SAMPLE

Dhu'l-Kifl: The Prophet of the Portion

The Story of Prophet Dhu'l-Kifl (ذو الكفل) in the Quran and Islamic Tradition

Aira Aurora

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Introduction

Dhu'l-Kifl (عليه السلام) is the prophet of the portion. His name — literally "the one of the portion" or "the one of the double portion" — is one of the most enigmatic in the Quran. He is mentioned only three times, always briefly, always alongside other prophets, and always with a simple but powerful description: he was patient, and he was among the best.

The Quran does not tell Dhu'l-Kifl's story. There is no narrative — no confrontation with a tyrant, no flood, no fire, no exile. There is only a name, a description, and a list. And yet, the Quran's brevity is not insignificance. Every word in the Quran is deliberate. The inclusion of Dhu'l-Kifl's name — three times — in the company of prophets like Ismail, Idris, and Alyasa is a statement: this person mattered. This person was a prophet. This person was patient. This person was among the best.

The mystery of Dhu'l-Kifl has occupied scholars for centuries. Who was he? When did he live? What was his mission? The Quran does not answer these questions directly. Islamic tradition offers several identifications — some say he was the prophet Ezekiel (Hizqil) of the Israelite tradition; others say he was a righteous man from the Children of Israel; still others say he was a prophet who was tested with patience and passed. The name itself — "the one of the portion" — has been interpreted as referring to a double portion of reward, a double portion of patience, or a portion of prophethood.

This book takes the Quranic verses as its foundation and builds outward. It explores the meaning of the name, the scholarly identifications, the Quranic descriptions of patience and excellence, the context of the verses that mention him, and the lessons that can be drawn from a prophet whose story is told in a name and a word. It is the sixteenth light in the NurOne - The Prophets series — the light that is briefly mentioned but permanently recorded, the light that has no narrative but has a name, the light that shows that significance is not measured by the length of the story but by the quality of the character.

The Quran mentions Dhul-Kifl in two surahs, both times alongside other prophets. In Surah Al-Anbiya: "And Ismail and Idris and Dhul-Kifl — all were of the patient. And We admitted them into Our mercy. Indeed, they were of the righteous" (21:85-86). And in Surah Sad: "And remember Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Yaqub — those of strength and vision. And mention Our servant Ayyub. And remember Ismail, Alyasa, and Dhul-Kifl — and all were of the best" (38:45-48). The Quran gives Dhul-Kifl no extended narrative. No story. No dialogue. No people. No mission described. Only a name, placed

among prophets of patience and righteousness. This brevity is itself a lesson: not every prophet was given a story to tell, but every prophet was given a place in the record.

The Quran further notes in Surah Sad about all prophets: "This is a reminder. And indeed, the righteous will have a good return — Gardens of Paradise, whose doors are opened for them, reclining therein" (38:49-50). Dhul-Kifl is included in this promise without qualification. The Quran treats him as equal in rank to the prophets whose stories fill entire surahs. His name appears not because of what he did that was recorded but because of what he was: patient, righteous, one of the best. The chapters that follow examine every mention of Dhul-Kifl in the Quran and the scholarly discussion about his identity, always holding the Quran as the standard and acknowledging that some knowledge is with Allah alone.

In another passage, the Quran declares Dhul-Kifl in Surah Al-Anbiya alongside Ayyub: "And remember Our servant Ayyub, when he called to his Lord: Indeed, Satan has touched me with hardship and torment. So strike with your foot. This is a spring for a cool bath and a drink. And We granted him his family and the like with them — as mercy from Us and a reminder for those of understanding. And We said: Take in your hand a bunch of straw and strike with it and do not break your oath. Indeed, We found him patient, an excellent servant.

Indeed, he was one who turned often to Allah" (38:41-44). The passage that follows immediately after mentions Dhul-Kifl among the righteous. Some scholars identify Dhul-Kifl with a figure from the Judeo-Christian tradition, while others see him as a prophet known only in the Quran. The Quran itself does not resolve the question. It simply places him among the prophets and lets the reader accept that some knowledge belongs to the One who sent them.

The Quran adds in Surah Al-Baqarah about the prophets collectively: "Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, so from their guidance, take an example" (6:90). The verse follows the list that includes Dhul-Kifl. It is a direct and personal command: take guidance from these prophets. The Quran does not require us to know every detail of a prophet's life to be guided by him. It requires us to recognize that he was sent, that he was righteous, and that his example is one worth following. Dhul-Kifl's legacy is his inclusion in that command. He is among those whose guidance the Quran directs us to take. The specifics of his life belong to Allah. The principle of his prophethood belongs to us: that every messenger was given a message, and the message was always the same — worship the One, live with patience, and prepare for the return.

The Quran's inclusion of Dhul-Kifl among the prophets without an extended narrative teaches something essential about the nature of prophethood itself. A prophet does not need a long story to be a prophet. A prophet does not need a famous miracle to be confirmed. A prophet needs only one thing: the truth of having been sent by Allah. Dhul-Kifl's presence in two surahs, listed among the patient and the best, is sufficient. Some scholars of the Quran identify Dhul-Kifl with Ezekiel of the biblical tradition. Others identify him with a figure known only in the Arabian tradition. The Quran does not resolve the debate. It gives us what we need: the name, the rank, and the qualities. Patient. Righteous. One of the best. One of the preferred. One of the believing servants. That is enough. The chapters that follow examine every reference and the scholarly discussions, always holding the Quran as the standard for understanding and acknowledging that the full knowledge of every prophet belongs to Allah.

The example of Dhul-Kifl reveals that a prophet does not need a story to be a prophet. The name is enough. The rank is enough. The inclusion among the patient and the best is enough. The full knowledge of his life belongs to Allah. The acknowledgment of his prophethood belongs to us.

The Quran says in Surah Sad about the prophets: This is a reminder. And indeed, the righteous will have a good return. Gardens of Paradise, whose doors are opened for them. Reclining therein, calling for fruit in abundance and drink. And with them will be those restraining their glances, of equal age. This is what you are promised for the Day of Account. Indeed, this is Our provision, and it will not be depleted. The passage is the closing context in which Dhul-Kifl is mentioned. He is among the righteous who will have a good return. The Quran does not tell his story, but it tells his destination. And in the end, the destination is what matters.

The Quran gives him a name and a verdict: preferred, of the best, one of the believing servants. The specifics of his life belong to Allah. The acknowledgment of his prophethood belongs to us. That is sufficient for faith and sufficient for guidance.

Chapter 1: Dhu'l-Kifl in the Quran

Dhu'l-Kifl (عليه السلام) is mentioned three times in the Quran:

Surah Al-Anbiya (21:85-86): "And Ismail and Idris and Dhu'l-Kifl — all were of the patient."

Surah Sad (38:48): "And remember Ismail and Alyasa and Dhu'l-Kifl, and all are of the best."

Surah Al-An'am (6:83-84): "And We gave him Ishaq and Yaqub — each We guided. And Nuh We guided before, and from his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun. And thus do We reward the doers of good. And Zakariya and Yahya and Isa and Ilyas — each was of the righteous. And Ismail and Alyasa and Yunus and Lut — and each We preferred over the worlds."

The third reference is debated — some translations include Dhu'l-Kifl in the list from Surah Al-An'am, but the most common reading places him in the Surah Al-Anbiya and Surah Sad passages. In all cases, the mentions are brief: a name in a list, a description in a phrase.

In each mention, Dhu'l-Kifl is listed alongside other prophets:

In Surah Al-Anbiya: Ismail and Idris and Dhu'l-Kifl. The three are grouped as "of the patient" — min al-sabirin. Ismail is the prophet of sacrifice, Idris is the prophet who was raised high, and Dhu'l-Kifl is the prophet of the portion. All three are characterized by patience.

In Surah Sad: Ismail and Alyasa and Dhu'l-Kifl. The three are described as "of the best" — min al-akhyar. Ismail again, Alyasa (Elisha, the companion of Ilyas/Elijah), and Dhu'l-Kifl. All three are among the best.

The pairing with Ismail in both mentions is significant. Ismail — the prophet of sacrifice, the firstborn of Ibrahim, the one who was willing to be sacrificed — is the Quran's model of patience. The pairing of Dhu'l-Kifl with Ismail in both lists suggests that Dhu'l-Kifl's patience was of the same caliber as Ismail's. The prophet who was willing to be slaughtered is paired with the prophet of the portion — and both are "patient" and "of the best."

The Quran gives Dhu'l-Kifl two descriptions:

Patient. Min al-sabirin — of those who are patient. The word sabr — patience, endurance, steadfastness — is one of the Quran's central virtues. It is the virtue of Ayyub in suffering, of Yaqub in grief, of Nuh in the flood, of Musa before Pharaoh. To be "of the patient" is to be in the company of the greatest

prophets. The Quran does not specify what Dhu'l-Kifl was patient with — there is no narrative of trial, no story of suffering. But the description is enough: he was patient, and patience, in the Quran, is never theoretical. It is always tested, always proven, always earned through experience.

Of the best. Min al-akhyar — of the best, of the excellent ones. The word akhyar is the plural of khayr — good, excellence. To be "of the best" is to be among the elite of the prophets — not just righteous but excellent, not just good but the best. The description places Dhu'l-Kifl in the highest category of prophethood.

The name "Dhu'l-Kifl" is Arabic and means "the one of the portion" or "the one of the share." The word kifl means a portion, a share, a double portion. The prefix dhu means "possessor of" or "owner of." The full name: the one who possesses a portion.

Scholars have interpreted the name in several ways:

A double portion of reward. Some scholars say Dhu'l-Kifl was given a double portion of divine reward because of his exceptional patience and righteousness. The "portion" is the reward — and it was doubled because his virtues were doubled.

A double portion of prophethood. Others say he was given a double portion of prophetic responsibility — perhaps leading two peoples, or receiving two revelations, or serving two missions. The "portion" is the prophetic assignment.

A portion of patience. Some say the name refers to the fact that Dhu'l- Kifl was given a specific portion of patience — a particular test of endurance that he passed. The "portion" is the trial, and the name commemorates the trial he endured.

A portion of the scripture. Some scholars connect the name to the idea that Dhu'l-Kifl was given a portion of the divine scripture — perhaps a section of the Torah or a separate revelation. The "portion" is the scripture he received.

The diversity of interpretations reflects the Quran's brevity. Without a narrative, the name becomes a window through which scholars see different possibilities. But all interpretations agree on one thing: the name is positive. Whatever the "portion" was, it was a gift from Allah — a mark of divine favor, not human achievement.

The most common scholarly identification of Dhu'l-Kifl is with the prophet Ezekiel (Hizqil in Arabic tradition) of the Israelite tradition. Ezekiel is a major prophet in the Hebrew Bible, known for his visions, his symbolic actions, and

his message of restoration after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The identification is supported by several factors:

The name. "Kifl" has been connected to the Hebrew word for portion or lot, which appears in the context of Ezekiel's prophetic assignment.

The context. Dhu'l-Kifl is listed among the Israelite prophets — alongside Musa, Harun, Yusuf, and others — which places him in the Israelite prophetic tradition where Ezekiel belongs.

The description. Ezekiel's tradition emphasizes patience — he was a prophet during the Babylonian exile, a period of extreme trial for the Israelites. His patience in delivering a difficult message to a suffering people is consistent with the Quran's description of Dhu'l-Kifl as "of the patient."

However, the identification is not certain. The Quran does not confirm it, and other identifications have been proposed. Some scholars identify Dhu'l-Kifl with a righteous man from the Children of Israel who was not a prophet in the traditional sense but was included in the prophetic lists because of his exceptional character. Others identify him with a figure from the pre-Islamic

Arabian tradition.

The uncertainty is theologically productive: it shows that the Quran's purpose is not to identify every prophet with historical precision but to present them as models. Dhu'l-Kifl — whoever he was historically — is a model of patience and excellence. The name matters less than the character.

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Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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