Zul-Qarnayn and Gog and Magog

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In Surah al-Kahf (18th surah of Quran) is the story of Zul-Qarnayn (or Dhul-Qarnayn) and Gog and Magog. The verses that deal with the expeditions of Zul-Qarnayn are from 83 to 100:

83. And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about Dhul-Qarnayn. Say, "I will recite to you about him a report."
84. Indeed We established him upon the earth, and We gave him to everything a way.

85. So he followed a way
86. Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it [as if] setting in a spring of dark mud, and he found near it a people. Allah said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, either you punish [them] or else adopt among them [a way of] goodness."
87. He said, "As for one who wrongs, we will punish him. Then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with a terrible punishment.
88. But as for one who believes and does righteousness, he will have a reward of Paradise, and we will speak to him from our command with ease."

89. Then he followed a way
90. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had not made against it any shield.
91. Thus. And We had encompassed [all] that he had in knowledge.

92. Then he followed a way
93. Until, when he reached [a pass] between two mountains, he found beside them a people who could hardly understand [his] speech.

94. They said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, indeed Gog and Magog are [great] corrupters in the land. So may we assign for you an expenditure that you might make between us and them a barrier?"
95. He said, "That in which my Lord has established me is better [than what you offer], but assist me with strength; I will make between you and them a dam.
96. Bring me sheets of iron" - until, when he had leveled [them] between the two mountain walls, he said, "Blow [with bellows]," until when he had made it [like] fire, he said, "Bring me, that I may pour over it molten copper."
97. So Gog and Magog were unable to pass over it, nor were they able [to effect] in it any penetration.
98. [Dhul-Qarnayn] said, "This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord comes, He will make it level, and ever is the promise of my Lord true."
99. And We will leave them that day surging over each other, and [then] the Horn will be blown, and We will assemble them in [one] assembly.
100. And We will present Hell that Day to the Disbelievers, on display -[a]

I will discuss the matter in eight research points.

Research Point 1: 'they ask you'

The 83rd verse begins with: 'And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about Dhul-Qarnayn'.

This means that the prophet was asked about Zul-Qarnayn. It was not the Muslims that asked the question. In Syed Abu'Ala Maududi's book 'The Meaning of the Quran' the introduction to surah al-Kahf states that the prophet was asked 3 questions by the pagan Meccans, who in turn were instigated by the people of the book (either Jews of Christians). The 3 questions concerned:
1. The people of the cave
2. al Khidr
3. Zul-Qarnayn.

It is my interpretation that the pagan Meccans had no prior knowledge of these three matters by themselves from Arab folklore. These matters were most likely known by the Jews (of the people of the book) of Mecca and it they who most likely formulated the questions and then put the ignorant pagan Meccan Arabs to

[a] Unless otherwise stated all English translations of the Quran in this essay are from the publication of Saheeh International, The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes, Riyadh: Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, 2001-2011; Jeddah: Dar Abul-Qasim 1997-2001.

ask the prophet the 3 questions:

The Jews wanted to ask the prophet hard questions to test his prophethood. In answer surah al-Kahf was revealed.

Important to note is that stories of Zul-Qarnayn were known prior to the revealed verses in surah al-Kahf. How much was known by the Jews and others is not mentioned in the Quran.

Research Point 2: The name Zul-Qarnayn

Yusuf Ali's Quran commentary states that Zul-Qarnayn literally means 'The Two horned one.' There is a book called The Secret History of the Mongol Queens' written by Jack Weatherford. This author holds the DeWitt Wallace Chair of Anthropology at Macalester College in Minnesota and an honorary position at Chinggis Khan University. He also received The Order of the Polar Star - the highest award for service to the Mongolian nation. The fourth sentence on the first paragraph of page seven states:

'By contrast, men wore a small clump of bangs in the middle of the forehead directly above the nose. Aside from the bangs, men shaved most of the head except for two large clumps just above each ear. They never cut these tufts, but instead braided them into "horns" that hung down to the shoulders and often grew so long that they had to be looped back over the ear'

Thus, Mongolian coiffure for warriors was these two separate clumps of hairs above each ear and they resembled horns. I imagine they did not just droop down but it was tightened upwards like horns sticking out and then when it got too long it fell down to the shoulders.

Zul-Qarnayn could be a Mongolian. Mongolians are nomadic horse people just like many native North American Indians became horse cultured peoples after Europeans reintroduced horses back to North America. In their homeland of Mongolia Mongolians are divided into many tribes but in the vastness of Asia they are but one nation amongst a myriad of ancient peoples.

Central and East Asia is very vast and it was populated by a myriad of tribes including Tartars, Turks, Huns, Scythians, Mongolians and many other peoples, as is mentioned below.

Throughout Central and East Asian history, and long before the rise of Ghenghis Khan in the 13th century CE, there were many other warrior hordes that rode out

from their native lands and conquered and marauded. The Great Wall of China was built to buttress against their incursions. One such warrior king was Attila the Hun, a nomadic and barbarian Asian king who conducted devastating raids and conquests against the Eastern Roman Empire in the 5th century CE[1] but before Attila there were many other warrior kings that roamed about on their steeds. Another tribe that came from Central Asia are the Saka (whom the Greeks called Scythians). They are one of the oldest recorded nomadic empires and they were an Iron Age people with a highly developed metallurgy. Looking for greener pastures they moved westward across the Eurasian steppes. The Greek historian Herodotus described The Persian King Darius' expedition against them in Southern Russia in the 6th Century BCE.[2] These Scythians had previously supplanted an even older people called the Cimmerians whose history goes back to 1200 BCE.[3] With the passing of time we see that newer Nomadic empires arose in different parts of Mongolia, China, Central and West Asia. In the fifth century BC there came a people on the western borders of China called the Hsiung-nu. For hundreds of years they menaced the Chinese. These Hsiung-nu were 'fierce mounted warriors who were able to muster as many as 300,000 horseback archers on their periodic intrusions into North China'. The Great Wall of China was built to keep them out.[4] A lesser rival of the Hsiung-nu were the Yüeh-chih who were driven out of China in the second century BCE. Moving westward they defeated the local Greek rulers and settled in regions of Sogdiana and Bactria, in Central Asia. They divided their lands into 5 chiefdoms. Of these 5 chiefdoms one became known as the Kushan Kingdom. Kushans are important for my research because they ruled over parts of central Asia, Afghanistan and northern India. They were commerce minded people and tolerant to many different religious systems as borne in their gold coinage.[5] From the foregoing it should be adduced that Eurasia was home to many nomadic peoples and empires that conquered, divided, traded, and spread amongst them technologies and religious thought. One of these ancient peoples might have been ruled by the mysterious Zul-Qarnayn.

How would the Jews know about Zul-Qarnayn? During the first Diaspora Jews were taken captive in the 6th century BC to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar II conquered The Jewish state of Judah.[6] Perhaps someone in this exile community at Babylon was in the employ of the a merchant or king that went on travel or expedition east into Central Asia and on one these travels he heard the name of a legendary Mongolian or other Central to East Asian nomadic king called Zul-Qarnayn. It would be unheard of in the west far away in the Jerusalem and other Mediterranean cities. Of Zul-Qarnayn, we are told in the Quran, in verse 84 of surah al-Kahf (18th surah of Quran):

'Indeed We established him upon the earth, and We gave him to everything a way.'

Historians in the past read this verse and often thought of the most popular names of great rulers that were famous in the Middle East such as Iskander (Alexander the Great). I think this kind of interpretation is wrong because the Jews wanted to ask the prophet Muhammad a hard question and the famous Greek conqueror Alexander the Great is famous in the Middle East like Julius Caesar. The Arabs would almost certainly have known the name Alexander just as they knew of Caesar and the Jewish King Solomon. Thus if Zul-Qarnayn was Alexander it would not be a hard question for the prophet to answer with something. Stories of a Greek Zul-Qarnayn would be popular even amongst the Arabs. However, if Zul-Qarnayn was a nomadic King from somewhere in the vastness of Central or East Asia his identity would be obscure in the West without actually diminishing his status in Central to East Asia and as the Quran says he would still be established upon the earth, in his region of the world.

Research Point 3: The first expedition

Zul-Qarnayn was a ruler that went on 3 expeditions. Verse 85 in the 18th surah of the Quran begins the first of three travels of Zul-Qarnayn and the verse simply reads:

'So he followed a way.'

When the second and third expeditions are narrated Allah begins each narration with 'So he followed a way' in verses 89 and 92 respectively.

In the first expedition, in verse 86:
'...he reached the setting of the sun, he found it [as if] setting in a spring of dark mud, and he found near it a people. Allah said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, either you punish [them] or else adopt among them [a way of] goodness."'

He reached a place described as the setting the sun and there he saw a spring of dark mud. This translation is from Saheeh International. Yusuf Ali's Quran translation describes it as a 'spring of murky water'. Muhsin Khan's Quran translation describes it as a 'spring of black muddy (or hot) water'.

Clearly there is something wrong with this spring. It has some kind of impurity in it. I have an interpretation of what this impurity might be but my interpretation hinges on how the people in this region described in the Quran as 'the setting of the sun' were treated by Zul-Qarnayn. In verses 86 to 88 of the Quran Allah says:

86. '...Allah said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, either you punish [them] or else adopt among them [a way of] goodness."

87. He said, "As for one who wrongs, we will punish him. Then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with a terrible punishment.

88. But as for one who believes and does righteousness, he will have a reward of Paradise, and we will speak to him from our command with ease."

In these three verses we can see that the response from Zul-Qarnayn is both a stern rebuke against falseness and wrongdoers and mercy for righteous believers. The rebuke of the disbelievers, in my interpretation, has something to do with the 'spring of dark mud'. I hypothesize that the place visited by Zul-Qarnayn was affected by a petroleum seep. Before explaining what a petroleum seep is we have to start with a technical definition of petroleum. Here is one from Britannica Encyclopedia:

'complex mixture of hydrocarbons that occur in the Earth in liquid, gaseous, or solid forms. The term is often restricted to the liquid form, commonly called crude oil, but as a technical term it also includes natural gas and the viscous or solid form known as bitumen. The liquid and gaseous phases of petroleum constitute the most important of the primary fossil fuels.

Liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons are so intimately associated in nature that it has become customary to shorten the expression "petroleum and natural gas" to "petroleum" when referring to both.'[7]

Britannica Encyclopedia also explains what a petroleum seep is and how old they are:

'Small surface occurrences of petroleum in the form of natural gas and oil seeps have been known from early times. The ancient Sumerians, Assyrians, and Babylonians used crude oil and asphalt ("pitch") collected from large seeps at Tuttul (modern-day Hīt) on the Euphrates for many purposes more than 5,000 years ago.'[8]

Below is a photo of a petroleum seep in Slovakia, Central Europe:



[photo credit: Branork, sourced via Wikipedia]

Areas affected by petroleum seeps can be singular and isolated or they can involve hundred of seeps over geographical areas spanning hundreds of miles. An example of this comes from the website of an American government science agency called The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is housed under the US Department of Commerce. The NOAA monitors and researches natural petroleum seeps in North America. Their webpage that explains the scale of oil seeps states the following about the seeps that are currently occurring off the coast of California:

> The waters off southern California are one area in particular which host hundreds of known, naturally occurring oil and gas seeps. These seeps contribute about 5 million gallons of oil to the ocean annually, with wide year to year variation. They likely have been leaking for thousands of years.[9]

In ancient times, in a terrestrial location with hundreds of fissures leaking out oils to the surface a wide area of land would appear to be covered in murky springs. Petroleum oil is highly flammable and people could have started fires at these seeps and they would observe that the fires don't extinguish but that for hundreds of years they continue to burn. To see such natural and apparently eternal fires would be like witnessing a miracle for ignorant and superstitious people of antiquity. They might have worshipped the fire, thinking it to be divine, and in doing so they would be serious wrongdoers and disbelievers. Hence the stern rebuke from Zul-Qarnayn.

Lastly, the description of the place as 'the setting of the sun' is a metaphorical description to mean a place where spiritual darkness is descending upon the people because possibly some of the people that visited that place inclined to worshipping the fire and in doing so become disbelievers. Just as evening twilight after sunset is the transition phase between day and night, the

land of the setting of the sun is a place of spiritual transition where the hearts of believers are dimmed in disbelief.

Research Point 4: The second expedition

Immediately I say to readers, notice the solar symmetries in verses 86 and 90. Verses 90 and 91 to follow:

90. '...he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had not made against it any shield.

91. Thus. And We had encompassed [all] that he had in knowledge.

The opposite of sunset is sunrise. Sunrise and sunset are symmetrical because both phenomena are images of the red disk of the sun touching and crossing the horizon. If you stand facing north then on your right the sun will rise above the ground and to your left, some 12 hours later, the sun would fall below the ground. Before and after the sun rises and sets respectively is called twilight. At both times the natural light is dimmed but morning twilight is different from evening twilight because in the former daylight intensifies and in the latter night ensues.

The end of verse 90 reads: 'a people for whom We had not made against it any shield.' Yusuf Ali's Quran translation says: 'for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun' and Muhsin Khan's Quran translation says: 'for whom We (Allah) had provided no shelter against the sun.'

To interpret this description of these people I introduce a book called 'How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs' written by De Lacy O'Leary. The book covers some of Central Asian history to grasp how Buddhists and other easterners such as Hindus passed on scientific knowledge to the scholars of Baghdad's Darul Hikma (House of Wisdom) during the Abbasid Caliphate. In chapter 9: *Buddhism as a possible medium*, on page 125 I discovered a word I had not previously known: *gymnosophists*. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines this word as: 'any of a sect of ascetics in ancient India who went naked and practiced meditation'. In other words, gymosophists are knowledge seekers but that their habit is to roam the land naked and indeed the 91st verse of surah al-Kahf (quoted above) says: 'Thus. And We had encompassed [all] that he had in knowledge.' Yusuf Ali's Quran Tranlsation of verse 91 reads: '(He left them) as they were: We completely understood what was before him.' Muhsin Khan's Quran translation of verse 91 reads: 'So (it was)! And we knew all about him

(Dhul-Qarnain'. After this verse there is nothing of the second expedition. The second expedition ends on a note of knowing (or knowledge) and from the verse before the people seen in this second expedition seem naked. There is no rebuke here. Kushans as I noted in research point 2 above, ruled from Northern India to Central Asia and being eclectic in their art their rulers could have supported the free migrations of many different peoples between India and central Asia, including gymnosophists seeking new retreats in Central Asia.

At a deeper level of thought I interpret a spiritual symmetry between the first and second the expeditions. The possible fire worshippers at the murky spring, in the first expedition, were the people of the setting sun. They were going into spiritual darkness. The possible gymnosophists of the second expedition are naked knowledge seekers and their seeking of knowledge at a place of the rising of the sun can be metaphorically described as increasing in spiritual light. Hence the second expedition when 'he came to the rising of the sun' is spiritually symmetrical to the first expedition when he 'reached the setting of the sun' because both times Zul-Qarnayn encountered groups of people who were in a state of spiritual twilight but the two groups were opposites in the spiritual direction they were going.

Research Point 5: Description of the people and place of the third expedition

In the third expedition, in verse 93, Allah Says:

93. ...he reached [a pass] between two mountains, he found beside them a people who could hardly understand [his] speech.

The second part of this verse informs the reader that the people barely understood a word. Both Yusuf Ali's and Muhsin Khan's Quran translations read 'a people who scarcely understood a word'. This could mean that they belonged to the same language group of the people of Zul-Qarnayn but that they were living at a remote location on the far outskirts and because of the distance their dialect of that same language group was barely understandable but not totally foreign. In other words, Zul-Qarnayn possibly found a band or tribe of his own nation at some far off place.

If Zul-Qarnayn was a nomadic Mongolian then we need to understand where Mongolia is in the vastness of Eurasia. The opening paragraph of Encarta's Encyclopedia article on Mongolia states:

'Mongolia (region), extensive territory, Central Asia, bounded roughly by Siberia on the north, by Dongbei on the east, by

the Great Wall of China on the south, and by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Sinkiang Uighur), China, on the west. Mongolia encloses the Gobi Desert. The region includes the Chinese Autonomous Region of Nei Monggol (Inner Mongolia), located between the Gobi and the Great Wall, and Outer Mongolia, part of which is occupied by the Republic of Mongolia and part of which is located in Tuva, south-central Russia.'[10]

In ancient times much of the world including Central and East Asia was open land not part of any internationally recognised sovereign state as is in modern times. Thus, Mongolian tribes could have wandered off anywhere and settled. Their first priority was to find good places for food and shelter and good pastures for their animals, especially horses.

The first part of verse 93 states that Zul-Qarnayn reached between two mountains and that is where he found the people who barely understood a word. Mountains are useful for Mongolian herders as noted on page 161 of Jack Weatherford's book 'The Secret History of Mongol Queens' (referenced above in research point 2). The third paragraph begins:

'While the farmer follows the same path to the same field every day, the herder looks across a landscape of perpetual possibility No fences or walls bar the way, but neither are there roads to guide or bridges to cross. The steppe is infinite opportunity. The options depend on the ability of the person who sees them and can find how to utilize them to meet today's needs. The Mountain becomes what the herder makes of it: a barrier to the herd's migration or a refuge from the harsh blizzards and fierce sandstorms of spring and fall.'

From the centre of Mongolia the country side stretches for thousands kilometres of in every direction. Two thousand kilometres to the Tibetan plateau in the south. Two thousand kilometres to the middle of Khazakstan in the west. Two thousand kilometres to North Korea in the East. Two thousand kilometres deep into the central Siberian Plateau in the north. There are vast deserts, grasslands, steppes and mountain ranges and all of this is foreign to the westerner of antiquity in far away Babylon or Jerusalem. Thus a Mongolian Zul-Qarnayn could have found a remote tribe from his own Mongolian nation taking shelter against the side of the mountain to protect against fierce winds and blizzards and to corral their herd. These mountains could possibly be thousands of kilometres from the central lands of the Mongolian tribes, and beyond these mountains is another country (perhaps Siberia in the far north) inhabited with yet more mysterious peoples such as Gog and Magog.

Research Point 6: The barrier made of blocks of iron

Three verses in surah al-Kahf (18th surah of Quran) describe how Zul-Qarnayn helped these remote people living beside the two mountains:

94. They said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, indeed Gog and Magog are [great] corrupters in the land. So may we assign for you an expenditure that you might make between us and them a barrier?"

95. He said, "That in which my Lord has established me is better [than what you offer], but assist me with strength; I will make between you and them a dam.

96. Bring me sheets of iron" - until, when he had leveled [them] between the two mountain walls, he said, "Blow [with bellows]," until when he had made it [like] fire, he said, "Bring me, that I may pour over it molten copper."

The great barrier construction under the command of Zul-Qarnayn is not the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China stretches for over two thousand kilometres along the north and north-west frontier of China.[11] It was to protect from Mongolian and Central Asian warring tribes but this wall is too big to be the barrier built by Zul-Qarnayn.

The description in the Quran, as I interpret it, means that the barrier of Zul-Qarnayn was to seal off the pass between two nearby mountains so as to cut off Gog and Magog from passing through them to raid, kill and loot. The mountains pass could be a few hundred metres wide and the breadth of the barrier constructed in it would resemble a wall of a great fortress but that its height might be as high as the mountain peaks on either side of the pass. Its size would be colossal by human standards. Even the height of the watchtowers of the Great Wall of China standing at only 12 metres[12] would be puny compared to the barrier of Zul-Qarnayn.

The block of iron used tells us that Zul-Qarnayn must have been very powerful in the land to accumulate such a vast quantity of iron and that his times are not too remote in pre history. Large quantities of iron mean that his people had long since reached their iron age.

Mastery over iron varied geographically with different peoples learning to use the black metal at widely different times. Britannica Encyclopaedia's article on Iron Age states that people in the Middle East made limited use of iron as a scarce metal as early as 3000 BC.[13] Use of iron in implements and weapons entered Europe between 2000 and 1500 BCE from Western Asia. In China iron was smelted around 600 BCE. In sub Saharan Africa Iron Age is recorded at between

500-400 BCE and in Southern Africa at 200 CE.[14] Zul-Qarnayn was an Iron Age ruler in his region of the world and his reign could very well be more than 2000 years before the birth of Christ.

Research Point 7: 'surge like waves'

Verse 99 of surah al-Kahf (18th surah of Quran) which describes the movements of Gog and Magog states:

99. And We will leave them that day surging over each other, and [then] the Horn will be blown, and We will assemble them in [one] assembly.

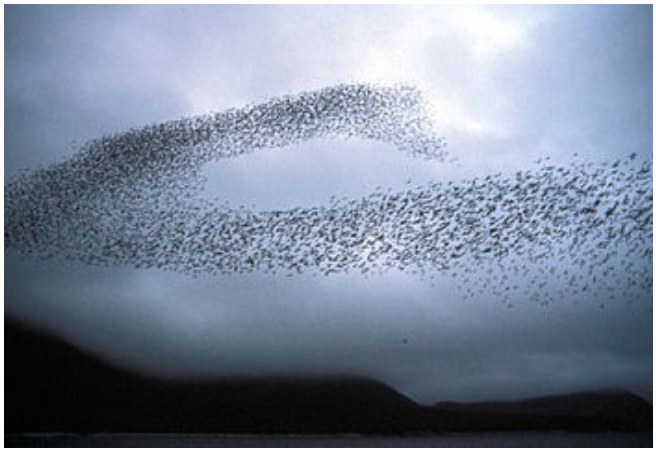
Of this same verse both Yusuf Ali's and Muhsin Khan's Quran translations state: 'surge like waves on one another'. This I interpret to be a kind of herd behaviour. Wikipedia's article on herd behaviour states in its opening paragraph:

'Herd behavior describes how individuals in a group can act collectively without centralized direction. The term can refer to the behavior of animals in herds, packs, bird flocks, fish schools and so on, as well as the behavior of humans in demonstrations, riots and general strikes,[1] sporting events, religious gatherings, episodes of mob violence and everyday decision-making, judgement and opinion-forming.'[15]

Herd behaviour is just one branch of a broader social phenomenon called swarm behaviour. Wikipedia's article on swarm behaviour opens with:

'Swarm behaviour, or swarming, is a collective behaviour exhibited by entities, particularly animals, of similar size which aggregate together, perhaps milling about the same spot or perhaps moving en masse or migrating in some direction. It is highly interdisciplinary topic.[1] As a term, swarming is applied particularly to insects, but can also be applied to any other entity or animal that exhibits swarm behaviour. The term flocking is usually used to refer specifically to swarm behaviour in birds, herding to refer to swarm behaviour in quadrupeds, shoaling or schooling to refer to swarm behaviour in fish.'[16]

Below is the Wikipedia lead picture of auklet birds exhibiting swarm action:



[photo credit: D. Dibenski, via Wikipedia]

If you combine swarm action with devastation my first thought is locusts that descend of farm crops and devour and destroy the harvest and they swarm and surge over one another like waves onto the next farms until almost everything is devoured in their path. Such devastation could be imagined for the onslaught of Gog and Magog. In a book written in the 9th century by the scholar Muslim is prophetic report sourced to prophet Muhammad. It states that:

> Gog and Magog will emerge during the time of Jesus' second coming and that they will drink up all of Lake Tiberias in Israel such that when the last of them approaches it he will say: "there was once water here". God will then convey these words to Jesus: "I have brought forth from amongst my servants such people against whom none would be able to fight; you take these people safely to Tur".[17]

Located in the modern state of Israel, Lake Tiberias is 23 kilometres long, has a maximum width of 13 kilometres and a maximum depth of 46 metres.[18] The lake currently holds approximately four cubic kilometers of water.[19] One cubic kilometre of water equates to one trillion litres of water.[20] Thus, Lake Tiberias has four trillion (4000 000 000 000) litres of water. How many people would it take to drink up 4 trillion litres of water? 100 million people? The answer depends on how much water you apportion to each person. The other possibility to this bit of research is that Lake Tiberias might hold a lower volume of water in say 200 years from now. After all global warming is heating up the earth and world population is hovering around 8 billion. These factors could accelerate evaporation and use of the water until its volume is much lower than the 4 trillion litres in present times.

Armies of hundreds of thousands were not unheard of in ancient times. Remember that Spartan King Leonidas is reported to have stood with just 300 die hard Spartans against Xerses' Persian army numbering in the thousands at the narrow mountain pass at Thermopylae in 480 BCE.[21] In 331 BCE Alexander The Great with 40 000 infantry and 7000 cavalry defeated the Persian King

Darius' army of 250 000.[22] More than 900 years later In 636 CE a Muslim army numbering 40 000 led by Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas stood against 120 000 Sassanid Persians at Qadisiyah and they won as is reported by the medieval Muslim historian Tabari[23] but 582 years later when the Mongolian war lord Genghis Khan marched into Muslim lands they had 'several millions of armed normades' at his command, as is reported by Syed Amir Ali on page 391 of his book 'A Short History of Saracens'. On page 392 and 393 of the same book Ali states that of the 1 million inhabitants of the city of Samarkand (located in present day Uzbekistan) '50 000 alone remained to tell the fate of the ruined city'. Another 1747 000 people were killed at Nisahpur and at Herat another 1.6 million.[24] The medieval historian Ibn Khaldun reports that from a population of 2 million at Baghdad 1.6 million were killed when the city was sacked by Hulagu, grandson of Genghis Khan in 1258 CE.[25] The city was greatly destroyed and never ever recovered to its former glory. Reports Ali:

> The women and children who came out of their houses with the Koran in their hands, imploring quarter, were trampled to death. Delicately nurtured ladies who had never brave the sight of crowds were dragged into the open streets and subjected to the grossest brutalities...For three days the streets ran with blood, and the waters of the Tigris was dyed red for miles along its course. The horrors of rapine, slaughter, and outraged humanity lasted for six weeks. The palaces, mosques, mausolea were destroyed by fire or levelled to the earth for their golden domes. The patients in the hospitals and the students and professors in the colleges, were put to the sword...;books were thrown into the fire or, where the Tigris was near, buried in its waters.[26]

In all some 4 to 6 million people died in the Muslim holocaust.

In World War II Hitler's gamble to conquer the USSR (now Russia) started off on 22 June 1941CE with an army slightly over 3 million.[27] Thus, armies are getting bigger with time. The armies of Gog and Magog could very well be above 10 million. An army of 40 million Gog and Magog, even if they only armed with swords and bows and arrows would still make many Asian countries run out bullets and if that large a number is fighting with swarm and herd action then you may not be successful fighting them in conventional battle regiments.

Research Point 8: Action needed

So what are the people to do? The prophecy referenced above (see research point 6) from the scholar Muslim says that Jesus will flee with a group of Muslims to Tur when Gog and Magog appear from behind their barrier. Tur is the place

mentioned in the Quran where Moses spoke to God[28] and where the Hebrews made their covenant with God.[29] Does this mean that we are not to search them out and find the barrier before Jesus descends back to earth? My answer is no. We must mobilize and search out the mysterious iron and copper barrier built by Zul-Qarnayn.

In verse 98 of surah al-Kahf (18th surah of Quran) Zul-Qarnayn says:

98. '..."This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord comes, He will make it level, and ever is the promise of my Lord true."

The barrier is a mercy from Allah. The opposite of mercy is wrath. Thus when Allah orders the barrier to be levelled then the wrath of Allah descends.

In a prophecy prophet Muhammad is reported by the scholar Al-Bukhari to have said:

the Prophet once came to her in a state of fear and said, "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah. Woe unto the Arabs from a danger that has come near. An opening has been made in the wall of Gog and Magog like this," making a circle with his thumb and index finger. Zainab bint Jahsh said, "O Allah's Apostle! Shall we be destroyed even though there are pious persons among us?" He said, "Yes, when the evil person will increase."[30]

From this prophecy I interpret that the onslaught of Gog and Magog is punishment from Allah.

To support my petition for action I put forward another prophecy, also recorded by the scholar Al-Bukhari, which reports prophet Muhammad to have said:

The Prophet said "The people will continue performing the Hajj and 'Umra to the Ka'ba even after the appearance of Gog and Magog."[31]

If Hajj and Umra will continue unabated then this could mean that plans are under way to fight and defend against Gog and Magog and just maybe our defence incorporates the work of explorers and researchers that would find the barrier before the times of Jesus' second descent and that we would have made defence plans years in advance. Insha Allah Ameen.

References:

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Document History:
27 May 2017 - first uploaded to scribd.