

Khidr

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Khidr or **al-Khidr** (Arabic: الخبزر *al-Khidr*; also transcribed as **Khidr**, **Khizr**, **Khyzer**, **Qeezr**, **Qhezr**, **Qhizyer**, **Qhezar**, **Khizar**, **Xızır**, **Hızır**) is a mystical figure that some believe to be described in the Quran as a righteous servant of God possessing great wisdom or mystic knowledge. In various Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, Khidr is described as a messenger, prophet, wali or in some cases as a deity who takes the worldly place of an otherwise passive God. The figure of al-Khidr has been syncretized over time with various other figures including Vishnu in India, Sorūsh in Iran, Saint Sarkis the Warrior and John the Baptist in Armenia, Saint George in Asia Minor and the Levant, etc.^[1]

Because of the linguistic similarities between the name "al-khidr" and the Arabic word for green ("al-akhdar"), the meaning of the name is often taken colloquially and sometimes academically to be "the Green One" or "the Verdant One." Some scholars disagree with this assessment, however the some others point to a possible reference to the Mesopotamian figure Utnapishtum from the Epic of Gilgamesh through the Arabization of his nickname, "Hasisatra". According to a new view the name Khidr is not an Arabic variant or an abbreviation of Hasisatra, it directly comes from the name of the Canaanite god Kothar-wa-Khasis^[2] and it may be later assimilated to Arabic term al-akhdar.^[3]

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al-Khidr



17th century Mughal painting of al Khidr

Mystic, Green One, The Verdant One, Teacher of the Prophets

Honored in Islamic and Islamicate area

Influenced Countless future Sufi saints and mystics

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Quranic narrative

In chapter 18, verses 65–82, Moses meets the Servant of God, referred in the Quran as "one from among Our friend whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves".^[4]

Muslim scholars identify him as al-Khidr, although he is not explicitly named in the Quran and there is no reference to him being immortal or being especially associated with esoteric knowledge or fertility.^[5] These associations come in later scholarship on al-Khidr.^[6]

The Quran states that they meet at the junction of the two seas and Moses asks for permission to accompany the Servant of God so Moses can learn "right knowledge of what [he has] been taught".^[7] The Servant informs him in a stern manner that their knowledge is of different nature and that "Surely you [Moses] cannot have patience with me. And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?"^[8] Moses promises to be patient and obey him unquestioningly, and they set out together. After they board a ship, the Servant of God damages the vessel. Forgetting his oath, Moses says, "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing." The Servant reminds Moses of his warning, "Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?" and Moses pleads not to be rebuked.

Next, the Servant of God kills a young man. Moses again cries out in astonishment and dismay, and again the Servant reminds Moses of his warning, and Moses promises that he will not violate his oath again, and that if he does he will excuse himself from the Servant's presence. They then proceed to a town where they are denied hospitality. This time, instead of harming anyone or anything, the Servant of God restores a decrepit wall in the village. Yet again Moses is amazed and violates his oath for the third and last time, asking why the Servant did not at least exact "some recompense for it!"

The Servant of God replies, "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. Many acts which seem to be evil, malicious or somber, actually are merciful. The boat was damaged to prevent its owners from falling into the hands of a king who seized every boat by force. And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them. God will replace the child with one better in purity, affection and obedience. As for the restored wall, the Servant explained that underneath the wall was a treasure belonging to two helpless orphans whose father was a righteous man. As God's envoy, the Servant restored the wall, showing God's kindness by rewarding the piety of the orphans' father, and so that when the wall becomes weak again and collapses, the orphans will be older and stronger and will take the treasure that belongs to



Dome of Al-Khidr, Temple Mount, Old City of Jerusalem.

them."

Reports in the Hadith

Among the strongest transmitted proofs about the life of al-Khidr are two reports, one narrated by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Al-Zuhd* whereby Muhammad is said to have stated that Elijah and al-Khidr meet every year and spend the month of Ramadan in Jerusalem and the other narrated by Ya'qub ibn Sufyan from Umar II whereby a man he was seen walking with was actually al-Khidr. Ibn Hajar declared the claim of the first fair and that of the second sound in *Fath al-Bari* (1959 ed. 6:435). He goes on to cite another sound report narrated by Ibn 'Asakir from Abu Zur'a al-Razi whereby the latter met al-Khidr twice, once in his youth, the other in old age, but al-Khidr himself had not changed.

al-Khidr is believed to be a man who has the appearance of a young adult but a long, white beard. According to some authors like Abdul Haq Vidhyarthi, al-Khidr is Xerxes (not to be confused with Xerxes I), who disappeared after being in the lake regions of Sistan that comprise the wetlands of the Irano-Afghan border today, and after finding the fountain of life, sought to live his entire remaining life in service of God and to help those in their path/journey to Him.

Muhammad al-Bukhari reports that al-Khidr got his name after he was present over the surface of some ground that became green as a result of his presence there. There are reports from al-Bayhaqi that al-Khidr was present at the funeral of Muhammad and was recognized only by Ali from amongst the rest of the companions, and where he came to show his grief and sadness at the death of Muhammad. Al-Khidr's appearance at Muhammad's funeral is related as follows: *A powerful-looking, fine-featured, handsome man with a white beard came leaping over the backs of the people till he reached where the sacred body lay. Weeping bitterly, he turned toward the Companions and paid his condolences. Ali said that he was Khidr.*^[9]

In another narration al-Khidr met with Ali by the Kaaba and instructed him about a supplication that is very meritorious when recited after the obligatory prayers. It is reported by Imam Muslim that during the time when the false Messiah appears and as he approaches at the outskirts of the city of Medina, a believer would challenge him, whom the false Messiah will slice into two piece and rejoin, making it appear that he caused him to die and be resurrected, to which this man would proclaim the falsehood of the Dajjal who would try again to kill him (or make show of it) but would fail and thus his weakness and inability being made revealed. According to the commentators and transmitters of this narration the person who will challenge the Antichrist and humiliate him will be al-Khidr.

Islamic perspectives

In Shia Islam

Many Shia Muslims believe al-Khidr accompanied the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, in meeting one Sheikh Hassan ibn Muthlih Jamkarani, on 22 February 984 CE (17 Ramadan 373 A.H.) and instructing him to



A Persian manuscript depicting Elijah and al-Khidr praying together from an illuminated manuscript version of Stories of the Prophets.

build a mosque at that site of their meeting, known as Jamkaran.^[10] The site, six kilometers east of Qom, Iran, has been a pilgrimage destination for the Shia for some time. In the last few years, however, it has become very popular, particularly with young people, and drawn crowds of tens of thousands.^[11]

In Ismailism, al-Khidr is of greater importance as one of the 'Permanent Imams'; that is those who guide people through the ages of history.^[12]

In Sufism

To Sufis, al-Khidr holds a very dear place. Although amongst the Sunni scholars there is a difference of opinion about him being still alive, amongst Sunni Sufis there is almost a consensus that al-Khidr is still alive, with many respected figures and shaykhs, and prominent leaders claiming having had personal encounters with him. Examples of those who have claimed this are Abdul-Qadir Gilani, al-Nawawi, Ibn Arabi, Sidi Abdul Aziz ad-Dabbagh and Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi. Ibn Ata Allah's *Lata'if al-Minan* (1:84-98) states that there is consensus among the Sufis that al-Khidr is alive. In fact there are orders that claim origin with al-Khidr himself, or that al-Khidr was part of their chain, for example some of the Naqshbandi, the Muhammadiyyah, the Idrisiyya, and the Senussi are tariqat that had al-Khidr as one of the central figures connecting them to the spiritual outflow of Muhammad.

In Sufi tradition, al-Khidr has come to be known as one of those who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation. He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path, like some of those from the Uwaisi tariqa. Uwaisis are those who enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master. Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint al-Khidr.

al-Khidr has had thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role as an initiator. Through this way come several Sufi orders which claim initiation through al-Khidr and consider him their master. Al-Khidr had thus come to symbolize access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself. In the writings of Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khidr rules over 'the Men of the Unseen' (*rijalu'l-ghayb*)— the exalted saints and angels. Al-Khidr is also included among what in classical Sufism are called the "‘abdāl" ('those who take turns'). In Sufi hierarchy, "‘abdāl" is a mysterious rank. It is thought in Sufism that God decides who will be abdal for a decade before an abdal is born. Adbals are thought as the gainers of mysterious power that is knowing the future also called Ilm-e-ladunni. They are deployed to protect Islam from some unwanted evil activities that threaten the existence of Islam. In a divinely-instituted hierarchy of such saints, al-Khidr holds the rank of their spiritual head.

The Sri Lankan Sufi Bawa Muhaiyaddeen gives a unique account of al-Khidr. Al-Khidr was on a long search for God, until God, out of his mercy, sends the Archangel Gabriel to guide him. Gabriel appears to al-Khidr as a wise human sage, and al-Khidr accepts him as his teacher. Gabriel teaches al-Khidr much in the same way as al-Khidr later teaches Moses in the Quran, by carrying out seemingly unjust actions. Al-Khidr repeatedly breaks his oath not to speak out against Gabriel's actions, and is still unaware that the human teacher is actually Gabriel. Gabriel then explains his actions, and reveals his true angelic form to al-Khidr. Al-Khidr recognises him as the Archangel Gabriel, and then Gabriel bestows a spiritual title upon al-Khidr, by calling him *Hayat Nabi*, the Eternal Life Prophet.

The French scholar of Sufism, Henry Corbin, interprets al-Khidr as the mysterious prophet, the eternal wanderer. The function of al-Khidr as a 'person-archetype' is to reveal each disciple to himself, to lead each disciple to his own theophany, because that theophany corresponds to his own 'inner heaven,' to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality. Accordingly, al-Khidr is Moses' spiritual guide, who initiates Moses into

the divine sciences, and reveals to him the secret mystic truth.

In Ahmadiyya

Ahmadiyya identifies al-Khidr to be the symbolic representation of Muhammad himself. Ahmadis believe that the Quranic passage of Moses' encounter with the "Servant of God" is closely linked, contextually to the subject matter of surah Al Kahf in which his story or parable is cited. According to Ahmadi exegesis on al-Kahf, which draws upon external and internal, religious and historical evidence to show that Moses' journey towards, and his experience with the "servant of God" was not physical but by way of vision, similar to the Mi'raj (ascension) of Muhammad.

The righteous 'servant of God' otherwise known as al-Khidr is not believed to be a historical figure but rather a symbolic figure who signifies the person of Muhammad whom Moses had desired to see and whom he saw in this vision. Muhammad has been called the 'servant of God' in many places within the Quran and is believed to be the servant of God par excellence who has been called a mercy to the whole world;^[13] he is also believed to have been vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure.

The place of the meeting of the two seas signifies the time when the Mosaic dispensation meets the Islamic dispensation, i.e. when the Judaic dispensation will be superseded by the Islamic one.^[14]

The first action of "the servant of God" of making a hole in the boat is interpreted as signifying the commandments laid down by Muhammad which would, as it were make a hole in the boat, which in spiritual terms denotes worldly riches, i.e. he would see to it that wealth is fairly distributed and does not accumulate in the hands of a few. The "poor people" to whom the boat belonged represent the Muslims, and making a hole in it means that Islam would exhort its followers to spend in the way of God by way of Zakat and charity that would seem to be a source of economic weakness, but in fact would be one of economic strength and prosperity.

The tyrant king who confiscates the boats were the Byzantine and Persian Empires who would have seized Arabia had it not seemed to them a poor and barren land not worth conquering. Thus the Arabian land in which Muhammad was to appear, represented as the damaged boat had been safeguarded from being conquered or "taken by force".

The youth, is interpreted as ignorance, strength and wild impulses, thus the second action of the "servant of God", the killing of the youth signifies that the teachings of his religion would require its followers to bring about a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions. The source of these carnal desires, impulses and passions is the human body and soul combined, from which all moral qualities spring. Islamic theology holds that every human is born virtuous, thus because his parents have been called "believers", this means that the believers may be dragged into vice by the impulses represented as the "youth". Islam seeks to eradicate these impulses and leaves man with the soul and body combined to develop along beneficent lines to achieve the high purpose of human life.

Then Moses and the "servant of God" approach a town, ask its people for food and are refused to be accepted as guests. This signifies that both Moses and Muhammad would seek co-operation from Jews and Christians but it would be denied. The two orphan boys to whom the wall belonged are Moses and Jesus and their 'righteous' father is Abraham. Their treasure was the true teaching bequeathed by them to their peoples, which was in danger of being lost due to the latter's irreligiousness. Thus the third act of the 'servant of God' (Muhammad) of rebuilding the wall signifies that the treasure or true teachings were to be safeguarded in the Quran, so that they (the people of Moses and Jesus) may accept it after having awakened to a realization of the truth of the Quranic teachings.^[15]

In Zoroastrianism

There are many figures in Iran who Khidr took their places by the Islamisation process. One of them is paradoxally a female figure Anahita. It is clear from a shrine in Yazd. Among the Zoroastrians, for the pilgrims to Yazd, the most important of the six *pirs* is *Pir-e Sabz*. It is still a functional temple and the holiest site for present-day Zoroastrians living in Iran.^[16] Each year from 14–18 June, many thousands of Zoroastrians from Iran, India and other countries make a pilgrimage to Yazd in Iran to worship at a hillside grotto containing the sacred spring dedicated to *Pir e Sabz*. Here the worshippers pray for the fertilising rain and celebrate the greening of nature and the renewal of life. It generally refers to the sacred meal made from wheat, barley or lentil sprouts ceremoniously consumed in honour of Pir e Sabz. In Persian the term *sabz* means 'green' and *pir* means 'shrine' among the Zoroastrians of Iran. The name of the shrine derives from the greenness of the foliage growing around the sanctuary.^[17] It is actually known *Pir-e Sabz Banu* 'the old woman in the mountain' or *Chek Chek*, but also *Pir-e Sabz* 'the green saint'. Because *pir* means also 'elder' in Persian.^[18] As Babayan says, "*Khizr is related to the Zoroastrian water goddess Anahita, and some of her former sanctuaries in Iran were rededicated to him (Pir-e Sabz)*".^[19]

Al-Khidr in "The History of al-Tabari"

Persian scholar, historian and exegete of the Qur'an Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, writes about Khidr in a chapter of his *The History of al-Tabari*, called "The Tale of al-Khidr and His History; and the History of Moses and His Servant Joshua." Al-Tabari describes several versions of the traditional story surrounding al-Khidr. At the beginning of the chapter, al-Tabari explains that in some variations, al-Khidr is a contemporary of the mythical Persian king Afridun, who was a contemporary of Abraham, and lived before the days of Moses.^[20] Al-Khidr is also said to have been appointed to be over the vanguard of the king Dhul-Qarnayn the Elder, who in this version is identified as the king Afridun.^[21] In this specific version, al-Khidr comes across the River of Life and, unaware of its properties, drinks from it and becomes immortal.^[22] Al-Tabari also recounts that al-Khidr is said to have been the son of a man who believed in Abraham, and who emigrated with Abraham when he left Babylon.^[23]

Al-Khidr is also commonly associated with Elijah, even equated with him, and al-Tabari makes a distinction in the next account in which al-Khidr is Persian and Elijah is an Israelite. According to this version of al-Khidr's story, al-Khidr and Elijah meet every year during the annual festival season.^[23]

Al-Tabari seems more inclined to believe that al-Khidr lived during the time of Afridun before Moses, rather than traveled as Abraham's companion and drank the water of life.^[24] He does not state clearly why he has this preference, but rather seems to prefer the chain of sources (the *isnad*) of the former story rather than the latter.

The various versions in al-Tabari's *History* more or less parallel each other and the account in the Quran. However, in the stories al-Tabari recounts, Moses claims to be the most knowledgeable man on earth, and God corrects him by telling him to seek out al-Khidr. Moses is told to bring a salted fish, and once he found the fish to be missing, he would then find al-Khidr. Moses sets out with a travel companion, and once they reach a certain rock, the fish comes to life, jumps into the water, and swims away. It is at this point that Moses and his companion meet al-Khidr.

Al-Tabari also adds to lore surrounding the origins of al-Khidr's name. He refers to a saying of Muhammad that

al-Khidr ("the Green" or "the Verdant") was named because he sat on a white fur and it shimmered green with him.^[25]

Comparative mythology

There are several versions of the Alexander romance in which al-Khidr figures as a servant of Alexander the Great. In one version, al-Khidr and Alexander — identified with Dhul-Qarnayn — cross the Land of Darkness to find the Water of Life. Dhul-Qarnayn gets lost looking for the spring but al-Khidr finds it and gains eternal life. In the *Iskandarnamah* by an anonymous author, al-Khidr is asked by Dhul-Qarnayn to lead him and his armies to the Water of Life.^[26] Al-Khidr agrees, and eventually stumbles upon the Water of Life on his own.^[27]

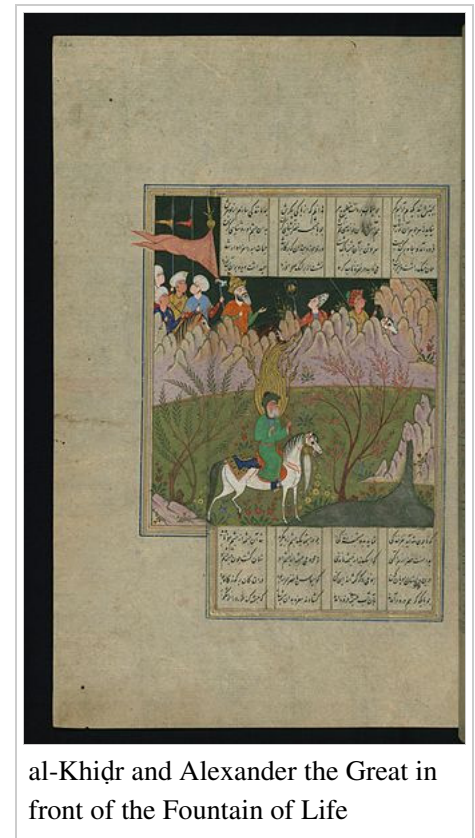
Some scholars suggest that al-Khidr is also represented in the Arthurian tale Sir Gawain and the Green Knight as the Green Knight.^[28] In the story, the Green Knight tempts the faith of Sir Gawain three times. The character of al-Khidr may have come into European literature through the mixing of cultures during the Crusades.^[29] It is also possible that the story derives from an Irish myth which predates the Crusades in which Cú Chulainn and two other heroes compete for the curadmír, the select portion given to champions, at feasts; ultimately, Cú Chulainn is the only one willing to let a giant — actually a king who has magically disguised himself — cut off his head, as per their agreement.

The story is also similar to one told by Rabbi Nissim ben Jacob in the eleventh century of a journey made by the prophet Elijah and Rabbi

Joshua ben Levi.^{[30][31]} The first house where they stay the night belongs to a pious old couple who give the prophet and the rabbi the best of their food and beds. However, the couple's cow dies in the night. Elijah later explains that the Angel of Death came and he persuaded the angel to take the cow instead of the wife. The next house, as in the al-Khidr story, is that of a rich miser, and Elijah repairs his wall so that he will not, in having it repaired, find the treasure hidden under it.

A third potential parallel to the legend surrounding al-Khidr is the Epic of Gilgamesh.^[32] The episode in question takes place after the death of king Gilgamesh's closest friend Enkidu. Gilgamesh goes on a journey to find his ancestor Utnapishtim, a wise figure who was granted immortal life and who lives at the mouth of two rivers.^[32] Ultimately, although Gilgamesh finds Utnapishtim, he is not able to attain immortality. Although the parallel is not exact, the story shares several major themes with both Surah 18 in the Quran and the Alexander romance, namely, the presence of a wise figure in all three stories, and the quest and ultimate failure to attain immortality in the epic of Gilgamesh and the Alexander romance.^[33]

In certain parts of India, al-Khidr is also known as *Khawaja Khidr*, a river spirit of wells and streams.^[34] He is mentioned in the Sikandar-nama as the saint who presides over the well of immortality, and is revered by both Hindus and Muslims.^[34] He is sometimes pictured as an old man dressed in green, and is believed to ride upon a fish.^[34] His principal shrine is on an island of the Indus River by Bhakkar in Punjab, Pakistan.^[34]



al-Khidr and Alexander the Great in front of the Fountain of Life

In *The Unreasoning Mask* by famed science fiction writer Philip José Farmer, while Ramstan, captain of the al-Buraq, a rare model spaceship capable of instantaneous travel between two points, attempts to stop an unidentified creature that is annihilating intelligent life on planets throughout the universe, he is haunted by repeating vision of meeting al-Khidr.

In popular culture

Hızır is revered as helper among some Muslims, vehicles of emergency such as *Hızır Acil* named after it (Turkey).

Ugaritic god Kothar-wa-Khasis

According to Turkish academic Bilal Aksoy, the most compelling modern hypothesis on Khidr's prototype compares him with the Ugaritic god **Kothar-wa-Khasis**.^[35] First of all, both figures possess wisdom and secret knowledge. According to the Quran, "Khidr" (although not named directly) has a special wisdom and esoteric knowledge (**hikmah** and **ilm al-ladun**). Kothar has also special wisdom and his name means "Skillful and Wise" or "Adroit and Perceptive" or "Deft and Clever". **Hasisu** means wisdom, intelligence in Babylonian, also in some ancient Near Eastern languages. Not only his name, but according to some scholars Kothar's epithet **hyn** also means wise or clever (Syrian *hawna*: intelligence or ability).^[36] Kothar is a craftsman god and in the mythology almost all blacksmiths and craftsmen are wise, clever and skillful figures. Because people believed that they have some secret powers and wisdom to work metals,^[37] for example in Greek epic, Hephaistos is praised not only for his craftsmanship, but with intellectual epithets appropriate to Odysseus.^[38] He is described as *klytomētis* (renowned for mind) and *klytotechnēs* (renowned for skill) by Homeros.^[39] Blacksmiths and craftsmen played a central role in ancient society. They made many tools that people needed, from agricultural tools like the reaping-hook (the sickle or scythe) to weapons like arrows, spears, axes and swords. They made musical instruments, too. Therefore, the metalworkers or craftsmen were considered the lords of many social inventions like agriculture, music, writing, fire, etc. As a direct result of their social status, they were seen as wise, intelligent figures in mythology, Kothar too.

Secondly, Kothar and Khidr are dragon slayers or they help some figures to kill a dragon. Kothar helps Baal to kill Yam-Nahar by making weapons for him. Khidr helps Sufis or *wali's* like Sarı Saltuk to struggle with a dragon. According to some other stories he plays a central role, not that of a helper, and slays the dragon himself. For example, the people who live in Antakya (*Turkey*) tell a story about this feature of Khidr^[40] and it originates from the story of Baal and Yam Nahar. Strabo tells the same story, but his characters are different; Zeus and Typhon.^[41] The another one which mentioned Khidr himself as a dragon slayer, quoted by Flemish ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (XVI. century).^[42] In some regions, especially in the frontiers of Asia Minor, Khidr is seen as a dragon slayer, because he took the place of Saint George or other warrior saints like Saint Theodore (Theodore of Amasea) who fights against the dragons.^[43] However, it can't be explained only by this continuity. The myth of the dragon slayer was very popular in the ancient Near East and the divine smiths were usually assistant figures to make weapons for the chief gods of this mythological scenario, but they were also seen as a dragon slayer in some myths. In Kurdish mythology Kaveh the blacksmith (*Kawa*) kills an evil king Zahhak who was only a personification of the Avestan dragon Azhi Dahaka. According to a Scottish tale, from the another side of the world, the blacksmith of Kirkudbright defeated the White Snake of Mote Hill. Moreover, Kothar has fought against Behemoth and some other monstrous beings in Ugaritic mythology.^[44] A Ugaritic text tells it: *In the sea are Arshu and the dragon, May Kothar and Hasis drive (them) away, May Kothar-and-Hasis cut (them) off.*^[45]

Kothar and Khidr are known as "sailor" figures who are symbolically associated with sea, lake and rivers. **Chusor** is an inventor of the boat and he saves sailors. It believed that he was the first voyager on a boat. Khidr helps people when they need help. Most of these dangerous conditions are about seas, lakes and rivers, etc. For example, he sometimes helps children when they are drowning in the water or he helps boatmen during stormy weather. The Alevi Kurds of Dersim saw him as a savior and describe him as a "sovereign of the seas". He is a patron "saint" of the rivers in India. This characteristic feature of Khidr is not only from new syncretisms, it is basically connected with Kothar's characteristic features. Because Chusor (*Kothar*) was inventor of the boat and sailors believe that he protects them when they voyage. One of his epithets was **bn ym** (son of the sea).^[46] Khidr often has some characteristics of a sailor, even in cultural areas which are not directly linked to the sea, like mountainous Dersim. It may be evident that Khidr originally comes from the culture of a people who inhabited the seashore. He has transformed to a wanderer by the cultural effects of darwishes and wanderer Sufis.^[47]

Above their all characteristics, the status of Kothar can't be denied to show this continuity. Kothar is an assistant or "*a servant god*" in Ugaritic mythology. He helps Baal and builds a palace for him, but he is actually a "*servant of supreme god EL*".^[48] Thus, he is accepted as one of the divine servants in Ugarit, because Keret, son of El, is also called a "*servant of El*".^[49] It's a very interesting point, because according to the Quran, Khidr is "*a servant of Allah*" (**'abd min 'ibādīnā**).^[50] Besides, the names of *Allah* and *El* are very similar to each other. It is known that they come from a common root. By the similar or common elements, it can be seen easily as part of their continuity.^[51]

Kothar and Khidr bring fertility. Kothar controls and customizes the seasons. Like some craftsmen or blacksmiths, Kothar is associated with agriculture. Among the Dogon people of Mali the heavenly smith has a role of civilizing hero; he brings down grain from heaven and reveals agriculture to mankind.^[52] In the Bible **Cain** (meaning perhaps *smith*) was a farmer and 'blacksmith', although he was not the inventor of agriculture. The Welsh smith *Govannon* had agricultural powers as well, for it was he who cleaned the plows at the end of planting, to ensure that the tools abundance would serve another year.^[53] Evidently, Kothar's profession, which is associated with agriculture among some cultures, has a good reason for him to get a new position in time. Some peoples of the Levant, especially the people of ancient Cyprus, believed that **Kautar** (that is Kothar) was father of **Tamoza**/Tammuz (deity), the god of fertility.^[54] Thus, Khidr became a special figure of new syncretisms in late periods. Because Kautar (later Khidr) and his son Tamoza (Adonis)^[55] have been compared with Ali ^[56] and his son Hussein (**Husayn**). In some contexts they identified with each other. Khidr and Ali have almost the same position in Islamic mystic thought and some Shiite beliefs and they can take the place of each other. In some contexts Khidr is identified with Husayn, sometimes with the last imam or **Mahdi**. The mythological scene show very strong syncretisms. It can be described like this: El (deity) and his son Baal,^[57] Kautar (Kothar) and his son Tamoza (*Adonis*), Ali and his son Hussein.^[58] The names of El (deity) and Ali are similar to each other and it was an onomastic invitation for some new beliefs about Ali, Husayn and Khidr. There are many other connection points like their abodes. El's abode is at the source of two rivers, according to the Quran. "Khidr"s abode is **majma-ul bahrayn**; that is, the junction of two seas. In ancient texts El's abode is described as *the stream of two seas*. Du Buisson pointed to parallelism between El's abode and *majma-ul bahrayn*.^[59] It's very important that Arabic *al-Kawthar* which means a river of the paradise, is etymologically connected with the name of Ugaritic divine craftman, **Kothar**.^[60]

Kothar was the lord of wise words and good speech. He is also a soothsayer and magician, creating sacred words and spells, in part because there is an association in many cultures of metalworking deities with magic. Sanchuniathon says that Chusor invented the art of composing chants and incantations. In Ugaritic texts

kotharat means singer women.^[61] Actually in mythology the blacksmiths and craftsmen play important role as a poet, musician and magician. The same associations are to be found among the Turco-Tartars and Mongols, where the smith is linked with heroes, singers and poets.^[62] Like them, Khidr teaches a kind of dhikr (Arabisch ذِكْر; "*remembrance* (of God)", "*pronouncement*", "*invocation*") to some Sufis like Abdulhalik Gucduvani. But it seems that it was not only an echo of Kothar, it is also a strong effect of Surush (or *Surosh*) who was originally a Zoroastrian divinity Sraosha and Khidr took his place when Islam was introduced to Iran and became the dominant religion there.^[63] By the Islamisation process in Iran, Surush (*Sraosha*) was accepted as a messenger angel and also identified with Jibril (Gabriel). Because at the same time Surush was an inspirational figure to poets.

According to a rumor the Islamic prophet Muhammad has learned a devotion by Khidr.^[64] It's more interesting that Khidr is seen as their ancestral master or pir (Sufism) among the ashiks. According to the ashiks' tradition, Khidr gives to apprentices the art of poetry and he helps them for their initiation.^[65] The continuity is comprehensible, because in mythic mentality the eloquence and especially the poem is associated with the ritm and melody of craftsmen's work. Its echo can be understood with the origins of the English word *poem* (and poetry). It comes from Latin *poēma*, from Ancient Greek ποίημα (*poiēma*), from ποιέω (*poiēō*, "I make"). On the other hand, Sufis accept Khidr as a master of the calligraphy while Kothar were indirectly associated with the art of writing. In ancient times the people thought that the writing was a magic work. It's often regarded at first as an instrument of the secret and magic power. Therefore, it might be created by craftsmen and blacksmiths who have same power. Besides, the cuneiform was a craft. First of all; it was not easy to write on a clay tablet and to produce a good clay tablet must have been one of the first tasks of an apprentice scribe.^[66] Although Kothar was not a patron of scribes, it is very important that Nabu [grandchild of Babylonian god Ea (god)] was known as a patron of the scribes, because some scholars think that Ea is a prototype of Kothar. According to another opinion, Kothar's prototype is Egyptian god Ptah. Ptah's son Imhotep was known as a patron of the scribes.^[67] It points that the divine craftsmen and blacksmiths who were also gods of good speech or wise words in mythology, have been transformed to lords of the writing in time. It can be seen in some mythologies that the lord of eloquence is inventor of the writing, too. For example, Irish god Ogma was the lord of eloquence, poetry, and rhetoric. But he had a truly remarkable skill as a poet and he invented the earliest system of writing used in Ireland: Ogham.^[68] The another one, Sigurd who was one of the most famous mythological German heroes, had learned the skill of the rune writing by the smith Regin.^[69]

The another characteristic continuity between Kothar and Khidr is their soft and skilled hands. In Ugaritic texts, Kothar is mentioned as a skilled hand (*hrsh yd*). Actually, most blacksmiths in mythology were described with such attributions. One of the epithets of the Greek blacksmith Hephaistos, which was used less frequently, was "*skilled with both hands*". There are many linguistic remainders which show a symbolic connection between the smithy, skillfulness and hand. For example, in the Ethiopian language, **äḡama** or **äḡamma** means blacksmith, skillful and it comes from **äḡ** which means hand. In Ethiopian language, **äḡä wāxe** and **äḡä wārq** means also blacksmith, but literally of good or golden hand.^[70] In Igbo language the word for arts and craft is **nka** which derives from the another Igbo word **aka** and aka means hand.^[71] In this context it is very important that Khidr can be recognize by his soft hands among the people. Because the people of Levant and Asia Minor believe that he has boneless hands. Actually hand or soft hands metaphorically refers skillfulness, generosity and abundance. There is a term in Arabic for skilled men and women which derived from Arabic hand (*yad*).^[72] On the other hand Arabic **semahat** used in Islamic mysticism for to be generous and to be soft.

Like some blacksmiths and craftsmen, Kothar indirectly, Khidr is directly associated with immortality. In mythology blacksmiths and craftsmen have secret power to get immortality and the healing powers were often attributed to them.^[73] In many countries the smith is seen as a medicine man. Vedic craftsman Tvastar is the

former of the bodies of men and animals and invoked when desiring offspring, called **garbha-pati** or *the lord of the womb*. He is also the guardian of Soma that conveys the experience of immortality, is a healer and gives absolution. He made of the goblet for Soma drink.^[74] In Welsh beliefs Govannon (Gofannon) yeasted a kind of immortality beer. In Yakut mythology **K'daai Maksin** (Kıdaai) is the divine blacksmith and he repairs the broken or amputated limbs of heroes. According to the another Yakut belief their ancestor Elliei was the first blacksmith and he has been seen as a healer. Because they believe that smiths have the power to cure by natural means without the assistance of spirits, as do the Shamans. According to an Acanti myth a blacksmith sent by the God to Earth to make a dozen men and animals. Mircea Eliade shows in his work *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy* that the divine blacksmith of mythology makes elixir of immortality as an alchemist. In Irish mythology, Cú Chulainn (*Culain*) made a new dog for himself after his savior dog was dead. Mcleish thinks that Ugaritic craftsman Kothar has also same feature. Khidr is described as a holding a cup/goblet in some Alevi divine songs. The cup or goblet symbolize the immortality. On the other hand the Nusayris of Antakya (*Turkey*) believe that Khidr can operate men like a surgeon.^[75] According to some Islamic epic romances he repairs the broken limbs of warriors. It's told in *Danishmendname* that Khidr has repaired the broken hand of Artuhi who was a friend of Melik Danishmend Gazi.^[76] He heals also mental illness. For example the shrine of Beit Jala (near Bethlehem) is associated with Khidr by Muslims who believe it's miraculous cures of mental illness. Even more importantly Khidr known everywhere as an immortal figure, from Balkans to India.

The Alexander romance is also originated from ancient Levant. Kothar and some mythological figures who were syncretized with Kothar, have played a role in Alexander's legendary voyage. The siege of Gaza (or *Gazza*) and Tyre were important events for Alexander romance. Both of them were very problematic. First of all Alexander's army have been faced with drought during the siege of Gaza. The capture of Tyre ended in July. Then the army marched 160 miles and arrived in Gaza. It was perhaps in early August and the time of drought. According to D.W. Engels the army needed in round number 100,000 gallons of water within a day. It means 6,000.000 gallon water for this adventure, because the siege of the city took two months. The another problem was the topographical position of Gaza. Because Gaza was built on a hill. Thus, he has made a mound to capture Gaza^[77] and the troops entered to the city in this way. Some sources writes that the height of the mound was almost 250 feet and it built by the engineers from Tyre who had long been for their cleverness and skill. So that the skillful builder of Bible Hiram Abiff whom King Solomon procured from Tyre for the temple. But Arrian wrote that the engineers were from Cyprus and all Phoenicia.^[78]

The siege of Tyre was also problematic. Because the New Tyre was on an island and had walls right up to the sea and the mainland settlement of the city which originally called Ushu.^[79] It was more like a line of suburbs than any one city. The New Tyre itself, which was on an island just off shore, and the associated settlement of **Ushu** (Greek *Usoos* or *Ousous*) on the adjacent mainland. Alexander the Great connected the island to the mainland coast by constructing a causeway, a bridge land during his siege of the city, demolishing the old city to reuse its cut stone. Alexander the Great became a mythological figure also in this region. Because elements of Alexander romance -like a barrier, Yajuj Majuj (Bible Gog and Magog), the water of immortality- refers to the hill which made by Alexander's order during his Gaza siege and the bridge land of Tyre, the craftsmen peoples of the region -for example Tyre's craftsmen-, the god of sea **Usoos** and **Melqart** who associated with immortality etc. It can to note that the name of Usoos may be connected with a transliteration of **Hasis** and he was also known as an inventor of the dugout. Usoos or Ousoos is later syncretized with Baal of Tyre and has turned to Melqart, the god of the city. There were two temples for this god. The main temple of Melqart was on the island (New Tyre) and there was another one on the mainland (Old Tyre).^[80]

That is, the another mythological figure who played role in this myth, was Melqart ("*King of the City*"). Melqart was a god of the sea and fertility like Kothar. He was seen as Heracles by the Greeks. Because Heracles has

shown some same characteristics. For example he was known as a voyager like him. The people of Alexander's time call Heracles as a travel companion, not as a helper for difficult situations.^[81] According to legends that Alexander believed, his father's family traced its roots to Heracles. Heracles was demigod, thus half human, half god. It might be important for Alexander who wants become an immortal. According to a rumor about Alexander the Great's last days which was maintained at Metz Codex, Alexander called Zeus and he said that "*if you decide my dead, please accept me as a mortal, as a third one (mortal)*". He means Heracles and Dionysus, that is demi-gods.^[82]

There are more common elements between Alexander romance in Syriac language, the story of Moses (*Qur'an* 18:61-5) and of Dhul-Qarnayn (*Qur'an* 18: 83-96) and some historical events or ancient mythological figures of the region. For example, the rocky (Arabic *shahrat*) which is mentioned in the Quran (18:61-3) as a place where companion of Moses forgot their food, correspond to two rocks (*stelae* or 'pillars') of Tyre which symbolized immortality. Tyre means rock in Semitic languages. It is mentioned as *Shur* in the Bible (Hebrew *shur*, rock).^[83] Their food is dried fish which is another connection. Because Old Tyre was a famous shore city for the fish industry and sailors have got dried salted fish to eat, before they went to the sea journey. Besides, Kothar wa-Hasis was also known as a fisher of the goddess Asherah and Chusor was inventor of fishing tools and the boat. In this context like Tyre, Sidon which is located on the 25 miles north of Tyre, may be shows a symbolic association with the story of Moses (*Quran*). Because it is possible that **Sidon** originally comes from a word which means fish.^[84] But in the same time it may be an astrological sign of Pisces (astrology) like two 'pillars' which is erected by Melqart (originally by Usoos/Ousous and his brother) in Old Tyre.^[85] Both of them symbolize the immortality. In astrology two parallel columns denote the zodiacal signs of Cancer (astrology) and Capricorn (astrology), which formerly placed in the chamber of initiation to represent birth and death, as seen in the Masonic Lodge.^[86] Wallace B. Fleming points to manufactural industry of glass in Tyre and he writes in his work *The History of Tyre* (New York, 1915: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 143, 148); "*The pillar of the temple of Melkart which 'shone brightly in the night' must have been a hollow cylinder of green in which a lamp perpetually burned*". The another one was in the temple at Aradus (Arwad).^[87] There were two great pillars of glass. This possibility is comparable with the greenness of Khidr.

Some interpreters thought that Moses of Sura al-Kahf is not Moses, he symbolized Alexander the Great. Moses was in Bible depicted as horned like Alexander the Great of the Quran. It originated from a linguistic fault of Bible translators in the Middle Ages and Moses is depicted wearing horns in Christian art of the Middle Ages. Torah (*Exodus* 34: 29-35) reports that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, the skin of his face was radiant. When the Bible has been translated to Latin, the translators mistakenly attributed to Moses "*horns of light*", Because the Hebrew verb **karan**, *to shine*, has the identical spelling as **keren**, *horn*.^[88] Dhul-Qarnayn figuratively means the "*two-horned one*" in Arabic and the most of scholars thinks that he is Alexander the Great. But not only mythological and historical characters, also events and narrations were confused with each other. It can be say ultimately, all the common elements show that the Alexander romance and also the story of the Quran (18: 60-5) is basically originated from mythology and some historical events of this region, thus from ancient Levant.^[89]

Ritualistic murder and the origins of the cult of Khidr

The new hypothesis about the cultural origins of the figure of Khidr points to an another common element by a religious tradition in Near East. Like Alevis the people make flour of roasted wheat on the day before the festival for Khidr. They keep it somewhere in the kitchen to see later for Khidr's traces. Next day in the morning if they see some signs on the flour, it means that Khidr came there to bring abundance and blessing for them. Later they bake some kind of cake which is called *Qavut*, *Kavut*, *Köme* or *Göme*.^[90] Thus, it takes different

names among variously ethnic groups.

The tradition for Khidr originated from the mythico-rituals of Ancient Near Eastern dying gods like Osiris, Adonis (and also Melqart) and the process which shows the transformation of the grain to flour symbolizes cremation (*death*) of the god.^[91] Frazer's opinion about Adonis and Osiris rites indirectly clarifies this ritualistic acts. He writes: "The women bewail him (Adonis), because his lord slew him so cruelly, ground his bones in a mill, and then scattered them to the wind. The women (during this festival) eat nothing which has been ground in a mill, but limit their diet to steeped wheat, sweet vetches, dates, raisins, and the like".^[92] It is actually associated with shamanistic initiations and also with smith's world. Eliade completes this analogy in his important work *The Forge and the Crucible*: "*The identification of shamanism with the art of smith likewise appears in the ceremonial spectacles of certain shamanic initiations. In their dreams or initiatory hallucinations the future shamans watch themselves being torn to pieces by the 'demon'-masters of the initiation. Now these traditional spectacles entail, directly or otherwise, gestures, tools and symbols belonging to the sphere of the smith...*"^[93]

In the last analysis the roasting of the grain and making flour of it by the hand mill symbolizes the process of the death of the god. It means the beginning of a new period. Because as a cosmic machine, mill produces periods of time.^[94] Thus, the mill doesn't mean only worldly, also cosmic and it is often made by a mythological smith like Finnish blacksmith Ilmarinen. He makes a mill which is called Sampo. In Serbian tradition the blacksmith gives the water mill to people.^[95] This symbolic and cultural association between the smith and mill, is really remarkable for the continuity between Kothar and Khidr.

In brief there are many mythico-rituals for the dying gods in Ancient Near East which indirectly correspond to the ritual for Khidr. For example, **Melqart** was also cremated in Tyrian ritual. According to the Pseudo-Clementines, people used to speak of a place near Tyre where Melqart had been consumed in flames.

Representations of the god at Pyrgi show him enveloped in flames.^[96] The death of the god is also a part of Masonic rituals. So that some researchers reinforced the link between ancient sacrificial rites of the mystery religions and Freemasonry. Patiagorsky emphasised the ritualism in the death of the divine male Deity and the Masonic protagonist Hiram Abiff, where as Howard underlines the pattern of ritual murder in the ancient world. Thus, the ritualistic murder of the Masonic initiations can be traced to the sacrifice of the divine male Deity to the Great Mother Goddess, the divine female principle.^[97] More important point that Hiram Abiff is thought to be identified with Melqart who might be a variant of Adonis.^[98] Unlike some other writers John Sebastian Marlowe Ward points in his work that Hiram Abiff symbolizes **Adonis**, not **Osiris** (*Why Hiram Abiff Represents Adonis and Not Osiris*). As death of the god, Hiram is murdered after building of Solomon's Temple.

Consequently, Kothar has got this feature as father of **Tamoza** (*Tammuz*) in some mythologies of the Levant and also as a smith. Besides, he is comparable figure with the master of stonemason Hiram and the servant of Allah (*Khidr*) who repairs a wall (Quran 18: 77-82).^[99] Because Kothar is a master-builder as well as a master-smith. He built a palace for Baal on sacred mountain Saphon.^[100] It means that there are many similar or common elements that show possibility of the cultural interaction between all these characters. It means that it can find the effects of the cult of Khidr on some Masonic rituals. It was introduced by the Christian sects like Knights Templar and Carmelites. According to Idris Shah the chivalrous Order of the Garter was actually modelled after the Middle Eastern Order of Khidr. Shah maintains that the Order of Khidr had been a Holy Grail Order of Cupbearers overseen by the Sufis, who divided up the membership into circles of thirteen participants each, called *halkas*.^[101]

On the other hand, the cult of Saint George was strengthened by the Crusaders in Europe. England, Aragon and Portugal assumed him as their patron saints, and so did most of the chivalrous orders founded at the date of

these wars. For example, in 1245 Frederic of Austria instituted an order of St. George, on his day. In the early thirteenth century Genoa had a military order under his protection, and in 1201 an order was founded in Aragon, 'the Knights of St. George of Alfama'.^[102] It can say that the city of Tyre has played important role for the association between two mythological figures; Saint George and Khidr. Because the martyrdom of St. George was sometimes placed at Melitene (today Malatya); but it was also located at Tyre^[103] and the city was of unusual importance, not only because of its wealth, but because it was "*caput et metropolis*" of the Christian churches of Phoenicia, and fourteen cities were suffragen to the Archbishop of Tyre.^[104] Tyre might be important also for the Knights Templar.^[105]

The astrological representations of the Khidr as a mythical character

The mythological mentality is not only about the world and terrestrial facts, it tells also stories about the celestial beings and their adventures. Thus, at the same time the most of the ancient myths firstly signifies the astrological movements. It is very likely that the Alexander romance and the story of the Moses and "Khidr" have some astrological representations, although some scholars who have an interesting to study these myths, are not fully aware yet about it. They are only focused to social, historical dimensions of the myths, that is some social, historical events and characters. However, the fish, the source of water and the immortality, twin pillars or rocks/stone and the mill are clearly celestial signs. The journey on the sea may be also an astrological motif as well as worldly. Because the ship Argo is one of the most remarkable of the constellations. It will be found that this ship descends under the horizon, when the Sun is in the sign of Capricorn.^[106]

Moreover, the killing a child is an ancient sacrificial ritual which has been seen in some cultures, is an astrological motif as well as socio-cultural. The story of Moses and "Khidr" in the Qur'an (*see below*) tells that the servant of Allah ("Khidr") kills a child and Moses discussed with him about it. Perhaps it can be traced to the cult of Melqart/Herakles in Tyre. Because Herakles like Melikertes is a "child-killer" and he kills his enemy's child. Lykophron (second century BC) calls Herakles the Child Destroyer (*Teknoraistēs*). Lykophron also reports version that have Herakles kills the children of his brother Iphicles alongside his own. Pache finds an echo of this version in the first-century BC historian Nicolaus of Damascus, in which Herakles in his madness first kills two of Iphicles's son.^[107]

The sacrificial killing of first-born children which often called Moloc or Molok in Phoenicia, was widely practiced from the beginning of the first millennium BC among Canaanites in general, but particularly in the Phoenician colonies throughout the whole Mediterranean area. Although lambs sometimes also were killed sacrificially, the male infants were "real" victims. Their bodies cremated and buried under the foundations of palaces, fortresses and temples.^[108] It recalls the dying of the widow's son Hiram and Melqart. First of all the widow has astrological meanings and she symbolized the mourning goddess such as Mary (mother of Jesus). Secondly, some mythic figures like Herakles, Nergal and Melqart who represent the planet Mars in the astrology, are described as a child or young man.^[109] For example Armenian war-god Vahagn was called **patenenik** means 'youth' or 'child'. In Edda the Norse Thor bears the epithet **sveinn**, signifiying 'boy' or 'youth'. The Egyptian Horus was known as the 'youth'. The one of his epithet means 'young child' (**hrd nhn**). The Aztec war god was known as **Telpochtli**, 'the young male'.^[110]

The ancient authors like Strabo, Arrian, Pomponius Mela and Appian refer many times to the worship of Melqart in Tyrian colonies, but never describe the sacrifices offered to Melqart.^[111] Although this relatively weak point, this sacrificial ritual also points an astrological thema and it may be occurs in the Quranic story about Moses and the servant of Allah (that is 'Khidr').^[112] This possibility shows again that Khidr is originally from syncretic form of Kothar (*Ousoos*) who was syncretized with Baal in Tyre.^[113] After this transform of the

god, Melqart became a god of travellers and sailors. Ousoos who erroneously is accepted as Kothar's brother by some scholars, was actually no other than Kothar and his name (*Ousoos*) means *hasis*, that is the Ugaritic divine craftsman.^[114] According to Philo of Byblos Ousoos was invented the dugout and he was the first sailor.

Although all these, the social and historical events make an illusion for most scholars. They only focused the similarities between the mythic and historical characters or events. But the other hand some mythologists believe a structuralist analyses to explain the myths. Because they can find easy too much common elements between some myths as a result of the effects of astrology. A myth actually can have an astrological or historical roots or both of them. The myth of the Khidr is an astrological as well as socio-cultural and historical. Therefore, Wensinck was partly right, when he has tried to find the continuity between the Gilgamesh Epic and the Alexander romance.^[115] Consequently, Khidr who kills a child, is different from the Khidr of the popular legends and the folk religions. Thus, Quranic Khidr shows some original features of the syncretic form of Kothar (*Ousoos* < *Hasis*) and he has shown some astro-mythological characteristics of Mars and Mercury (planet). But in the folk beliefs he is represents mostly Mercury.

See also

- Malamatiyya
- Muslim views on the intercession of saints
- Saint George#Interfaith Shrine
- Mahis
- Jamkaran

Notes

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31. ^ Brannon M. Wheeler, The Jewish origins of Qur An 18:65-82? Reexamining Arent Jan Wensick's theory (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go2081/is_n2_v118/ai_n28711540/), *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, **118**, 153–171, April–June 1998 (via findarticles.com)
32. ^ ^a ^b "al-Khadir (al-Khidr)" (http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.
33. ^ "al-Khidar (al-Khidr)" (http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.

34. ^{a b c d} Longworth Dames, M. "Khwadja Khidr" (http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khwadja-khidr-SIM_4126?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.
35. [^] Gürdal Aksoy 2006: 215-93
36. [^] Ayali-Darshan points that *hyn* is connected with the name of Mesopotamian god Ea and the terms derived from the Akkadian form *ḥasīsu*, frequently occurs in Hurrian and Hurro-Hittite material as a customary epithet for Ea (Noga Ayali-Darshan, 'The Meaning of *Hyn dḥrṣ ydm* in Light of a Parallel from Emar', *Ugarit-Forschungen*, Band 43, 2011, p. 1-6). This connection makes strong the continuity between Kothar and Khidr. Because Ea is almost same type god with Kothar. He is wise figure among the gods and at least he has more than twenty epithets which mean wise, clever, intelligent etc (for some epithets, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sümerlerin Kurnaz Tanrısı Enki*, çev. H. Koyukan, İstanbul, 2000: Kabalcı, p. 417 ISBN 975-8240-33-1).
37. [^] for details see Aksoy 2006: 237-9; about blacksmiths and craftsmen, see Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy*, Chicago, 1978: University of Chicago Press
38. [^] Morris 1992: 85-6
39. [^] Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis; Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, foreword by G. Murray, New York, 1950: Henry Schuman, p. 155
40. [^] Aksoy 2006: 236
41. [^] The myth of Khidr and the dragon which, mentioned by the people of Antakya, can be traced to ancient times. This myth tells a story about the origin of the Orontes river. About its origin, see Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion*, Leiden, 1969, E.J. Brill, p.32-3
42. [^] Oya Pancaroglu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia", *GESTA XLIII/2*, 2004, p. 151, 158 see http://www.imtlucca.it/attachments/gerevini_pancaroglu_dragon_slayer.pdf
43. [^] Ethel Sara Wolper, "Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 90, issue 3-4, 2000, p. 309-322; Pancaroglu 2004; see also Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, Great Britain, 2003: Ashgate ISBN 1 84014 694 X
44. [^] 'BEHEMOTH was a terrifying monster of Hebrew mythology, the dry-land equivalent of the monstrous sea serpent LEVIATHAN' (Arthur Cotterell-Rachel Storm, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*, London, 1999, Lorenz Books, p. 272 ISBN 0-7548-0091-1).
45. [^] B.F. Batto, 'Behemoth', in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, second extensively revised edition, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1999, Brill, p. 168 ISBN 90-04-11119-0
46. [^] Aksoy 2006: 223-25, 236
47. [^] Aksoy 2006: 239-40 and Pertev Naili Boratav, "Hızır (Türklerde)", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, VII, 1967, p. 465–66 (in Turkish)
48. [^] Arthur Cotterell-Rachel Storm, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology, An A-Z Guide To The Myths And Legends Of The Ancient World*, 1999, p. 293, Lorenz Books, ISBN 0-7548-0091-1
49. [^] for the *divine servants*, see Mark Smith-Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cyle*, Vol. II, Leiden, 2009, p.50-1, 452, 577: Brill ISBN 978 90 04 15348 6; for Keret, see T. Kleven, "Kingship in Ugarit", in *Ascribe to the Lord, Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. by Lyle Eslinger-Glen Taylor, 1988: Sheffield Academic Press, ISBN 1-85075-189-7.

50. ^ In Arabic '**abd min 'ibādīnā** means "*one of our servants/worshippers*". The Arabic word for worship, *ibadah* comes from the Arabic word *abd* which means servant or slave.
51. ^ F.W. Bussell, "The Persistence of Primitive Beliefs of Theology: A Study of Syrian Syncretism: 'Ali, Elyun, El, Helioss and Eliyah", *Folklore* 28, No. 3, 1917
52. ^ "*All the entire mass of palaeo-Nigritian culture bears witness to a whole complex of religious activities concerning the smith, whose ideological foundations are to be found in the myth of the Celestial Smith and the Civilizing Hero. It would nevertheless be an error to explain this ritual significance of the smith solely on the basis of his role in the making of agricultural tools. Neither iron itself nor the smithy is necessarily exalted in agricultural civilizations...*" Eliade 1978: 30, 94
53. ^ Patricia Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, New York, 2004, p. 225 ISBN 0-8160-4524-0
54. ^ Kothar is the Phoenician Chusor mentioned by Sanchuniathon and by Mochos of Sidon. According Albright, he is also *Kautar* said by Melito of Sardis to have been the father of Tammuz (Gaster, p. 154 fn).
55. ^ The epithet of *Tammuz* is from *adon* which means lord in Semitic languages.
56. ^ *cousin of Mohammad*.
57. ^ *Baal* means lord like *adon*.
58. ^ His epithet *al-Sayyid* also means lord in Arabic, as Adonis in Syriac. Moreover, Adonis is known as a handsome god and Husayn is an Arabic name which is the diminutive of Hassan, meaning "good", "handsome" or "beautiful". Gürdal Aksoy writes that it could be an easy way to mythologize Husayn by this common elements (also about the origins of Ta'zieh ritual, see Aksoy 2009: 222).
59. ^ Aksoy 2006; for Ta'zieh ceremony and its origins, see Aksoy 2009: 212-22; Robert Du Mesnil Du Buisson, *Nouvelles Etudes sur les Dieux et les Mythes de Canaan*, Leiden, 1973, p. 4, E. J. Brill
60. ^ John Pairman Brown, "Kothar, Kinyras and Kythereia", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. X, ed. by C.F. Beckingham, 1965, p. 199-200 and D. Pardee, "Kothar", *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter Willem Van Der Horst, 1995, p. 914, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, ISBN 9789004111196
61. ^ In Ugaritic texts the *knr* which was a type of lyre, appears with the other names of musical instruments. In an Ugaritic text, the *knr* is listed first among an ensemble of instruments which seem to be described as the 'beloved companions' of Kothar. The *knr* (Hebrew *kinnôr*), once divinized, itself becomes a god, *Kinyras* (Cinyras). He was a priest-king, lover of Aphrodite and also father of Adonis. By this characteristic he seems like Kothar. Because Kothar is accepted as father of *Tamoza* (Tammuz/Adonis). Besides, its translation is *kithara* in the Septuagint and some think that it come from *ktr*, that is Kothar (see J.C. Franklin, "Lyre Gods of Bronze Age Musical Koine", JANER 6, nr. 1, 2006, p. 39-70 <http://www.kingmixers.com/FranklinPDFfiles/LyreGodsWeb.pdf>; Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, An Ancient Name of the Lyre, ArOr 67/4, 1999, p. 585-600 http://www.pies.ucla.edu/IESV/1/VVI_lyre.pdf; John C. Franklin, "Kinyras at Pylos", <http://www.kingmixers.com/FranklinPDFfiles/KinyrasPylos.pdf>)
62. ^ Eliade 1978: 98–99
63. ^ The *silence dhikr* is associated with Zoroastrian *baj*. It is a silence prayer. *Srosh-baj* is one of the daily prayers of Parsees.
64. ^ Aksoy 2006: 218, n. 1

65. ^ Pertev Naili Boratav, *Türk Mitolojisi (Oğuzların, Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Türkmenistan Türklerinin Mitolojisi)*, 1. baskı, Ankara, 2012, p. 71 ISBN 978-9944-795-41-8; Theo Maarten van Lint, "The Gift of Poetry: Khidr and John the Baptist as Patron Saints of Muslim and Armenian Âşîqs – Aşûls", Van Ginkel J.J., Murre-van den Berg H.L., Van Lint T.M. (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, Peeters, 2005 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 134), p. 335-378 ISBN 90-42914181 and Aksoy 2012: 76-9
66. ^ Andrew Robinson, *The Story of Writing*, London, 2007, new edition, p. 82, Thames and Hudson ISBN 978-0-500-28660-9, ISBN 0-500-28660-4 and Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, London and New York, 2002, p. 91, Routledge http://monoskop.org/images/f/ff/Ong,_Walter_J_-_Orality_and_Literacy,_2nd_ed.pdf
67. ^ Aksoy 2006: 230-5
68. ^ Aksoy 2006: 235; Cotterell-Storm 1999: 156; <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rjohnso/ancientirish.pdf>
69. ^ C. Scott Littleton, *Gods, Goddesses and Mythology*, Vol. 10, China, 2005, p. 1300, Marschall Cavendish, ISBN 0-7614-7569-9
70. ^ Wolf Leslau, *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*, Vol. I, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, p. 265-6 http://books.google.nl/books?id=S7ckMbbwiHQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=ethiopic+etymological+wolf+leslau&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=jx8jUoirD4_LtAa1vICYAw&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=blacksmith&f=false
71. ^ Michael Okoh, *Fostering Christian Faith in Schools and Christian Communities through Igbo Traditional Values. Towards a Holistic Approach to Christian Religious Education and Catechesis in Igboland (Nigeria)*, Bonn, 2012, p. 117 ISBN 978-3-643-90168-2
72. ^ Hasan Taşdelen, Arap Deyim ve Atasözlerinde ‘El’ Motifi, *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 18, sayı 2, 2009, p. 212 (in Turkish) [http://ucmaz.home.uludag.edu.tr/PDF/ilh/2009-18\(2\)/M10.pdf](http://ucmaz.home.uludag.edu.tr/PDF/ilh/2009-18(2)/M10.pdf)
73. ^ Littleton 2005: 1426
74. ^ About Soma or Haoma, see David Stophlet Flattery and Martin Schwartz, *Haoma and Harmaline: The Botanical Identity of the Indo-Iranian SacredHallucinogen "Soma" and its Legacy in Religion, Language, and Middle Eastern Folklore*, 1989: <http://www.ebookdb.org/reading/2CGC3BG81E6D34GD23342869/Haoma-And-Harmaline--The-Botanical-Identity-Of-The-Indo-Iranian-Sacred-Hallucino>
75. ^ Aksoy 2006: 240-5; Eliade 1978 and Kenneth Macleish, *Myth: Myths and Legends of the World Explored*, London, 1996, p. 570, Bloomsbury, ISBN 9780816032372
76. ^ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *İslam-Türk İnançlarında Hızır yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü*, İstanbul, 2012, p. 199-200 ISBN 978-605-5272-05-0 (in Turkish)
77. ^ Arrian, *History of Alexander and Indica* I, trans. by P.A. Brunt, London, 1976, II: 26; 3-4, William Heinemann Ltd; Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander*, Vol. I, Books I-V, trans. by J.C. Rolfe, London, 1971, I: 21, William Heinemann Ltd; Donald W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, Los Angeles and Berkeley, 1978: University of California Press
78. ^ for more details, see Aksoy 2006: 257-63
79. ^ It was called later as *Palaetyrus* by the Greeks, meaning "Old Tyre".
80. ^ Josette Elai, "The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period", *JANES* 13, 1981, p. 23
81. ^ Michael Burgan, *Alexander the Great*, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 15, Compass Point Books, ISBN 978-0-7565-1872-1
82. ^ Aksoy 2006: 265
83. ^ For more detail, see Aksoy 2006: 257-69

84. ^ About this etymological comment and its critics, see Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Sidon: A Study in Oriental History*, New Jersey, 2007, p. 11-12, Gorgias Press ISBN 978-1-59333-592-2
85. ^ "Pillars of Hercules. The name given to the two promontories guarding the eastern passage to the Strait of Gibraltar, connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The name, originating in classical mythology, refers to a belief that the 'pillars' were once connected but were split and pulled apart by Hercules to join the two seas" (William Stewart, *Dictionary of Images and Symbols in Counselling*, London, 1998: Athenaeum Press, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, p. 318 ISBN 1-85302 412-0). It seems parallel to two *stelae* ('pillars') of Melqart (*Tyrian Heracles*), not only by symbolic representations, also by geographical position (for more information, see Gabriela Bijovsky, 'The Ambrosial Rocks and the sacred precinct of Melqart in Tyre', in: C. Alfaro, C. Marcos and P. Otero (eds.) *XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática*, Madrid - 2003. Actas - Proceedings - Actes I. Madrid. Pp. 829-834. http://www.mcu.es/museos/docs/MC/ActasNumis/The_Ambrosial_Rocks.pdf).
86. ^ Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, San Francisco, 1928, H.S. Crocker Company, p. 1928. But some writers notes that two pillars denote the sign Gemini (astrology) in astrology (see Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Masonry*, fifth printing, 1996, Guildford, Biddle Ltd. p.32).
87. ^ The island of Aradus was used as a bridgehead or staging area by the Crusaders during the later part of the 13th century, in the time of the Crusades. It was the last piece of land that the Crusaders maintained in the Holy Land, as they were fighting a losing battle against the Muslims (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arwad>)
88. ^ Ellen Frankel-Betsy Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, USA, 2004, p. 76, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, ISBN 978-1-5682-1742-0
89. ^ for details see Aksoy 2006: 257-69; more information about old Tyre, see H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre, from the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C. E.* Jerusalem, 1973: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research
90. ^ (Aksoy 2006: 288-292)
91. ^ (Aksoy 2006: 288)
92. ^ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion, Part IV, Adonis Attis Osiris*, third edition, The Macmillan Co. p. 189-91.
93. ^ for more information, see Eliade 1978: 83-4.
94. ^ For more information, see Giorgio de Santillana-Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill, An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and It's Transmission Through Myth*, fourth printing, USA, 1998; Tom Chetwynd, *A Dictionary of Sacred Myth*, London, 1986: Unwin Paperbacks, p. 126-7
95. ^ Radomir Ristic, 'Blacksmith as Magus', *The Crooked Path, A Journal of the Nameless Art*, Issue 1, No. 1, Spring 2008, p. 28
96. ^ Ev Cochrane, *Starf*cker: The Catastrophic Conjunction of Venus and Mars*, Iowa, 2006: Aeon Press, p. 81, ISBN 9780977285129
97. ^ Ernest Millington, *Shadow Rulers: The Euro-American Trojan Horse. The Hidden History of Dynastic Overlords and Their Plan for World Domination*, Bloomington, 2009, p. 105-6 ISBN 978-1-4401-2296-5 (pbk) ISBN 978-1-4401-2297-2 (ebk)
98. ^ Millington 2009: 105
99. ^ According to Flavius Josephus Hiram constructed a temple to Melqart at Tyre as well as the temple at Jerusalem for King Solomon.

100. ^ The palace of Baal in heaven is equivalent to the construction of his temple on earth (S.D. Ricks-Michael A. Carter, 'Temple-Building Motifs: Mesopotamia, Ancient Israel, Ugarit and Kirtland', *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry, USA, 1994, p.155 ISBN 0-87579-811-X).
101. ^ Mark Amaru Pinkham, *Guardians of the Holy Grails, The Knight Templar, John the Baptist and the Water of Life*, Illinois, 2004, p. 79 ISBN 1-931882-28-2; see also Ocak 2012: 79
102. ^ John P. Brown, *The Darwishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by H.A. Rose, Haarlem, 1968: Frank Cass Co. Ltd, p. 174-5, fn. 8
103. ^ Joseph Fontenrose, *Python. A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959: Univ. of California Press, p. 516
104. ^ Wallace B. Fleming, *The History of Tyre*, New York, 1915: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 89
105. ^ see Templar of Tyre.
106. ^ William Drummond, *The Œdipus Judaicus*, London, 1811, printed by A. J. Alpy, p. 20
107. ^ Corinne Ondine Pache, *Baby and Child Heroes in Ancient Greece*, USA, 2004, p. 54-5 ISBN 978-0-252-02929-5; Cochrane 1997: 46
108. ^ Alexander Piatigorsky, *Freemasonry*, London, 1999, The Harvill Press, p. 320-1 ISBN 978-1860462658
109. ^ It is important that Mars represents also blacksmiths: "*Mars's Astrological Rulership (...) 6. Occupations: As the god of war, Mars is naturally associated with all military professions as well as in the creation of weapons and the use of sharp instruments. Surgeons, blacksmiths, metallurgists, dentists, butchers, barbers, and carpenters are thus under its influence*" (Alan Oken, *As Above, So Below. A Primary Guide to Astrological Awareness*, New York and Canada, 1973, Bantam Books, p. 285). Oken writes in his same book; "*Mars is warrior and murderer, but he is also the surgeon and healer*".
110. ^ for more details see Ev Cochrane, *Martian Metamorphoses: The Planet Mars in Ancient Myth and Religion*, Iowa, 1997, p. 124-5 ISBN 978-0965622905
111. ^ But the rites for Melqart performing by Alexander the Great at Tyre can compare with the performing of the 'Khidr' in Quran. Because he sacrificed to Melqart ('Herakles') and dedicated to him the engine which battered down the wall, as well as the Tyrian sacred schip (Josette Elai, 'The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period', *JANES* 13, 1981, p. 23 <http://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1981%2013/Elayi13.pdf>). Alexander is a hero like Herakles. Because both of them visit to Egypt. According to Herodotus when Herakles visited Egypt, -like Alexander he sacrificed to Jupiter (that is Ammon) (Thomas William Doane, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, New York, 2007: Cosimo, p. 69-70 ISBN 9781602069510
112. ^ The **Servant** is a constellation in the Egyptian civilisation and according to Brugsch it means Pegasus (constellation) (Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, 1963, 1963, Dover Publications, p. 20 ISBN 978-0486210797). It is not more important than the status of Kothar among the Ugaritic gods. Because he was a *servant* of the El, the chief god.
113. ^ Than he has turned to Melqart (*Herakles*). Coulter and Turner writes about Melqart: "*Originally a solar deity, but later became god of travellers, sailors, and of the city Tyre (...) He is associated with both Baal and the Greek Heracles*". (C.R. Coulter-Patricia Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities*, Chicago and London, 2012: Routledge, p. 317 ISBN 1-57958-270-2). But not only this, it is said that his name is a Phoenician translation of the Sumerian name Nergal, and thus, they are very closely assimilated (Cochrane 1997: 44, ft. 37).
114. ^ for *Ousoos*, see Baumgarten 1981: 163-5

115. ^ for some common astrological elements between Herakles, Gilgamesh (or *Izdubar*) and Samson, see Thomas William Doane, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, New York, 2007, Cosimo, Inc. p. 69-74 ISBN 9781602062030

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External links

- Article Claiming Al-Khidr Is Still Alive (<http://seekingilm.com/archives/168>)

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For the Palestinian village west of Bethlehem, see [al-Khader](#).

Al-Khidr (**Arabic:** الخضر "the Green One", also transcribed *Khidr*, *Khidar*, *Khizr*, *Khizar* and (**Persian:** خضر), **Turkish:** *Hızır*) is an enigmatic figure in Islam; some say he is a *‘Abdan Ṣālih* (righteous servant of God)^[*citation needed*] while others say he is a **prophet**. Al-Khidr is best known for his appearance in the **Qur'an** in **sura al-Kahf**.^[*Qur'an 18:65*] Although not mentioned by name in the *āyah* (verse), al-Khidr is assumed to be the figure that **Musa** (Moses) accompanies and whose seemingly violent and destructive actions so disturb Moses that he violates his oath not to ask questions.

Islamic tradition sometimes describes al-Khidr as *Mu'allim al-anbiya* (Tutor of the Prophets), for the spiritual guidance he has shown every prophet who has appeared throughout history. The one prophet whom al-Khidr did not teach is Muhammad; significantly, it is Muhammad who taught al-Khidr. This is an unsurprising reversal of the master-disciple relationship exemplified by al-Khidr and Moses. Having the young, unlettered Muhammad teach the wise, ancient al-Khidr underscores the superiority of Muhammad's prophethood and the fact that he too is a repository of divine knowledge (*ilm ladunni*).^[*citation needed*]

Hızır is also an important figure in **Alevism** as well as the subject of a major Turkish holiday, **Hindrellez**. In the **Jordanian** city of **Mahis** there is a Mausoleum to al-Khidr.

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Quranic narrative

In ayat 18:65-82, Moses meets al-Khiḍr, referred in the Quran as "one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves," [\[Qur'an 18:65\]](#) at the junction of the two seas and asks for permission to accompany him so Moses can learn "right knowledge of what [he has] been taught". [\[Qur'an 18:66\]](#)

Al-Khiḍr, realizing that Moses had the [Torah](#) and divine knowledge to draw upon, informs him in a stern manner that their knowledge is of different nature and that "Surely [Moses] cannot have patience with me." Moses promised to be patient and obey Al-Khiḍr, and they set out together.

After they board a ship, al-Khiḍr damages the vessel. Forgetting his oath to follow quietly, Moses says, "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing."

Al-Khiḍr reminds Moses of his warning, "Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?" and Moses asks not to be rebuked.

Next, al-Khiḍr murders a young man. Moses again cries out in astonishment and dismay, again Al-Khiḍr reminds Moses of his warning, and Moses promises he will not violate his oath again. They then proceed to a town where they are denied hospitality.

This time, instead of harming anyone or thing, al-Khiḍr restores a decrepit wall in the village. Yet again Moses is amazed and violates his oath for the third and last time, asking why al-Khiḍr did not at least exact "some recompense for it!"

Al-Khiḍr replies, "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." Many acts which seem to be [evil](#), malicious or somber, actually were merciful. The boat was damaged to prevent its owners from falling into the hands of "a king who seized every boat by force. ... And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them." God will replace the child with one better in purity, affection and obedience.

As for the restored wall, al-Khiḍr explained that underneath the wall was a treasure belonging to two hapless orphans whose father was a righteous man. As God's envoy, al-Khiḍr restored the wall, showing God's kindness by rewarding the piety of the orphans' father.

Reports in the Hadith

Among the strongest transmitted proofs about the life of al-Khidr are two reports, one narrated by Imam Ahmad in *al-Zuhd* whereby Muhammad is said to have stated that Ilyas and al-Khidr meet every year and spend the month of Ramadan in Jerusalem and the other narrated by Ya'qub ibn Sufyan from the 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz whereby a man he was seen walking with was actually al-Khidr. Ibn Hajar declared the chain of the first fair and that of the second sound in *Fath al-Bari* (1959 ed. 6:435). He goes on to cite another sound report narrated by ibn 'Asakir from Abu Zur'a al-Razi whereby the latter met al-Khidr twice, once in his young age, the other in his old age, but al-Khidr himself had not changed.

Al-Khidr is believed to be a man who has the appearance of a young adult but a long, white beard. According to some authors like Abdul Haq Vidhyarthi, al-Khidr is Xerxes (not to be confused with [Xerxes I](#)), who disappeared after being in the lake regions of [Sijistan](#) or [Sistan](#) that comprise the wetlands of the Irano-Afghan border today, and after finding the fountain of life, sought to live his entire remaining life in service of God and to help those in their path/journey to Him.

Bukhari reports that al-Khidr got his name after he was present over the surface of some ground that became green as a result of his presence there. There are reports from al-Bayhaqi in his *Dala'il an-Nubawwah* that al-Khidr was present at the funeral of Prophet Muhammad and was recognized only by Abu Bakr and Ali from amongst the rest of the companions, and where he came to show his grief and sadness at the passing away of the Prophet. Al-Khidr's appearance at Muhammad's funeral is related as follows: *A powerful-looking, fine-featured, handsome man with a white beard came leaping over the backs of the people till he reached where the sacred body lay. Weeping bitterly, he turned toward the Companions and paid his condolences. Abu Bakr and 'Ali said that he was Khidr.* (Ibn al-Jazari 1994, p. 228.)

In another narration al-Khidr met with [Ali](#) by the [Kaabah](#) and instructed him about a supplication that is very meritorious when recited after the obligatory prayers. It is reported by Imam Muslim that during the time when the false Messiah appears and as he approaches at the outskirts of the city of [Medina](#), a believer would challenge him, whom the false Messiah will slice into two pieces and rejoin, making it appear that he caused him to die and be resurrected, to which this man would proclaim the falsehood of the Dajjal who would try again to kill him (or make show of it) but would fail and thus his weakness and inability being made revealed. According to the commentators and transmitters of this narration the person who will challenge the Antichrist and humiliate him will be al-Khidr.

Sidi Abd al-Aziz ad-Dabbagh is reported in *al-Ibriz* to have said about al-Khidr, that he is not a prophet but rather a saint who has the same status as that of the *ghawth* (a level where the saint acquires resemblance to the heart of Israfil) and who attained this status in front of God as a direct blessing without the aid of any spiritual guide.

The picture to the right shows al-Khidr to be meeting [Dhul-Qarnayn](#).

In Sufism

To Sufis, al-Khiḍr holds a very dear place. Although amongst the Sunni scholars there is a difference of opinion about him being still alive, amongst Sunni Sufis there is almost a consensus that al-Khiḍr is still alive, with many respected figures and shaykhs, and prominent leaders claiming having had personal encounters with him. Examples of those who had claim this are Ghawth Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Imam an-Nawawi, Muhyideen Ibn Arabi, Sidi Abdul Aziz ad-Dabbagh and Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi. Ibn 'Ata' Allah in *Lata'if al-Minan* (1:84-98) states that there is consensus among the Sufis that al-Khiḍr is alive. In fact there are orders that claim origin with al-Khiḍr himself, or that al-Khiḍr was part of their [chain](#), for example some of the Naqshbandiyya, the Muhammadiyyah, the Idrisiyyah, and the Sanusiyyah are tariqahs that had al-Khiḍr as one of the central figures connecting them to the spiritual outflow of the Prophet Muhammad.

In Sufi tradition, al-Khiḍr has come to be known as one of those who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation. He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path, like some of those from the Uwaisi tariqa. Uwaisis are those who enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master. Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint al-Khiḍr.

Al-Khiḍr has thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role of an initiator. Through this way come several Sufi orders which claim initiation through al-Khiḍr and consider him their master. Al-Khiḍr had thus come to symbolize access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself. In the writings of Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khiḍr rules over 'the Men of the Unseen' (*rijalu 'l-ghayb*)—the exalted saints and angels. Al-Khiḍr is also included among what in classical Sufism are called the *abdāl* ('those who take turns'). In a divinely-instituted hierarchy of such saints, al-Khiḍr holds the rank of their spiritual head.

Sufis draw many analogies supporting [natural theology](#) from this Qur'anic passage, such as the need for earthquakes to act in contrast to earth's stability, disease to contrast good health, and countless other analogies. The question of [accountability](#) raised by some is answered through the fact that al-Khiḍr was acting as God's envoy and not according to his personal judgment.

The Sri Lankan Sufi [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen](#) gives a unique account of al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr was on a long search for God, until God, out of his mercy, sends the Archangel [Gabriel](#) to guide him. Gabriel appears to al-Khiḍr as a wise human sage, and al-Khiḍr accepts him as his teacher. Gabriel teaches al-Khiḍr much in the same way as al-Khiḍr later teaches Moses in the Qur'an, by carrying out seemingly unjust actions. Al-Khiḍr repeatedly breaks his oath not to speak out against Gabriel's actions, and is still unaware that the human teacher is actually Gabriel. Gabriel then explains his actions, and reveals his true angelic form to al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr recognises him as the Archangel Gabriel, and then Gabriel bestows a spiritual title upon al-Khiḍr, by calling him *Hayat Nabi*, the Eternal Life Prophet.

The French scholar of Sufism, [Henry Corbin](#), interprets al-Khiḍr as the mysterious prophet, the eternal wanderer. The function of al-Khiḍr as a 'person-archetype' is to reveal each disciple to himself, to lead each disciple to his own theophany, because that theophany corresponds to his own 'inner heaven,' to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality. Accordingly, Al-

Khidr is Moses' spiritual guide, who initiates Moses into the divine sciences, and reveals to him the secret mystic truth.

In Shi'ite Islam

Many [Shī'ī](#) Muslims believe al-Khidr accompanied the Twelfth Imām, [Muhammad al-Mahdi](#), in meeting one Sheikh Hassan ibn Muthlih Jamkarani, on 22 February 984 CE (17 Ramadan 373 A.H.) and instructing him to build a mosque at that site of their meeting, known as [Jamkaran](#).^{[1][2]} The site, six kilometres east of [Qom](#), [Iran](#), has been a pilgrimage destination for the Shī'ah for some time. In the last few years, however, it has become very popular, particularly with young people, and drawn crowds of tens of thousands.^[3]

The Shia believe that this is the point where the Mahdi will reappear and are often seen putting letters down a well where they believe he will re-emerge. One of the most prominent believers is the current President Ahmadinejad who has invested large sums of money in developing the area. (CNN)

In Ahmadiyya

[Ahmadiyya](#) Muslims believe that the Quranic passage of Moses' encounter with the "Servant of God" is closely linked, contextually to the subject matter of surah [Al Kahf](#) in which his story or parable is cited. According to Ahmadi exegesis on *al-Kahf*, which draws upon external and internal, religious and historical evidence to show that Moses' journey towards, and his experience with the "servant of God" was not physical but by way of vision, similar to the [Mi'raj](#) (ascension) of [Muhammad](#).

The righteous 'servant of God' otherwise known as al-Khidr is not believed to be a historical figure but rather a symbolic figure who signifies the person of Muhammad whom Moses had desired to see and whom he saw in this vision. Muhammad has been called the 'servant of God' in many places within the Qur'an and is believed to be the servant of God *par excellence* who has been called a *mercy to the whole world*;^[Qur'an 21:108] he is also believed to have been vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure.

The place of the meeting of the two seas signifies the time when the Mosaic dispensation meets the Islamic dispensation, i.e. when the Mosaic dispensation will be superseded by the Islamic one.^[4]

The first action of "the servant of God" of making a hole in the boat is interpreted as signifying the commandments laid down by Muhammad which would, as it were make a hole in the boat, which in spiritual terms denotes worldly riches, i.e. he would see to it that wealth is fairly distributed and does not accumulate in the hands of a few. The "poor people" to whom the boat belonged represent the Muslims, and making a hole in it means that Islam would exhort its followers to spend in the way of God by way of [Zakat](#) and charity that would seem to be a source of economic weakness, but in fact would be one of economic strength and prosperity.

The tyrant king who confiscates the boats were the [Byzantine](#) and [Persian](#) Empires who would have seized [Arabia](#) had it not seemed to them a poor and barren land not worth conquering. Thus the Arabian land in which Muhammad was to appear, represented as the damaged boat had been safeguarded from being conquered or "taken by force".

The youth, is interpreted as ignorance, strength and wild impulses, thus the second action of the "servant of God", the killing of the youth signifies that the teachings of his religion would require its followers to bring about a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions. The source of these carnal desires, impulses and passions is the human body and soul combined, from which all moral qualities spring. Islamic theology holds that every human is born virtuous, thus because his parents have been called "believers", this means that the believers may be dragged into vice by the impulses represented as the "youth". Islam seeks to eradicate these impulses and leaves man with the soul and body combined to develop along beneficent lines to achieve the high purpose of human life.

Then Moses and the "servant of God" approach a town, ask its people for food and are refused to be accepted as guests. This signifies that both Moses and Muhammad would seek co-operation from Jews and Christians but it would be denied. The two orphan boys to whom the wall belonged are Moses and [Jesus](#) and their 'righteous' father is [Abraham](#). Their treasure was the true teaching bequeathed by them to their peoples, which was in danger of being lost due to the latter's irreligiousness. Thus the third act of the 'servant of God' (Muhammad) of rebuilding the wall signifies that the treasure or true teachings were to be safeguarded in the Quran, so that they (the people of Moses and Jesus) may accept it after having awakened to a realization of the truth of the Quranic teachings.^[5] The Quran does not denote that Moses was dreaming or in some kind of dream realm or spiritual realm. These interpretations are only considered by the Qadianis who are followers of Mirza Ghulam Qadian. Hence the reason why sunnis and shias declare them non-Muslims.

Relation to other stories

Al-Khidr also figures into the [Alexander Romance](#) as a servant of [Alexander the Great](#). Al-Khidr and Alexander cross the [Land of Darkness](#) to find the [Water of Life](#). Alexander gets lost looking for the spring, but al-Khidr finds it and gains eternal life (see [Alexander the Great in the Qur'an](#)).

Some scholars suggest that al-Khidr is also represented in the Arthurian tale, [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight](#), as the [Green Knight](#).^[6] In the story, the Green Knight tempts the faith of Sir Gawain three times. The character of al-Khidr may have come into European literature through the mixing of cultures during the [Crusades](#).

It is also possible that the story derives from an Irish myth which predates the Crusades in which [Cuchulainn](#) and two other heroes compete for the [champion's portion](#) at feasts; ultimately, Cuchulainn is the only one willing to let a giant—actually a king who has magically disguised himself—cut off his head, as per their agreement.

The story is also similar to one told in the [Talmud](#) of a journey made by the prophet [Elijah](#) and Rabbi Jochanan.^[7] The first house where they stay the night belongs to a pious old couple who

give the prophet and the rebbe the best of their food and beds. However, the couple's cow dies in the night. Elijah later explains that the Angel of Death came and he persuaded the angel to take the cow instead of the wife. The next house, as in the al-Khidr story, is that of a rich miser, and Elijah repairs his wall so that he will not, in having it repaired, find the treasure hidden under it. This story could have been adapted by religious figures to suit Elijah, taking the essence away from Moses having to learn from someone else. This could have been seen to belittle Moses. Hence was adapted to suit someone else.

Al-Khidr is also said to be lord [Vishnu](#) of the Hindu religion by Riaz Ahmed [Gohar Shahi](#).

See also

- [Malamatiyya](#)
- [Muslim views on the intercession of saints](#)
- [Saint George#Interfaith shrine](#)
- [The Green Man](#)
- [Mahis](#)
- [Jamkaran](#)

Notes

1. [^](#) [English](#) (click on "Brief History")
2. [^](#) [History of Jamkaran Mosque](#)
3. [^](#) Nasr, Vali, *The Shia Revival*, (Norton, 2006), p.220
4. [^](#) [The Holy Quran](#)
5. [^](#) [The Holy Quran](#)
6. [^](#) Lasater, Alice E. (1974). *Spain to England: A Comparative Study of Arabic, European, and English Literature of the Middle Ages*. University Press of Mississippi.
7. [^](#) [Polano, H. \(1876\). *The Talmud: Selections*.](#)

References

- Oliver Leaman: *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*. Taylor & Francis 2006, ISBN 0415326397, p. 343-345 ([restricted online version \(Google Books\)](#))

External links

- [Comprehensive site on Al-Khidr](#)
- [Shrine Devoted to Al-Khidr](#)
- [Article Claiming Al-Khidr Is Still Alive](#)