that the difference between 300 solar years and 309 lunar years is actually very small when calculated in total days. This explains why in the story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi, 309 lunar years are interpreted as equivalent to 300 solar years. The difference of 2.5 months is relatively small when viewed from the perspective of a long period of time.

Table 4. Comparison Table

Solar Year	Lunar Year	Difference (Day)	Difference (Lunar Year)
1	1,03	10,88	0,03
10	10,30	108,75	0,31
50	51,50	543,76	1,53
100	103,00	1087,51	3,07
200	206,00	2175,03	6,14
300	309,00	3262,54	9,21

### Conclusion

This astronomical and mathematical analysis demonstrates the incredible accuracy of the Qur'ānic statement. The 9-year difference mentioned in the verse precisely reflects the difference between the solar and lunar calendars over a 300-year period. The majority of scholars agree that the length of Aṣḥābul Kahfi's sleep was 309 years according to the Qamarīyah (lunar calendar), which is equivalent to 300 years according to the Shamsīyah (solar calendar). The difference of 9 years is due to the difference in calculation systems between the Qamarīyah and

<sup>36</sup> Ibnu Al-Atsir, *Al-Kamil fi At-Tarikh*, Cet. I (Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1997), 296–97.

Shamsiyah calendars. Some scholars provide additional explanations on the linguistic aspects and historical context of the verse. There is a difference of opinion as to whether this number of 309 years is a direct statement from Allah or a quote from the People of the Book, but the majority states that it is a direct statement from Allah.

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