

People of the cave:

a lesson to all generations

>Amman -
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Life is beautiful when one has many faithful friends from various countries and when relations evolve into the desire to pay mutual visits. Such friendships generate tourism. One of the most beautiful examples of this, concerns an Iraqi friend, with whom I had a close relationship since our studies in Baghdad, about thirty years ago. She invited me, and my children, to visit her in Jordan where she now resides.

I am now writing this article from Jordan. Every time I read chapter (Soura) "Al-Kahf" (the cave) I longed to visit this holy site. The cave is located between Sahab and Amman. I lived with the characters of Ahl Al-Kahf (people of the cave), as if I had met them personally, and reflected on their story in front of this cave, where they had fallen asleep for more than three hundred years.

The cave

The Koranic saint gave a detailed description of the history of Ahl Al Kahf, in verse Al Kahf: "When the youths resorted to the cave and said, 'O our Lord! Bring us mercy from Thee, and dispose for us our affair aright!' And we struck their ears (with deafness) in the cave for a number of years. Then we raised them up again, that we might know which of the two crews could best calculate the time of their tarrying. We will narrate to thee their story in truth. Verily, they were youths who believed in their Lord, and we added to their guidance" (Al Kahf/9-13).

When I visited the site, I found a mosque which was built above the cave on the ruins of an old Byzantine church. I also



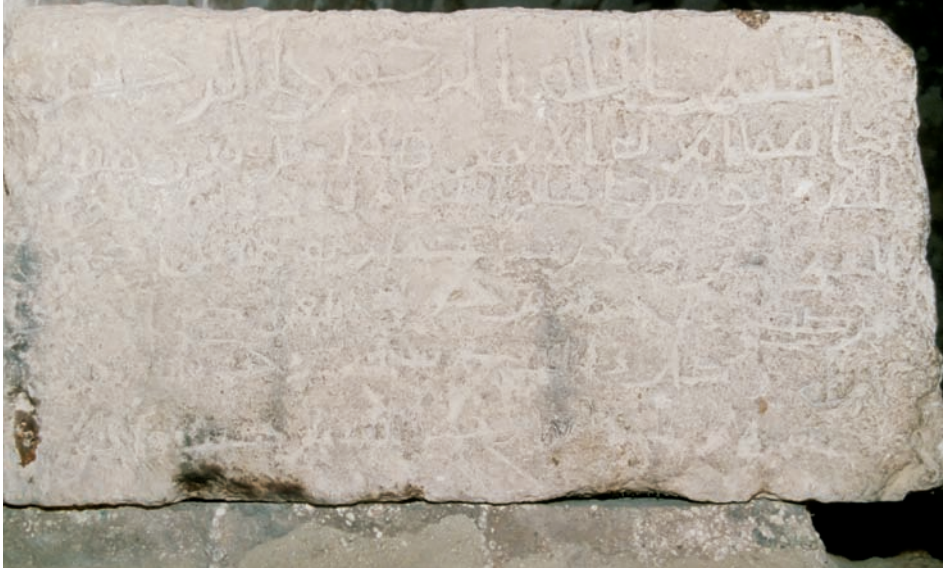
The cave's door

باب الكهف



Inside the cave

داخل الكهف



Koranic verses on the grave

آيات قرآنية محفورة على القبر

found a narrow window extending from the ground of the mosque to the top. Seven Roman columns were discovered on top of the cave. It is believed that the mosque, of which only the mihrab remains, was built on them. Nearby is a square pit and another smaller one believed to be a grape press. Not far from there, one finds many tombs strewn on the slope of the mountain. This cellar, dug in the rock, was discovered by two French Orientalists, Clermont Gabo

and Denzel Fisher. It has an entrance decorated by two columns, and an opening in the ceiling, of three arcades where the tombs of the people of the cave are found. Their bones were gathered in one tomb, after the theft of the bones of the dog in 2004. To the right of the cave entrance, one can see the tombs and the opening in the ceiling. Opposite, there are remains of Byzantine utensils, displayed in a glass cupboard. ■



The cave and surrounding area

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