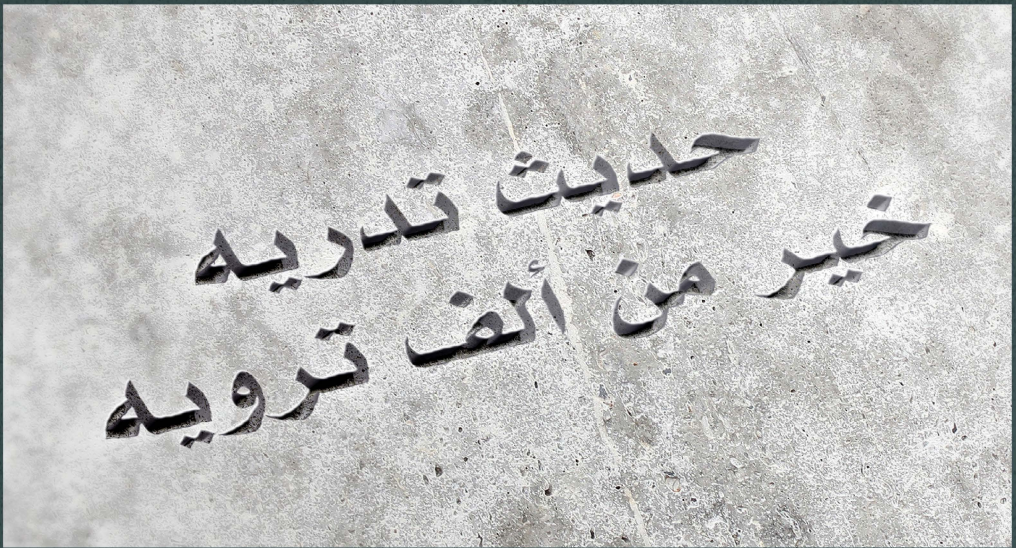


INFALLIBLE WORDS

Discourses on Hadīth

VOLUME 1



Tahir Ridha Jaffer

Infallible Words

Discourses on Ḥadīth

Volume 1

Tahir Ridha Jaffer

Infallible Words: Discourses on Ḥadīth

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

ء	’	ط	ṭ
ا	a	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	و	w
ز	z	ي	y
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	ة	h (or not transliterated)
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		

Long Vowels

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short Vowels

ـَ	a
ـُ	u
ـِ	i

(§) : ﷺ - Peace and blessings be upon him and his family

(a) : ﷺ - Peace be upon him (or her, or them)

(atf) : ﷺ May Allah hasten his reappearance

We dedicate this work to the pious ḥadīth scholars who have worked tirelessly over the ages to impart the sayings of the Infallibles to the believers – may Allah bless them all.

INTRODUCTION

The field of ḥadīth studies has burgeoned and continues to grow rapidly in the religious seminary (*hawza 'ilmiyyah*) today, with numerous institutes devoted to research on the subject and countless tomes, academic journals and advanced classes offered by renowned scholars on the sayings of the Infallibles. With the advent of the internet and adoption of the available technologies by research institutes affiliated to the seminary, it has become increasingly easier to access material that would previously require one to pore through large volumes in dusty old libraries. However, like most human advancements, this has proven to be a double-edged sword, since it has also given non-experts access to material which they cannot comprehend correctly, leading to much confusion in some quarters.

There is a vast scope for ḥadīth research and many of the modern phenomena we see around us can be analysed through the lens of ḥadīth. Second only to the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth constitutes a primary source of beliefs, teachings and legislation in Islam. From the earliest days, Muslims realized the importance of the *ahādīth* and took great pains to learn and preserve them, at times travelling to far off places to collect and record the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) from those who had heard it first-hand. The Shī'ahs likewise regularly travelled to meet the Imam of their time in order to get their religious queries answered and benefit from their advice and teachings.

Given that the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and the chosen ones from his progeny were divinely appointed guides who were tasked with teaching the people, it is evident that they were the only ones from whom Muslims could learn the correct meanings of the verses of the Qur'ān. As such, one of the important functions of ḥadīth has been to give

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insight to Muslim exegetes about the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses and out of the numerous commentaries and explanations that have been offered by scholars, only those that are based on the teachings of the Infallibles are deemed to be most authoritative.

As time passed, due to various factors such as the fabrication of ḥadīth by some unscrupulous individuals and groups, the rudimentary nature of stationery on which ḥadīth had been written, the burning of libraries, and the difficulty of making copies of texts, it became increasingly difficult to decipher the meaning and intent of the sayings, and distinguish the authentic traditions from the inauthentic ones. The fact that most narrators conveyed the meanings of the *ahādīth* rather than the actual verbatim statements of the Infallibles only made things more difficult. For this reason, scholars developed different sciences that could be used to help in ḥadīth evaluation and interpretation. These included, for instance, the science of *rijāl* (evaluation of narrators), *dirāyah* (contextual analysis), *fiqh al-ḥadīth* (a study of the purport and meanings of the *ahādīth*), to name a few.

With the passage of time, the complexity of these sciences increased as they were developed further by every subsequent generation of scholars. A lot of time and effort was put into the evaluation and interpretation of the *ahādīth* and seminarians would sometimes spend weeks discussing and debating the meaning of a single ḥadīth. It is precisely for this reason that when a non-expert tries to argue and prove his point using a ḥadīth, he actually undermines the great efforts of ḥadīth experts by ignoring what they have to say about the ḥadīth in question. Hence, it is paramount to realize the *faux pas* of quoting any ḥadīth without taking the time to see what the experts have said about it.

The misconception in the minds of some believers is that the seminaries of Qum and Najaf are outdated institutions with scholars who are detached from the realities of the modern and postmodern world, and know nothing about the real problems faced by believers in

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their daily lives. This perception of the *ḥawza* as an archaic and even obsolete establishment is promulgated by liberal minded individuals who wish to sway believers towards their skewed version of religion. Unfortunately, some people fall for this false notion due to lack of information about the profound and academic nature of contemporary research that is carried out in the *ḥawza*. One of the reasons for penning this series is to give English readers an idea of the kind of research that is carried out in the seminary.

Like all research work, the articles in this series are based on original research that complements the work of other researchers in the field. This is generally the norm when it comes to research: the work of experts is studied and then further developed, with novel ideas incorporated into it to produce new research. The current volume has seven chapters, each being an independent research article. Some of the articles are based on the author's masters and doctoral dissertations whereas others are from more recent studies. The chapters have been arranged chronologically from the most recent articles to the earliest. Since the topics vary and are not directly interconnected, the chapters can be read in any order.

The first chapter is an analysis of the probativeness and authority of narrations that pertain to medical issues. Islamic medicine is a much talked-about subject, especially since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this chapter, we present an overview of the different positions taken by scholars and experts with regard to the *ahādīth* that contain medical advice in the form of cures, preventative measures, etc. We discuss the authoritativeness of these traditions as well as how they can be evaluated. The limit and scope of medical narrations (*riwāyāt ṭibbiyyah*) is also examined to see if they were meant for a specific audience or are universal and can benefit all believers in every time and place.

The second chapter is an attempt at deciphering the creed and milieu of the compiler of the ḥadīth-based exegesis *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*,

namely Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥaskānī, since little is known about this author. Using the reverse approach of trying to understand who the author was by scrutinizing his work, and in particular the traditions he chose to include in his ḥadīth compilation, we go through all the traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* that could give us an idea of the author's thoughts and beliefs. This particular work proved extremely challenging since it contains different traditions that give contradicting impressions about the author. In the end, we offer a tentative conclusion about the creed of the compiler based on our study.

Chapter three is based on our doctoral research where a comparative study of the Abrahamic faiths is carried out to bring together similar traditions about 'end times' prophecy. These similar traditions are then used to construct what we term a 'transcendent *tawātur*' from the Abrahamic traditions which can be used to prove, beyond any doubt, the validity of certain prophecies of the last days. The idea of a *tawātur* that transcends a single faith tradition is not new *per se*, yet it has never been practically used to prove any aspect of common belief in this way. As such, this may be considered a somewhat novel approach that would prove beneficial in other creedal matters as well.

The fourth chapter is a study of the narrations about the great final battle during the end times. This chapter has been excerpted from our doctoral dissertation and comprises the evidence, primarily from ḥadīth, that there will indeed be a final battle before the end of the world. This is a subject about which scholars are seemingly divided in their opinions, with some insisting that when the awaited Imam (atf) reappears, the way will have been cleared for him and there will be little bloodshed, if any at all. On the other hand, the overwhelming evidence that we find in the ḥadīth leaves little room for doubt that this war will indeed take place. In this study we present and analyse the available evidence for the final battle in the ḥadīth corpus.

In the fifth chapter, the subject of death and the afterlife according to the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is studied. Since

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most of the details we have about death and what comes after it is found in our ḥadīth literature, this is the source that we primarily refer to in our comparative study. It is interesting to note how many similarities exist between the beliefs of these three monotheistic traditions, and also the fact that Islam offers the most detailed account of what transpires during and after death. While not directly related to the subject of ḥadīth studies, such a study is nevertheless a reflection of one of the current trends in the seminary, namely comparative theology.

Chapter six is an examination of the sources of the sermon of al-Sayyidah al-Zahrā' (a) commonly known as *al-khuṭbah al-fadakiyyah* and a translation of the same. A detailed list of the chains of narrators and early sources, both Shī'ah and Sunnī, that mention this sermon is provided in order to show that there can be little doubt about its authenticity. While a lot has been said about this sermon, this chapter presents an overview that would suffice any seeker of truth to achieve a level of certitude in the historicity of the sermon itself. The translation we have included is original and in some places, quite different from the already available translations.

The final chapter is based on our master's thesis and presents a critical appraisal of Juynboll's views on *isnād*. Gautier H. Juynboll (d. 2010) was an Orientalist scholar who specialized in ḥadīth. In this chapter, we examine his views on the birth of *isnāds*, *tawātur*, and the 'common-link theory' and offer critiques of these views. While most Orientalist scholars generally have a skeptical and negative view of ḥadīth in general, some of their research does offer insights into new approaches to known subjects. As such, engaging with them can prove beneficial at times, as long as one does not get carried away and remains firmly grounded in faith.

In the end, it is hoped that this volume, and any others that follow in the series, will prove useful to those who are interested in ḥadīth studies. It goes without saying that any errors in this work are solely the responsibility of the author and nobody else. We pray to the Almighty

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to grant us the ability to fulfill our duties, as His humble servants, in the cause of Islam. And all praise is due only to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

1

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBATIVENESS OF MEDICAL NARRATIONS

The relationship between religion and medicine is not new, and when it comes to the Abrahamic traditions, we find that all the three main Abrahamic faiths have, within their scriptures, teachings that are related to medicine and health. While it is evident that the Bible and the Qurʾān are not medical texts, there are certain verses within them that are clearly about the human body, ailments that afflict it, remedies that can benefit it, and actions that can help protect it by preventing disease. The 13th chapter of the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, for example, contains many such instructions. The Talmud also contains lengthy tracts of medical-related information which is based on investigation, experience and at times, superstition.¹ There are a number of independent monographs on the subject of medicine in the Jewish and Christian scriptures.² In this study, we will focus our attention specifically on the narrations in the ḥadīth corpus that address issues pertaining to health and medicine.

According to the teachings of Islam, it is Allah who is the Healer of the sick. This is portrayed beautifully in the expression of Prophet Ibrāhīm (a) that is quoted in the Glorious Qurʾān:

¹ Some of the remedies found in the Talmud are obviously based on superstition. For example, *Temurah* 15b states that a person with pain in the heart should suck goat's milk directly from its udder, and *Yoma* 8:6 says that according to some, one who is bitten by a mad dog was to be given that dog's liver to eat!

² See for instance: Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Bible and Talmud*, and I. & W. Jacob (Eds.), *The Healing Past: Pharmaceuticals in the Biblical and Rabbinic World*.

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٢٨٠﴾

And when I get sick, it is He who cures me.

(Q26:80)

In other words, it is only Allah who truly heals the sick. This is echoed in many narrations and even in some supplications. For instance, Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) is reported to have quoted the supplication that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) would recite when he visited any sick person, which was:

أذهب البأس ربّ البأس، واشف أنت الشافي لا شافي إلا أنت.

Remove the misery, O Lord of the misery, and cure [this person] for
You are the Healer, there is no healer save You.³

It is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) that in the past, the physician (*ṭabīb*) used to be called 'healer' (*mu'ālīj*), so Mūsā (a) said, "O Lord, from whom does malady come?" He (the Almighty) replied, "From Me, O Mūsā!" So he asked, "O Lord, then from whom is the cure?" He (the Almighty) said, "From Me." So Mūsā asked, "Then what do people need the healer for?" He said, "To give them some peace of mind [and hope of getting better] (*ṭīb al-naḥs*)." This is why the physician is called a *ṭabīb*.⁴ Indeed, this fact was known and emphasized by many of the famous Muslim physicians in history. For instance, Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 323) wrote the following in his treatise on medical ethics *Akhlāq al-Ṭabīb*:

I have seen among the physicians one who, upon successfully treating a severely ill patient, is overtaken by self-conceit and begins to speak [and act] haughtily. When he does this, then neither does he have any standing, nor is he successful, nor is

³ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 638.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 88.

he right.⁵

While it is quite natural for doctors to feel a sense of relief and joy when their patients recover, especially from very serious, life-threatening ailments, and Muslim physicians were aware of this feeling, the important thing that pious and Godfearing doctors always emphasized was that one should never forget that the true Healer is Allah, and that physicians are only agents through whom this healing occurs. As such, there is no room for arrogance when one successfully administers any remedy that results in the restoration of health.⁶

It has been noted that Islamic medicine was always religious in character, and most of its practitioners have been religious scholars. In contrast, the ‘secular’ form of medicine was known as Yūnānī medicine, which was a mixture of Greek and Pagan Arab medical practices, and this form of medicine was most often practiced by non-Muslims. While in many cases these two medical traditions were in disagreement, there were certain issues in which they overlapped. In later times, some scholars like al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) and others tried to combine the teachings of Islamic medicine with those of the common Greek medical tradition.⁷ Of course, as is their wont, Orientalist scholars who studied Islamic medicine were quick to attribute its teachings to influence or ‘borrowing’ from the Greek medical tradition.⁸ Interestingly, other scholars have shown that the European medical system is actually Arabian in origin and structure, and the Muslims were the “intellectual forebears of the Europeans” in this field.⁹

⁵ Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, *Akblāq al-Ṭabīb*, p. 38.

⁶ This was also echoed by the well-known scholar Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh in his *al-Ḥawāmīl wal-Shawāmīl*, p. 385.

⁷ P. Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine: Byzantine and Islamic Medicine*, pp. 346-7.

⁸ For instance, Edward G. Browne asserted in his monograph *Arabic Medicine* (1921) that Arabic or Islamic medicine was mostly the product of the Greek mind (See: J. A. Morrow, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine*, p. 4).

⁹ D. Campbell, *Arabian Medicine and its Influence on the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, pp. 69-77.

Contemporary Muslim scholars who have compared Islamic medicine to modern medicine note how traditional Islamic medicine functions in a manner that takes both the soul and the body into consideration whereas modern medicine casts aside the soul as irrelevant. Indeed, Islamic medicine is a part of the Prophetic Sunnah, since the Sunnah addressed all aspects of human life and as such, it could not possibly neglect such an important area as health and medicine. This is why we find so many traditions from the Prophet (s) and the infallible Imams (a) on the subject of medicine, health and hygiene. Since Muslims later learned and benefitted from other medical traditions and even incorporated them into 'Islamic medicine', some scholars have suggested that Prophetic medicine was distinct from what later became the wider Islamic medical tradition.¹⁰

A Brief History of Islamic Medicine

Medicine is part and parcel of life, and most cultures have their own forms of medicine. At the dawn of Islam, the Arabs had a rudimentary medical tradition which later grew and developed in leaps and bounds as Islam spread to other lands and the Muslims came into contact with other cultures.¹¹ While the term 'Islamic medicine' is one upon which there is little agreement in respect of its validity and definition, there is no doubt that one of the sciences that Muslim scholars developed was medicine, since knowledge and scientific inquiry is something that is highly recommended in Islam. It is for this reason that we see, for example, by the fifth century A.H., hospitals that served the sick and poor could be found in every Muslim city. Remarkably, as opposed to

¹⁰ Syed Hossein Nasr, Preface, *The Medicine of the Prophet*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, translated by P. Johnstone, p. xviii.

¹¹ Interestingly, though some have referred to it as 'Arabian Medicine', most of the outstanding Muslim physicians were Persians, not Arabs (such as al-Rāzī, al-Majūsī, Ibn Sīnā and others).

many of the hospices and leprosariums that were in existence in Christian lands, these ‘Islamic hospitals’ focused on the sick with the intention of curing them rather than merely isolating them. This is why they were built within the cities and not on their outskirts. Furthermore, the tradition of a ‘teaching hospital’ may be traced back to these Islamic hospitals as new physicians would also be trained therein.¹²

It is intriguing that the word used for ‘hospital’ in the early sources is *bīmāristān*, which is a term of Persian origin that is made up of *bīmār* meaning sick and *stān* meaning location or place.¹³ Sometimes the term was shortened by the Arabs to *māristān* but it meant the same thing – a hospital.¹⁴ The concept of an establishment for taking care of the ailing and sick had existed even during the time of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and we are told that he had ordered a small mobile military *bīmāristān* to be set up for those injured in battle. However, many scholars have mentioned that the first proper Muslim *bīmāristān* was built by al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in Damascus in the year 86 A.H.¹⁵ These early *bīmāristāns* were structured such that admitted patients were segregated based on gender as well as the types of ailments they suffered.

Bīmāristāns were frequently used by early Muslim rulers as edifices that symbolized their wealth, political power, and magnanimity. That is why we often see a kind of competition among early sovereigns and governors who tried to outdo each other by building larger and better equipped *bīmāristāns* than their predecessors.¹⁶ The patronage of the

¹² Aḥmad Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. xi.

¹³ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī‘ah, *Uyūn al-Anbā’ fi Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā’*, p. 45.

¹⁴ Early scholars like al-Kindī (d. 353 A.H.) in his work *al-Wulāt wal-Qudāt*, would use the terms ‘*bīmāristān*’ and ‘*māristān*’ interchangeably without any qualifications or explanations thereby giving the impression that these terms were commonly used and known by their time.

¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wal-Mulūk*, vol. 6, p. 437; al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī*, vol. 2, p. 291.

¹⁶ Aḥmad Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital*, p. 3.

rulers enabled physicians to offer free medical care to patients who were attended to and provided for until they recovered from their illness.¹⁷ One scholar described in detail how whenever a patient was admitted to a bīmāristān he would be examined by a physician daily and given medication until he was cured or he died. If he was cured, the physician would be paid, but if he died, the relatives of the patient would go to the chief doctor and present the prescriptions given by the physician. If the chief doctor judged that the physician was right, he would tell the relatives that the death was natural and if he judged otherwise, he would instruct them to collect blood money from the physician due to his poor performance and negligence.¹⁸

During the time of the Infallibles, different individuals would refer to them and ask them for solutions to their personal problems. Some of these questions were related to issues of health and medicine. Generally, in medicine, the physician interacts directly with a sick patient and examines his symptoms in order to offer a diagnosis and subsequently, a remedy. The prescription given by a doctor to one patient cannot be used by another patient simply because he feels that he has similar symptoms, as that might lead to severe complications. Similarly, it would not be farfetched to assume that the Infallibles also prescribed curative regimens to some individuals based on what they needed in their particular circumstances, and thus it would not be correct for other people to use the same prescriptions.

Among the narrations that deal with medical issues, there are generally two types of traditions in our sources that we encounter: those traditions that encourage seeking medical advice and using medicines to cure ailments, and other traditions that actually prescribe specific remedies and cures for certain ailments or even for the prevention of ailments. The question of whether the Infallibles actually prescribed medical remedies for people has been addressed from different

¹⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawāʾiẓ wal-ʿItibār*, vol. 2, p. 405.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Ukhuwwah, *Maʿālim al-Qurbā fi Ṭalab al-Ḥisbah*, p. 167.

perspectives. Some have opined that it is outside the scope of the responsibility of divinely appointed guides to deal with mundane matters such as prescribing medicines for the ailing. As such, they say that any tradition that speaks about medical treatments cannot be treated as probative.¹⁹

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who say that medical science itself was originally taught to mankind through the Prophets (ﷺ), and other than an Infallible, no one can truly provide a perfect cure for ailments.²⁰ However, there is a middle ground between these two positions where medicine, like other sciences, is believed to have been accessible to the Infallibles, and that is why they would entertain questions about it and give responses to those who asked them about medical issues.²¹ Of course, there is a good possibility that certain unscrupulous individuals who were out to take advantage of gullible believers later fabricated some narrations on the subject or even distorted some of the actual traditions for their own benefit, but that is no reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater and reject all the traditions that have reached us on this topic.

¹⁹ Ibn Khaldūn takes this position when he says about the Prophet: “He (ﷺ) was only sent to teach us about the religious ordinances and he was not sent to introduce medicine or any other mundane matters. And we know about what happened on the issue of the fertilization of palm trees where he told the people, ‘You are more knowledgeable about your worldly affairs.’ Hence, we cannot take anything that has reached us in the traditions pertaining to medicine as part of what was prescribed [by the Prophet] and there is no evidence to suggest this.” See: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa-l-Khabar fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab wa-l-Barbar*, vol. 1, p. 651.

²⁰ Al-Mufid, *Taṣḥīḥ Itiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, p. 144; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Faraj al-Mahmūm*, p. 22.

²¹ There are a number of traditions in *al-Kāfī* that speak of the Imams as the inheritors of the knowledge of all the Prophets (See: *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 221,223).

The Nature of Islamic Medicine

A question that needs to be addressed is whether the knowledge of medical issues that the Prophet and Imams possessed was based on divinely inspired knowledge and revelation or simply human experience and acquired knowledge. There is a difference of opinion among scholars regarding this. Of course, we know that there are some verses in the Qur'an that speak of medical issues directly or indirectly. For instance, the verse that states:

ثُمَّ كُلِي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَطْنِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ
الْوَانُءُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Then [O bee] eat from every [kind of] fruit and follow meekly the ways of your Lord. There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues, in which there is a cure for the people. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect.

(Q16:69)

Here we see that there is clear mention of the medicinal property of honey. Furthermore, according to one report, when someone remarked that there is nothing related to medicine in the Qur'an, Imam 'Alī (a) responded:

فقيل إن في القرآن كل علم إلا الطب، فقال ع: أما إن في القرآن آية تجمع الطب كله «كلوا واشربوا ولا تسرفوا».

“Indeed, there is surely a verse in the Qur'an which encompasses all of medicine: *Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant.*”²²

In his *Tlal al-Sharāʿi*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq quotes a tradition wherein

²² Al-Rāwandī, *al-Daʿawāt*, p. 75.

it is said that at one time Imam al-Şādiq (a) was present in the gathering of Maṣṣūr al-‘Abbāsī when an Indian man was reading manuscripts on medicine. The Imam listened quietly to him and when he had finished, he asked the Imam if he was interested in any of the material he had with him, to which the Imam replied in the negative, saying that what he had was better than what the Indian possessed. The Indian man asked what that was and the Imam explained the system he used as a remedy – countering the cold with the hot and the hot with the cold, the wet with the dry and the dry with the wet, and leaving all matters in the hands of Allah. He further explained that he followed the instructions of the Prophet (ṣ) and his advice regarding the stomach being the house of malady and being careful about what one eats as a means of regaining health, etc. The Indian man responded by saying that this was indeed the summary of all medicinal sciences. The Imam then asked him:

أفتراني عن كتب الطب أخذت؟ قال: نعم. قال: لا والله ما أخذت إلا عن الله سبحانه.

“Do you think I took my knowledge from the books of medicine?” The physician replied, “Yes.” He (a) said, “No, by Allah! I did not take my knowledge except from Allah, the Glorified.”²³

Another narration states that when Allah created Ādam (a) and then sent him down to earth, He taught him knowledge of all things, among which was knowledge of the stars and of medicine.²⁴ Furthermore, in the tradition that recounts the conversation Imam ‘Alī (a) had with his son al-Ḥusayn (a), we find that he gave him advice that would make him needless of medicine.²⁵

²³ Al-Şadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 511-4.

²⁴ Al-Qummī, *Safīnat al-Biḥār*, vol. 2, p. 78.

²⁵ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 59, p. 267.

However, there are some traditions that could be said to allude to their medical knowledge as being based on human experience. For instance, the narrations that divide knowledge into two branches: knowledge of religion and knowledge of the physical bodies, which in essence contrasts medicine with religious knowledge. For instance, it is reported that the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) said:

العلم علمان علم الأديان وعلم الأبدان.

Knowledge is of two types, knowledge of religions and knowledge of the bodies.²⁶

Similarly, there are reports that mention the fact that the Noble Prophet and the infallible Imams would themselves refer their followers to physicians. For instance it is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) once visited a sick person and asked him if they should call a physician for him. The man was surprised and asked if the Prophet himself recommended this. The Prophet replied affirmatively and said that Allah had not made any malady but that He had made a remedy for it as well.²⁷ Another narration states that during the Prophet's time, a man was injured so he (ﷺ) said, "Call a doctor for him." The people were surprised and asked if a doctor would actually be of any benefit to the man, to which the Prophet replied positively and said that there is no ailment but that Allah had sent down its remedy.²⁸

A tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) states that every city requires three individuals to whom people can turn in their worldly and otherworldly affairs: a learned and pious religious scholar, a righteous leader whom they can obey and follow, and a reliable and skilled physician.²⁹ There is also the famous tradition where it is narrated that

²⁶ Al-Karājiki, *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, vol. 2, p. 107.

²⁷ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 14, p. 349.

²⁸ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 59, pp. 70-72.

²⁹ Al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl*, p. 321.

Prophet Mūsā (a) once fell ill but refrained from going to the doctor so his ailment persisted, until such a time that it was revealed to him: “I will not heal you until you seek a remedy from what has been prescribed to you.”³⁰

The Infallibles even allowed their followers to visit doctors who were not Muslims. For instance, one report states:

عن جعفر بن محمد ع أنه سئل عن الرجل يداويه اليهودي والنصراني قال لا بأس بذلك إنما الشفاء بيد الله تعالى.

Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad [al-Ṣādiq] (a) was asked whether a person can seek treatment from a Jewish or Christian [physician] so he said, “There is nothing wrong in that. Ultimately, the cure is only in the hand of Allah, the Exalted.”³¹

Certain statements of the Infallibles could also be used as evidence that their knowledge of medicine was based on experience and experimentation. In the medical treatise attributed to Imam ‘Alī al-Riḍā (a), it is reported that he told Ma‘mūn:

عندي من ذلك ما جرّبته وعرفت صحّته بالاختبار ومرور الأيام مع ما وقفني عليه من مضي من السلف ممّا لا يسع الإنسان جهله ولا يعذر في تركه.

I have with me that which I have experienced and have learned of its efficacy through trial and the passage of time, along with what has reached me from the past generation, of which people cannot remain ignorant and have no excuse to abandon.³²

This statement clearly shows that the Imam admits that the knowledge he has of medicine and medical issues is based primarily on human

³⁰ Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 4, p. 413.

³¹ Al-Maghribī, *Da‘ā’im al-Islam*, vol. 2, p. 144.

³² Al-Riḍā (a), *Tibb al-Imām al-Riḍā*, p. 7.

experience and not divine revelation. Of course, the reports have to be validated to establish their authenticity, but on the whole, what we can see is that there are reports and narrations that suggest both experiential and revelatory sources of knowledge that the Imams possessed when it came to medical issues. Notably, some of those who question the attribution of this treatise to Imam al-Riḍā (a) use this very statement to argue that it does not match with what is known about the divinely inspired knowledge of the Imam and sounds more like what an ordinary physician would say.³³

It is important to remind ourselves that it was the general practice of the Infallibles to follow the natural course in everything, and even when they could heal the sick through special prayers and blessings, or what might be deemed miraculous or supernatural cures, they insisted that their followers seek medical attention and follow the regular method of using known remedies. In fact, since there is evidence to suggest that many people at that time used to avoid referring to physicians, it is noteworthy that the Infallibles themselves would suggest that the ailing should consult a doctor. Even the medicines that they prescribed were not out of the ordinary. That is why, for example, Ma'mūn had the treatise of Imam al-Riḍā written in gold (hence the name *al-risālah al-dhababiyyah*) – because of its value and the fact that there is no record of any of the famous physicians of the time rejecting any of the prescriptions of the Imam.

Furthermore, we find from some traditions that the Imams would explain the medicine which was prevalent at their time to the people. For instance, we have a number of traditions where Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) talks about the 'medicine of the Arabs' (*ṭibb al-ʿarab*) and then mentions things like cupping (*al-ḥijāmah*) and other medical practices that were common among the Arabs.³⁴ He also expressed his approval, or at least lack of disapproval, of some Arab medicinal practices when asked about

³³ Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Naṣīrī, “*Pazhuhishī dar Itibār-e Risāleye Dhababiyye*”, p. 15.

³⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 62, p. 262.

the same by one of his companions.³⁵

However, this does not mean that the Imams accepted all the medical practices and prescriptions that were prevalent during their time. In fact, there are some traditions that clearly show the Imams forbidding or discouraging their followers from using certain medicines that were commonly available and in use, and suggesting better alternatives. For instance, in one tradition Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) asks one of his companions called Bashīr what medicine they use when they fall ill. Bashīr shows the Imam a certain bitter concoction that they use as a remedy when they get sick. The Imam advises them not to do that but to use white sugar mixed in cool water instead, since “the One who places cure in bitterness is able to place it in sweetness [as well].”³⁶ In another tradition, Imam al-Kāzīm (a) is reported to have stated that there is no medicine but that it stirs up another ailment, and the best remedy is to desist from consuming anything more than what one needs.³⁷

Taking all this into consideration, even if we accept that the Infallibles would at times engage in or encourage some of the medicinal practices of their time, it would simply mean that these specific practices were beneficial as they had been approved of by the chosen infallible guides, and could thus be deemed acceptable as far as religious sanction was concerned. As such, it does not really matter whether the source of this knowledge was revelatory or human experience. The sanction of religion is the only thing that matters in the end. Therefore, what should concern us is establishing whether the narrations that pertain to medical issues were actually spoken by the Infallibles or not. In other words, it is the authenticity of these narrations that are of primary importance, not the basis of the knowledge itself.

³⁵ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 193.

³⁶ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 334.

³⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 273. This is an interesting tradition that speaks about the side effects of remedies, which is something that was not commonly known in those days. Today there is hardly any medication that does not list a whole variety of possible side effects.

Once the authenticity of a tradition is satisfactorily evinced, it is important to then decipher whether it is generally applicable in all times and places, or specifically aimed at certain individuals or groups who possess qualities that differentiate them from others. In other words, it needs to be seen whether the traditions are speaking in absolute terms, or relative ones.³⁸ In the latter case, it would not be proper to derive a general rule from the traditions since they are specifically aimed at an individual or group, and not meant for all people. This is something that scholars were careful about and aware of from the earliest times. Hence, as we will see, from as early as the fourth century, scholars like Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and others noted that many traditions on medical issues were aimed specifically for inhabitants of certain areas and cannot be taken as general prescriptions for all believers.

Upon examination, we find that the narrations we have which are related to the subject of medicine are of different types. Some deal with preventative measures and general instructions on how to lead a healthy, hygienic life whereas others talk of remedies and cures for various ailments. From the earliest of times, scholars had paid due attention to these traditions, compiling them in their works or even penning independent treatises dealing with medical narrations. This is not to say that all scholars looked at these narrations in the same way. There were clearly disagreements among them. Some insisted that the narrations were specifically restricted to certain geographical locations due to the climatic conditions there, whereas others were adamant about the general applicability of the traditions.

While a number of early Shīʿī works contain chapters and sections on medical narrations, some works were independently written on the subject. Perhaps the most famous among these is the ‘golden treatise’ attributed to Imam ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), which is said to have been written at the request of the then caliph Ma’mūn al-‘Abbāsī. Another

³⁸ Scholars commonly employ the terms *qaḍiyyah ḥaqīqiyyah* (factual proposition) and *qaḍiyyah khārijīyyah* (external proposition) to discuss this difference.

early work is *Ṭibb al-A'immah* by the two brothers Ibnā Baṣṭām al-Nayshāpūrī (d. 341 A.H.) which includes the chains of narrators along with the traditions. *Ṭibb al-Nabī* was later compiled by Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432 A.H.). This short treatise is only 24 pages long and contains 157 traditions from the Prophet (ṣ) on medicinal matters. The traditions have not been arranged in any specific order and lack chains of narrators. Many other works of this kind have been written over the ages and even in contemporary times, by both the Shī'ī and Sunnī scholars.³⁹

There are three basic positions taken by scholars on the question of the 'inspirational' nature of medicine. Some scholars hold the view that medicine is an inspired science taught to man by God through His Messengers. Others are completely against this and state categorically that medicine has nothing to do with religion or divine inspiration. A third group of scholars take a middle position saying that part of what is known as the science of medicine is based on divine teachings while another part of it is founded on human experience over the ages. Among those who fall into the first category and say that medicine is originally derived from divine inspiration (*wahy*) include individuals such as Qāḍī Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī (d. 363 A.H.), who writes in his seminal work *Da'ā'im al-Islam*:

“We have narrated from the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) and the veracious Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) traditions about remedies and cures, and what is permissible of them and what is unlawful. And from what has come from them (a), for those who take it with acceptance and belief, there is blessing and cure, God-willing; but not for those who doubt about it or

³⁹ Some early works by Sunnī scholars include three works titled *al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* by Abū Na'im al-Isfahānī (d. 432 A.H.), 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629 A.H.), and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748 A.H.), among others.

deem it to be mere experience.”⁴⁰

Another early scholar who espouses a similar opinion is Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 A.H.). He states:

“Medicine is a sound and established science, and its source is divine inspiration. The scholars only took it from the Prophets (a), because there is no means of attaining true knowledge of ailments except through hearing of them, and there is no way of knowing the remedies except by divine grace (*tawfiq*)...”

Shaykh al-Mufid then discusses the effect of climate and geographical location on the remedies given in the traditions and opines that some of the cures are limited by the place where the sick person resides. He says that all this, however, is part of the special knowledge given to the Infallibles by the Almighty.⁴¹

The Sunni scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751 A.H.) also holds the same view and says that the medicine taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) is not like the medicine of physicians, since his medicine is confirmed to be true and divinely inspired whereas the medicine of others is based on speculation, trial and experience. However, he acknowledges that many people fail to benefit from prophetic medicine but asserts that this is only because they do not believe in it and accept it. For him, belief and acceptance are the prerequisites needed to ensure the efficacy of these remedies, in the same way that the Glorious Qurʾān, which is a *cure for what is in the hearts* (Q10:57), does not remedy the hearts of those who disbelieve in it and in fact compounds the maladies of the hypocrites and unbelievers. Hence, just as the remedies of the Qurʾān only work on pure hearts, the remedies of prophetic medicine do not work save on pure bodies. It is perhaps for this reason that people have turned away from prophetic medicine just as they have turned away from

⁴⁰ Al-Maghribi, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, vol. 2, p. 135.

⁴¹ Al-Mufid, *Taṣḥīḥ al-ʾItiqād*, pp. 121-122.

seeking cures from the Qurʾān.⁴²

There are a number of other scholars, both among the Shīʿah and Sunnī schools of thought, who espouse the position that medicine, as a science, is based primarily on divine inspiration and that the most efficacious medicines and remedies are those that have been taught to us by the Prophet (ṣ) and the Ahl al-Bayt (a). On the other hand, there are a few scholars who hold the second and opposite opinion, stating that medicine has nothing to do with religion or knowledge conveyed to the people by the divinely chosen messengers and guides. For instance, the famous sociologist historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 A.H.) believed that medicine as a science began from the experiences and superstitions of early tribal peoples that were not based on any particular natural order. Furthermore, he says that the medical remedies and prescriptions found in the traditions are of this type and are not based on divine inspiration at all.⁴³

The famous Indian scholar Shāh Waliyullāh Dihlawī (d. 1762) echoed these sentiments and said that medicine was not a subject that Prophets were charged with teaching the people. Rather, all the advice that the Prophet (ṣ) ever gave on such matters was given by him ‘as a human being’ since the Prophet is quoted as having [allegedly] said, “I am only a human being; if I instruct you with anything about your religion then take it but if I instruct you with anything of my own opinion, then I am only human.”⁴⁴

The final position is a middle path which states that some of what has reached us in the form of traditions on medical matters has divine origins whereas some of it is taken from experience and traditional medicine. This view is espoused by many early scholars, including Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 A.H.). In his book *Iʿtiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, he writes:

⁴² Al-Jawziyya, *Zād al-Maʿād*, vol. 4, pp. 35-36.

⁴³ Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, p. 1172.

⁴⁴ Al-Dihlawī, *Hujjatullāh al-Bālighah*, vol. 1, p. 128.

“Our belief regarding the traditions that have reached us on medical matters is that they are of different types: some are specific to the climate of Makka and Madīna, so they are not applicable in any other climate. Some were mentioned by the Infallible (a) based on his knowledge of the nature of different humors... That which has been stated about honey being a cure for all ailments is correct, but it refers to all ailments that are ‘cold’...”⁴⁵

Another early scholar with a similar view was Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 A.H.) who said that medicine is generally of two types: deductive (or experimental) and based on experience. The first kind is what was practiced by the Greeks while the second was common among the Arabs and Indians. Al-Khaṭṭābī further said that most of what the Prophet (ṣ) spoke of in terms of remedies and cures was based on the medicine of the Arabs, except for the few instructions that came to him through divine revelation. Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790 A.H.) espoused a similar position⁴⁶ as did ‘Allāma Majlisī (d. 1111 A.H.).⁴⁷

Many contemporary scholars also hold this opinion, including the author of the encyclopedic work *Mawsū‘at al-Aḥādīth al-Ṭibbiyyah*, Shaykh Muḥammad Rayshahrī, who states that the origins of medicine were divinely inspired but human experience was later added to it. As such, it is not correct to assume medicine to be entirely based on divine inspiration. The knowledge of the Prophet and Imams was vast and included the science of medicine, yet they never identified themselves as physicians. That, in itself, is evidence of the separation of religion from medicine.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he proposes that the best way to authenticate and verify any tradition that talks about cures and remedies

⁴⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *Iṭiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁶ Al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 50-52.

⁴⁷ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 59, p. 78.

⁴⁸ Rayshahrī, *Mawsū‘at al-Aḥādīth al-Ṭibbiyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 15-19.

is through scientific experimentation, which is not difficult these days.⁴⁹

Evaluating the Probateness of Medical Traditions

In reality, medical narrations are like all the other narrations that we find in our corpus of ḥadīth. By this we mean that just as there are numerous possibilities when it comes to their provenance, authenticity, and the possible flaws that exist in the other traditions, the same is true for medical traditions as well. Just as in traditions on jurisprudence, theology and other matters we have some traditions that are general while others are meant only for specific cases, the same is also true for medical traditions.

The attention to medical traditions is not a new development as we find, for example, that al-Najāshī lists one title on the subject, known as *Nawādir al-Ṭibb*, which was compiled by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq.⁵⁰ So despite the fact that, as we have seen, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq considered many of the narrations on medical matters to be limited in scope as they were applicable in a given time and location, he still deemed them important enough to compile a work of medical traditions. Indeed, if this work had been extant, it would have been interesting to see what kinds of traditions al-Ṣadūq had compiled therein.

Given that some medical traditions are indeed meant for specific times, places, and individuals while others are more general and can benefit everyone, the important question is: how do we know and distinguish the generally applicable traditions from those that are specific? The only way this can be done with a reasonable degree of success is through the use of clues (*qarā'in*), both internal and external, that might give us an idea of the scope of the tradition being studied.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁰ Al-Najāshī, *al-Fihris*, p. 392.

⁵¹ The method of evaluating the traditions using the chains of narrators is not particularly helpful when it comes to medical narrations since in most cases where the

There are typically four main clues that can help us in this endeavor: (a) the purpose of the speech, (b) repetition, (c) changing instructions, and (d) questions posed. We will now briefly examine each of these in turn and see how they can assist us to distinguish between generally applicable medical traditions and those of limited scope.

- (A) The purpose of the Infallible's speech: In cases where an Infallible speaks or writes something with the intention of teaching the people, it would be safe to assume that what is said is generally applicable and all those who hear it can derive benefit by following the instructions mentioned by the Infallible. For example, the medical treatise attributed to Imam al-Riḍā (a), *Ṭibb al-Riḍā* or *al-Risālah al-Dhahabiyyah*, was (if the attribution is indeed correct) written with the intention and purpose of teaching Ma'mūn al-'Abbāsī, and by extension all the other people who would refer to it, about the principles of medicine.⁵² It would also be wrong to assume that since the Imam wrote the book for Ma'mūn, the traditions therein might specifically be for the latter's use and not for anyone else. This is because there are clear indications that the principles mentioned by the Imam are general and in a number of instances he employs phrases such as: "Whoever wishes to..." which clearly show the general purport and scope of the traditions.⁵³ Furthermore, traditions which are phrased in general terms, without addressing any specific individual, are also meant to be generally applicable. So we know that there is a general purport when the Imam says, for example, "Feed

traditions are not related to jurisprudential issues, attention was not paid to the meticulous recording of chains of transmission. This is why other methods are more effective in evaluating medical traditions and weak chains of transmission are not, in and of themselves, enough to discredit such traditions.

⁵² See: *Ṭibb al-Riḍā*, p. 15.

⁵³ Ibid, pp. 40-41.

apples to those among you who have fever, for nothing is as beneficial [for this] as the apple.”⁵⁴

- (B) Repetition: Another sign of the general applicability of medical traditions is the repetition of one piece of advice without changing any conditions, despite varying circumstances. For instance, there are plenty of traditions wherein the Infallibles have repeatedly recommended taking [a pinch] salt before or after meals and have outlined some of the benefits of doing so (see the chapter on the benefit of salt in *al-Kāfi*).⁵⁵
- (C) Changing instructions: A sign that a certain instruction has a restricted application and is not generally meant for everyone is when the Infallible changes his instructions after some development. For example, it is narrated that one of the companions of Imam Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (a) wrote a letter to him complaining that when he performs cupping (*hijāmah*) as is generally recommended, he suffers from a certain negative side-effect. The Imam responded to him advising him to perform the cupping and thereafter immediately eat some freshly roasted fish. After a while, the companion wrote to the Imam again about the same issue and the Imam replied that he should eat some freshly roasted fish along with water and salt after performing the cupping. The companion narrates that he followed these instructions and regained his health.⁵⁶ From this narration we can see that the companion first sought some advice from the Imam, describing the problem he was facing, yet after receiving a response and trying the remedy suggested by the Imam, he did not feel much better and that is why he wrote to the Imam again, possibly describing more of his

⁵⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 6, p. 357.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

symptoms in detail. At that point, the Imam replied with a more detailed remedy and when he followed these instructions, the companion regained his health. From all this, it is clearly evident that the remedy described by the Imam was for that particular case, based on the physical disposition of the specific individual asking the question. This is because the change of instructions given by the Imam upon receiving further information about the symptoms precludes the possibility of his instructions being of a general nature that would be universally beneficial to all those who receive it. However, if we are able to identify the ailment and all its symptoms, as well as the specific physical disposition of the ailing person, and if, in the unlikely event, we were to come across someone else matching the same symptoms and disposition, then the remedy offered by the Imam would be beneficial for that person as well.

- (D) Questions posed: Another way we can know whether a medical tradition is universally applicable or meant only for a particular individual or group is seeing whether or not it was in response to a question posed to the Infallible. Usually, individuals who posed questions related to health and hygiene were given answers specific to their circumstances and conditions. As such, the instructions found in traditions of this kind are limited in scope. For instance, there was a case where one individual was violently robbed and the bandits had tortured him by placing ice in his mouth, as a result of which he had lost his ability to speak. When he approached Imam al-Riḍā (a) for a cure, the Imam instructed him to mix powdered cumin seeds and thyme with salt and place the mixture in his mouth twice or thrice.⁵⁷ Of course, this prescription cannot be followed by anyone who has lost his ability to speak, as this was a specific case.

⁵⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a)*, vol. 2, p. 211.

As with other narrations, another factor that must be taken into consideration when evaluating medical narrations is the presence of inconsistencies and contradictions. Sometimes such contradictions are indicative of one of the two traditions being specific and limited in scope while the other is general and universal. For example, there are a number of traditions that recommend eating eggplant and list its benefits.⁵⁸ However, there are other traditions which state that the best time to eat this vegetable is during the season of dates and grapes.⁵⁹ These two types of traditions were analyzed by ‘Allāma Majlisī who noted that the eggplant that grows in al-Ḥijāz has the quality of being moderately tender and tasty, as he personally experienced, and this makes it beneficial to consume throughout the year. On the other hand, the general recommendation to eat eggplant in specific seasons is so that its negative effects may be counteracted by the other fruits that are available in those seasons (and this is applicable to the eggplant that grows in other locations).⁶⁰

Another example of an apparent contradiction in medical traditions pertains to the narrations that encourage the use of salt before and after meals.⁶¹ We note, on the other hand, that there is a tradition from Imam al-Riḍā wherein it is narrated that when he (a) was in Khurāsān, he used to start and end his meals with vinegar. When someone asked him about this, he reportedly said, “These two (meaning salt and vinegar) are alike.”⁶² One way of resolving this apparent contradiction (which is not a really a contradiction given the explanation of the Infallible himself) that some have suggested, is to look at the change and what brought it about. Since the Imam (a) did this when he was living outside al-Ḥijāz, it is likely that taking salt before and after meals was recommended due to the intense, draining heat of al-Ḥijāz, which

⁵⁸ See: al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 373.

⁵⁹ Al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 2, p. 525.

⁶⁰ See: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 63, p. 221.

⁶¹ For instance, see: al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 325.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 329.

caused a lot of perspiration and loss of body salts that needed to then be replenished. Indeed, it is for this very reason that physicians recommend *hajj* pilgrims to take salt even today. However, consuming salt in places where the weather is cooler and the body does not perspire as much may be harmful. This is perhaps why the Imam used vinegar instead of salt while in Khurāsān.⁶³

This explanation, though it may seem scientifically sound, is unlikely given that among the traditions that mention salt and vinegar, we find some narrations wherein the Infallible has mentioned both of these substances together and said that they both serve the same purpose. Furthermore, we note that the Prophet (ﷺ) and Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) are also said to have replaced one of these for the other. Therefore, the more reasonable conclusion we can draw is that there is no contradiction between the traditions that mention these two substances since they both perform the same function of cleansing and disinfecting the mouth and throat, as well as killing harmful microbes, which is clearly mentioned in the narrations themselves.⁶⁴

In cases where the contradiction is not between different narrations but between a tradition and what has been established scientifically as a medical fact, there are a number of ways one can understand or interpret the tradition and it is not always the case that any tradition that apparently goes against science is a fabrication. For instance, there are some traditions that encourage the consumption of sugar,⁶⁵ yet medical science has proven that sugar is bad for us. As such, these traditions seem to contradict what has been empirically proven beyond doubt. So we are left in a quandary when we read narrations stating that not only is sugar recommended, but the Infallibles would themselves consume sugar (as in the case of the narration where it is said that Imam

⁶³ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Manṭiq-e Fahm-e Ḥadīth*, p. 300.

⁶⁴ See: al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 6, p. 330.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 332.

al-Kāẓim (a) used to eat sugar before going to sleep).⁶⁶ Of course, we need to take into consideration here that there is a vast difference between the processed sugar we consume these days, which has been proven as harmful for the body, and the natural sugar that was used in the past. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the Imams were referring to a specific type of sugar.⁶⁷

In cases where one cannot, for some reason, find any clues that would help in the evaluation of the probativeness of a medical narration, it might be claimed that the default position would be to assume the general applicability of these narrations. This is because such a principle holds true for all the traditions from the Infallibles, as discussed in the sciences of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*)⁶⁸ and jurisprudence (fiqh).⁶⁹ However, it may be argued that in the case of medical narrations, due to the very personal nature of most of the traditions, where the specific conditions of the questioner(s) are taken into account (just as a physician would take medical history, climate, other existing medical conditions, height, weight, etc. of the patient(s) into account), the primary assumption should be that medical narrations are specifically meant for the direct addressees and are not to be taken as universally applicable teachings. Of course, if there are clues from within or without the tradition that gives an indication that the instructions are general, then it is something that anyone can act upon.⁷⁰

It should not be overlooked, however, that the traditions we have with us today in our ḥadīth corpus were compiled by scholars and experts with the sole purpose of preserving the teachings of the Infallibles that would be beneficial in guiding the people. Furthermore, the role of the Infallibles was not merely to solve individual problems; rather, they were guides for all of mankind. As such, they were well

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 63, p. 298.

⁶⁸ See: al-Khurāsānī, *Qawā'id al-Uṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 548.

⁶⁹ See: al-Najafī, *Jawābir al-Kalām*, vol. 35, p. 258.

⁷⁰ Rezaī Isfahānī, *Manṭiq-e Fahm-e Aḥādīth-e Ilmī*, p. 263.

aware of the fact that others might hear of the same remedies that they prescribed and might act on them. In cases where the remedies were specific, they would surely indicate that and it would rarely transpire that an Infallible spoke to a person in the presence of others yet prescribed something that would be beneficial to him while being harmful for everyone else who was listening. Keeping these points in mind, it would be safe to say that most of the medical traditions we have with us today are of general purport and may be of benefit to most, if not all, of the people.

Islamic Remedies and Placebos

In his discussion on medical traditions, Shaykh al-Mufid mentions an interesting point. He says that at times the Infallibles would know that a certain individual was on his way to recovery, and that his ailment had come to an end, and they would prescribe something which might have been harmful if the person was still sick. However, since the individual was already close to full recovery and his malady had ended, though he was unaware about it himself while the Imam knew about it with the permission of Allah, he (a) prescribed that specific medical remedy to the person who thought, as did those around him, that it was due to that remedy that he regained his good health.⁷¹ This kind of hypothetical situation sounds very much like using what is today commonly known as a placebo.

The early 19th century medical dictionary by Hooper defined ‘placebo’ as: “An epithet given to any medicine adopted more to please than to benefit the patient.”⁷² Etymologically, the term placebo is first used in the Old Testament where it is mentioned in Psalm 116 in the

⁷¹ Al-Mufid, *Taṣḥīḥ al-Itiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, pp. 144-145.

⁷² Hooper, *Quincy’s Lexicon-Medicum*, p. 634.

Latin translation of the Bible.⁷³ Placebo in this verse is derived from the Latin verb *placere* meaning to please.⁷⁴ As the definition of the term in medical usage developed, it became known as “a medicine having no pharmacologic effect”⁷⁵ and even “a substitute for medicine... given to deceive a patient.”⁷⁶ A more recent definition, which is taken by many to be the standard medical definition of the placebo is: “Any medication used to relieve symptoms, not by reason of specific pharmacologic action but solely by reinforcing the patient’s favorable expectancies from treatment.”⁷⁷

As noted earlier, both the Shī‘ī scholar Qāḍī Nu‘mān al-Maghribī and the Sunnī scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya expressed their belief that only those who had conviction and faith could benefit from the remedies prescribed by the divinely appointed guides. Those who were skeptical or doubted the efficacy of the remedies they offered did not benefit from them. Qāḍī Nu‘mān further narrates that once, Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) advised an individual who was suffering from severe abdominal pain to use the remedy that the Prophet (ṣ) had prescribed for someone with a similar ailment, but after he described that remedy, a man who was present there claimed that he had tried the same remedy earlier but gained no benefit from it. Hearing this, the narrator states that the Imam got angry and said that Allah would only allow this remedy to benefit the people who had faith in Him and in the Prophet (ṣ), and it would be of no benefit to hypocrites or people who lacked faith and belief.⁷⁸

‘Allāma Majlisī also says something similar. He states that some of the remedies given by the Infallibles were actually meant to test the faith

⁷³ The Latin phrase is: *placebo Domino*, “I will please the Lord,” as used by St. Jerome in his Latin translation of the 116th Psalm.

⁷⁴ Shapero, “A Historic and Heuristic Definition of the Placebo”, p. 53.

⁷⁵ See: *Blackiston’s New Gould Medical Dictionary*.

⁷⁶ See: *Taber’s Digest of Medical Terms*.

⁷⁷ See: Hinsie and Campbell, *Psychiatric Dictionary*.

⁷⁸ Al-Maghribī, *Da‘ā’im al-Islām*, vol. 2, p. 135.

of believers in order to see who among them was sincere in his conviction as opposed to those who had weak faith. Whenever the former group employed these remedies, they would feel better and recover – not because of the natural effects of the remedy itself, but because of their faith and belief in the Imam and their conviction and sincerity. An example of this, he says, is the effect of the earth (*turbah*) from the grave of Imam al-Ḥusayn (a), talismans and invocations. He notes that many a sincere believer lived a long and healthy life by relying on such remedies for their good health instead of referring to physicians.⁷⁹

Since it is noted from the definition of placebos mentioned above, as well as the vast amounts of literature discussing the ethics behind use of placebos, especially in cases where the patient is unaware that what they are being given might only be a placebo, it would indeed be farfetched to assume that the Infallibles ever did this. As scholars have noted, the basic principles that underlie medical ethics are: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.⁸⁰ It would therefore be considered unethical to deceive a patient by using a placebo without informing him, and allowing him to think that the prescription he is being given actually contains a remedy for his ailment. This is despite the very real possibility that his condition might improve by using the placebo, and the ends in this case do not justify the means. The reasoning behind this is simple: the false remedy might only temporarily alleviate his symptoms but since they will not cure him, his situation could worsen in the near future. Furthermore, others might wrongly assume that the remedy given to him is effective and might use it themselves. These are just some of the possible negative outcomes of using placebos. As such, it goes against the very nature of the infallibility of divinely appointed guides to use placebos – and indeed, since they had access to divinely inspired knowledge, there is no reason for them

⁷⁹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 59, p. 76.

⁸⁰ Stroessl, *Deception and the Ethics of Placebo*, p. 148.

to prescribe placebos if they knew the proper remedies for the ailments.

While it may be possible to evince a couple of traditions (like the one quoted above by Qāḍī Nu'mān) which imply that the remedies prescribed by the Imam would only work on those who believed, and this sounds very much like placebos, yet there are a number of reasons that lead us to reject the idea that the Infallibles used to prescribe placebos for those who sought medical advice from them. Firstly, the traditions that give this impression never negate the efficacy of the remedies outright. Rather, they put belief as a precondition, which only means that belief engendered the state that was necessary for the individual to benefit from the prescription provided. Indeed, many studies have shown that belief plays a role in helping ailing patients recover quicker. Secondly, we have to question why the Imam would prescribe a placebo in the first place. If, as al-Mufid suggests, he knew the person was recovering, would it not be easier just to tell him that or even to offer a prayer or supplication instead? Thirdly, if the medicine given by the Imam is proven to be a placebo, would that not damage the faith of his followers?

Even if we assume that the Infallibles would at times (not always) prescribe placebos, it would leave us in the obvious quandary of not being able to know whether any given remedy they recommend is truly beneficial in itself or is merely a placebo. Aside from this, there are many traditions in which the Infallible clearly states that he uses the remedy himself. It is quite obvious that if it was merely a placebo, the Imams would not try to derive benefit from it in this manner. Furthermore, the change of instructions by the Infallibles in cases where more symptoms are mentioned to them shows that the remedies were real and, like physicians, when more detailed symptoms were presented to them, they were able to give more specific instructions on the right remedies to use.

Additionally, the idea that any remedy given by the Infallible would only work on those who had firm belief would present a sort of 'catch-

22' situation where anyone who does not benefit therefrom could be easily dismissed as having weak faith. Hence, it would become almost impossible to ascertain the efficacy of the remedies and cures mentioned in the traditions of the Infallibles, since faith and conviction is not something tangible that can be measured. Using scientific methods to establish whether these remedies are truly effective is possible but has its own failings since science is known to be in constant flux, and it is not uncommon for scientists to say something today which they reject tomorrow, so there is no guarantee that what they agree with today will also be accepted tomorrow. Science is constantly evolving and growing, and many things are yet to be discovered.⁸¹

Therefore, if we find any narration that contradicts what scientists tell us about our wellbeing, it is not correct to immediately assume that the narration is false or fabricated. Rather, once we have used the correct method of evaluating the traditions and have attained a reasonable level of certitude that the traditions are indeed from the Infallible, then we cannot dismiss them outright simply because they do not accord with the scientific theories of the day. Furthermore, in some cases where certain remedies found in the traditions seemingly contradict modern science and medicine, scholars have come up with interesting solutions to explain away these apparent inconsistencies. For example, Ibn al-Jawziyya discusses the tradition that recommends using water to counter the effects of fever saying that even though physicians have been unable to make sense of this tradition, in order to understand it one must pay special attention to the way in which the Prophet (ﷺ) spoke. Doing so, he says, would reveal that the recommendation to use water was aimed at individuals who lived in al-Ḥijāz, where most of the cases of fever and rise in body temperature resulted from the hot climate. As a result, by using water and getting hydrated, it was possible to reduce

⁸¹ Some scholars have attempted to carry out a comparative study between medical traditions and modern medicine. See for instance: al-Najjār, *Muqāranāt bayn Ṭibb Ahl al-Bayt (a) wal-Ṭibb al-Ḥadīth*.

body heat. However, if the cause of this rise in temperature is not the climate, then using plain water is not helpful.⁸²

The Debate on Islamic Medicine in the *Hawza Ilmiyyah*

One of the issues that is sometimes discussed and deliberated upon in the seminaries is that of Islamic medicine and the probativeness of traditions related to the subject. The debate on this topic gained much momentum after the spread of the Coronavirus in Iran in 2020. Proponents of Islamic medicine and traditional (*sunnatī*) Persian medicine came out in full force to promote their alternative remedies to what was then seen as an incurable plague. The person most responsible for the flaring up of the debate was the Najaf-trained scholar ‘Abbās Tabrīziyān, the so-called ‘father of Islamic medicine’. In his first-ever televised interview, Tabrīziyān calmly explained how he spent decades studying the efficacy of Islamic remedies and tested all of them on himself before prescribing them to others.⁸³ He claimed that he has never had a case where the remedies proved detrimental and there were only a handful of instances where they were ineffective. Even that, he asserted, was most likely because the patients did not follow his instructions to the letter.

As the debate raged in the seminary and news outlets reported how many Covid patients who had taken recourse to Islamic medicine had passed away, a number of well-known scholars came out to condemn the blind acceptance of weak traditions that describe medicinal cures. Meanwhile, Tabrīziyān began speaking of the flaws in contemporary medicine and publicly burnt the famous textbook *Harrison’s Principles of Internal Medicine* as a symbolic gesture against Western medicine, which he insisted did more harm than good. Furthermore, during the period when the government had initiated a mandatory lockdown,

⁸² Al-Jawziyya, *al-Tibb al-Nabawī*, p. 19.

⁸³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9FoOZp2oQA>

Tabrīziyān issued a statement calling for people to continue attending public gatherings of worship, visiting their relatives and going to the holy shrines. He even wrote letters to the Chinese and South Korean ambassadors in Iran expressing his views regarding the Covid19 virus.

These antics and the obvious fanaticism that accompanied it led to a backlash that was, at times, equally radical. A number of scholars dismissed Islamic medicine outright, while some relegated it to a position of something irrelevant and inconsequential in modern times.⁸⁴ On his part, Tabrīziyān, insisted that medicine is a science that had to be divinely inspired, as is not something that could be acquired independently by human learning and experience. He explained that this is the case with all the sciences, and were it not for divinely inspired guides, man would surely have been incapable of independently identifying all the correct remedies for the different ailments.⁸⁵

The historian and religious scholar Rasūl Ja'fariyān compiled a 226-page booklet titled *Kitāb-Suzī-ye Tabrīziyān* in which he collected the letters of condemnation issued by various senior scholars after Tabrīziyān's book-burning stunt.⁸⁶ Aside from this, the offices of different *marāji'* issued statements on the subject of Islamic medicine on their websites and social media platforms. Sayyid Shubayrī Zanjānī's statement emphasized the fact that most traditions that speak of medical-related issues have weak chains and cannot be relied upon.⁸⁷ Shaykh Jawādī Āmulī said that there are about six thousand traditions related to medical matters and only five percent have chains (meaning that most of the traditions do not even have a chain of transmission to

⁸⁴ An example of this is seen in the statement by Sayyid Kāzīm Ṭabāṭabā'ī, one of the senior lecturers at Dār al-Ḥadīth, wherein he clearly says that he is against the very term "Islamic medicine" since it was not the purpose of the Sharī'ah to ordain a medical system for mankind. This, was published in the telegram channel (@namehayehawzavi).

⁸⁵ See video of the interview referenced above.

⁸⁶ This book does not seem to have been officially published and was likely only made available digitally by the author in his social media platforms.

⁸⁷ <https://mobahesat.ir/15274>

speak of).⁸⁸ A number of other renowned scholars in the seminary also voiced their disapproval and outright condemnation of Tabrīziyān and the blind following of traditions pertaining to cures and remedies for various ailments.

Many scholars discussed the famous ‘golden treatise’ that is attributed to the eighth Imam (a) and insisted that this was a false attribution.⁸⁹ Some scholars questioned why, if access to a divinely inspired form of medicine was given to the Prophets and Imams, did they visit physicians themselves and advise their followers to do the same? Furthermore, it was said that in the few instances where they did give some medical advice, it was only in the form of advisory instruction (*amr irshādī*) and not legislative command (*ḥukm mawlawī*).⁹⁰ On the whole, most scholars adopted a strong stance against the fanatical approach to Islamic medicine. However, despite the growing number of casualties and the apparent inefficacy of the different vaccines produced around the world, little has been said about the clear flaws in modern medicine as well.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that there are indeed some reliable traditions that have come to us from the Infallibles on medical issues. That is not to say that all the narrations on this subject are authentic and unquestionable; we do indeed have some fabricated traditions as well.

⁸⁸ A video of his statement can be seen here: <https://www.aparat.com/v/eHDMa>. Interestingly, in one study that was conducted by two scholars, 2,233 medical narrations were identified in the primary ḥadīth collection *al-Kāfi*, and each of these was evaluated based on its chain of transmission. The criterion used was based on the encyclopaedic work on *rijāl* by al-Sayyid al-Khū‘ī, and the results of this study showed that 1,272 traditions (almost 60% of the total) were either sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) or reliable (*muwaththaq*) and 961 traditions were weak (See: Ilkhānī and Qāḍī Morādī, *Istikhrāj wa Daste Bandī Riwāyāt-e Tibbī-e Kitāb al-Kāfi bar Asās-e Itibār-e Sanad*, 2013).

⁸⁹ <https://www.nasim.news/بخش-نظام-سلامت-۲۳۳۱۳۲۴/۹۲-آیت-الله-فاطمی-نیا-طب-اسلامی>

⁹⁰ <https://fa.shafaqna.com/news/707900/>

Furthermore, among the medical traditions that we are reasonably sure were spoken by an Infallible, there are some that are universally applicable since the instructions they prescribe for certain ailments can be followed by all people, and they would gain relief from those ailments. There are also some prescriptions that are specifically meant for certain individuals or groups and cannot benefit everyone. The best, and indeed only way to distinguish between these two types of traditions is by examining the clues (*qarā'in*) that are present within the tradition itself, or those external clues that can help us decipher the scope of applicability of a specific tradition.

The four main clues that give us an idea about the scope of a medical tradition are firstly, the purpose of an Infallible's speech, which can be deduced from the place where it is spoken, the person or people being addressed, and the means of address (was it through private correspondence or a public speech, for example). Secondly, the number of times the same instructions were repeated by the Infallible in different settings. Thirdly, changes in these instructions; and finally, the way in which the questioner posed his question to the Infallible. Contradictions between two traditions as well as between medical narrations and scientifically proven medical facts can be resolved by interpreting [one of] the narrations as being limited in scope and applicable only to a specific individual in a particular situation. The primary and default position with medical narrations is not unlike all other narrations given the fact that the Imams were guides for all the people, and only if there is some clue or evidence to suggest a limited scope can the tradition be interpreted as being applicable only to a particular individual or group.

In the end, it is important to remind ourselves that the Infallibles were teaching the people about issues related to health and hygiene in terms that they could relate to. As such, they used words and phrases that were part of common parlance in those days, so in order to correctly and accurately understand their narrations, we need to

acquaint ourselves with the meanings of these words and phrases as well as the circumstances that were prevalent in those early times. Once we have done our due diligence in trying to understand the medical narrations that exist in our reliable ḥadīth collections, we will surely find a wealth of information that would be very useful to us in our daily lives, in order to maintain our health and wellbeing in the face of the numerous diseases and maladies that exist in the world today, God-willing.

2

DECIPHERING A ḤADĪTH COMPILER'S CREED AND MILIEU – THE CASE OF AL-ḤASKĀNĪ'S *SHAWĀHID AL- TANZĪL*

Whenever there is a dearth of information about a given author or compiler in biographical sources, one of the ways in which clues about his worldview is attained is through scrutinizing his work. Generally, what an author writes manifests his thoughts and beliefs. When it comes to ḥadīth compilations, the traditions that a compiler chooses to include in his work also portrays his own opinions and those that were prevalent during his time. In this chapter, we will attempt to show how the process of deciphering a ḥadīth compiler's creed and understanding his milieu is not as straightforward as it seems. To do this, we will examine the 5th Century (A.H.) ḥadīth compilation of al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, famously known as *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, before trying to determine his confessional identity and learn a little about his era.

Close reading and literary analysis is essential if one wishes to learn more about a literary text than what is apparent. To delve into the 'soul' of the text as it were, and try to discover what lies behind the words – not only its deeper meaning, but also what was going through the mind of the author, requires this kind of meticulous study. When it comes to ḥadīth, however, the issue becomes much more complicated. Since the *ahādīth* are actually spoken by someone else (the Infallible) and conveyed through a chain of narrators, it would be almost impossible to attain an accurate understanding of the original speaker's thoughts and feelings unless they are made clear within the conveyed words. Even then, we would have to be certain that the words have been transmitted

verbatim, without any changes whatsoever. Nevertheless, there is something to be said about the choices made by the compilers of ḥadīth regarding the traditions they decide to include within their collections.¹

It would be fair to say that the choice made by ḥadīth compilers to include specific traditions in their collections reflected their own beliefs and ideas, or even those that were prevalent during their time. After all, works that are deemed unorthodox are harder to preserve and generally lack credibility among the masses. It is for this reason that some contemporary authors like Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi have tried to depict nascent Shī'ism as 'mystical' and 'esoteric' by studying early ḥadīth works like *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*.² Similarly, early Muslim scholars have also used this method to try and glean the confessional identities of authors and compilers in their biographical encyclopedias. Yet the question of how reliable this method is for learning a ḥadīth compiler's beliefs is something that has not been duly investigated.

In this study, we have undertaken a close reading of all the traditions within one compilation in order to see if we can decipher the compiler's confessional identity simply from the type of traditions he has included in his work. We have not mentioned the chains of transmission in full because it would not be useful for our purpose. Having chosen the traditions that might give us an idea about the compiler's creed, we present them in two broad categories: those that give the impression that he was a Sunnī scholar, and those that show he

¹ While it is a fair assumption that compilers were responsible for selecting the traditions to include in their collections and can thus be judged based on their choice of traditions, at times the situation was a little more complicated. There are instances when earlier collections were simply copied and included in later ones, without any scrutiny or analysis. In a recent discussion, the senior seminary lecturer Sayyid Aḥmad Madadī stated that while he believed *Rawḍat al-Kāfi* was al-Kulaynī's work, he was sure that it was not a collection of traditions that the compiler had himself selected, and that is why it contains so many weak traditions. He opined that even the other 'nawādir' sections of *al-Kāfi* were of this type.

² See: Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*.

was a Shī'ah. Each contains sub-categories and explanations on how the relevant traditions would make a reader incline either way when it comes to their judgment about the compiler. In the end, we present our final analysis and conclusion. Before getting into the traditions themselves, let us look briefly at al-Ḥaskānī and his work *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*.

Who was al-Ḥaskānī?

The fifth century scholar Abū al-Qāsim 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥasakān al-Naysābūrī (d. circa 490 A.H.), also known as Ibn al-Ḥadhdhā' and al-Ḥākīm al-Ḥaskānī,³ was a judge and a *muhaddith*. Born in Nayshāpūr in a family of religious scholars, he was initially trained by his own grandfather and father, and then by some of the great scholars of his time such as Qāḍī Abū al-'Alā' Ṣā'īd and others. He later became one of the renowned ḥadīth scholars of his age and many narrators attended his sessions and took permission (*ijāzah*) from him. Details about his life are sketchy at best and there is a difference of opinion about his confessional identity, with most Shī'ah scholars stating that he was a Sunnī while Sunnī scholars claim that he was a Shī'ah.

The Sunnī scholar al-Dhahabī seems to give conflicting views about al-Ḥaskānī's confessional identity, saying that he was a highly learned Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar and then claiming he was a Shī'ah. This is because he claims to have found some evidence from one of the latter's discourses (*majālis*) that he was a Shī'ah. It seems the fact that al-Ḥaskānī authenticated the tradition of *radd al-shams* (where it is reported that Imam 'Alī (a) turned the sun back to avoid missing the

³ Some have pronounced it as 'al-Ḥasakānī' yet, Aghā Buzurg Tehrānī clearly states that it is derived from the village of Ḥasakān (pronounced like *ghadban*) as mentioned by al-Dhahabī in his *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* (*al-Dhari'ah* 4:194 quoting from *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* 3:390)

time of prayer) is what led al-Dhahabī to categorically classify him as Shī'ī.⁴ However, another 8th Century scholar, the biographer Ibn Abī al-Wafā' lists him among the Ḥanafī scholars in his *Ṭabaqāt*.⁵ Among Shī'ī scholars, there is a difference of opinion with some, such as Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, stating that al-Ḥaskānī was a Sunnī scholar whereas others, like Aghā Buzurg Tehrānī, considering him to have been a Shī'ah.⁶

The general information available about his life, such as the fact that his great-grandfather was responsible for leading the army sent by the third caliph, 'Uthmān, to conquer Khurāsān, or that three of his sons were narrators of ḥadīth, his travels to Marv and other places in order to meet and learn from scholars, and the acquisition of *ijāzās* from some of the renowned scholars of his time, don't clarify much for us about his creed and milieu. From over a hundred titles that he is said to have authored, only a few are known and even fewer are extant. Out of these, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* is undoubtedly the most well-known. Al-Ḥaskānī also has a treatise on the merits of the month of Rajab as well as the unique traits (*khaṣā'is*) of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib as mentioned in the Qur'ān. From some of the titles attributed to him, it can be seen that he wrote extensively on the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt, and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) in particular.

Shawāhid al-Tanzīl – Where *Faḍā'il* meets Exegesis

Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li Qawā'id al-Taḥḍīr fi Āyāt al-Nāzilah fi Ahl al-Bayt 'Alayhim al-Salām ('Testimonies of Revelation for the Foundations of Superiority in the Verses Revealed about the Ahl al-Bayt (a)') is a compilation of traditions on the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt, and specifically Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), which form the exegeses or occasions of revelation for two hundred and ten verses of the Glorious

⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz*, vol. 3, p. 1200.

⁵ Al-Qurashī, *al-Jawābir al-Muḍīyyah fi Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*, vol. 1, p. 338.

⁶ Tehrānī, *al-Dhari'ah ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah*, vol. 4, p. 194.

Qurʾān. The book has seven chapters with the first six chapters presented as preambles to the last chapter, which comprises the main part of the book. There are a total of 1,160 traditions with complete and incomplete chains of transmission. In his introduction, al-Ḥaskānī says that due to the abundance of narrations, he did not analyze their chains of transmission. In his afterword at the end of the book, he admits that some of the chains of transmission are not sound and that he had hastily compiled the traditions he could find. He thus did not mean to imply that whatever he has gathered is sound in terms of the chains of transmission.

Al-Ḥaskānī says that the purpose of writing this book was to refute one of the followers of Ibn Karrām (the founder of the Karrāmiyya sect) who, having gained popularity and a following among the people, claimed that there was nothing in the Qurʾān regarding the merits and praise of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his family, and that exegetes had unanimously agreed that Sūrah al-Insān was revealed in Makka, so the claim that its verses were revealed in honor of the family of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is incorrect. Having learnt of this, al-Ḥaskānī spoke out against his lies and calumny and expected other scholars and elders to censure the man. However, when he saw no such reaction from them, he found it necessary to compile this work in order to dispel any doubt regarding the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt in the Qurʾān.

As we shall see, what makes this work particularly interesting is that the compiler has quoted from both Shīʿī and Sunnī ḥadīth sources. Furthermore, he has narrated some traditions from the early Shīʿī exegesis of Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī and later works, like al-Ṭabrisī’s *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, also quote traditions from him. However, it seems that no Sunnī scholar of repute has mentioned this work as a source. In fact, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* remains a relatively unknown work in Sunnī circles, and is only mentioned in the context of polemical discussions and debates. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the author was not a Sunnī; it only means that his work never gained recognition

in Sunnī circles as it did among the Shī'ah.

There are a number of manuscripts of this work and interestingly, it has been known and circulated in Yemen for a long time. There are many early copies of this text in both private and public Yemeni libraries, with two of the oldest and most valuable manuscripts being among them. It has been suggested that a new critical edition of the text should be published based on these old manuscripts that were apparently not referred to for the published edition that is currently available.⁷ It is remarkable how the Zaydīs of Yemen were inclined to and appreciated this work, perhaps due to its contents and the fact that it was transmitted via the Zaydī scholar Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan al-Bayhaqī al-Barawqanī who had travelled from Khurāsān to Yemen in 541 A.H., bringing with him manuscripts of this book. Al-Barawqanī had taken this work from al-Ḥaskānī's son Wahabullāh.⁸

Other manuscripts of this work can be found in libraries and repositories in Iran, Iraq and India. The printed edition was first published in Beirut in 1973, and there is even a summary of the work, titled *Ikhtiṣār Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, that has been prepared by a Zaydī scholar. The book has been translated into Persian and recently, into English as well.⁹ The text of this work can be freely accessed online and is found in Shī'ī ḥadīth software like the comprehensive Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth by Noorsoft, as well as Sunnī software like al-Maktabat al-Shāmela. However, it should be noted that in the Sunnī software, it is listed under 'works by deviant sects' (*kutub al-ṭawā'if al-mubtadi'ah*), thereby reflecting the general tendency of Sunnī scholars, and especially those of the Salafī/Wahhābī persuasion, to claim that the compiler of this work was a Shī'ah.

⁷ Cf. 'Two Old Manuscripts of Shawāhid al-Tanzīl' (Farsi):

<https://ansari.kateban.com/post/1262>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The English translation is by Morteza Karimi and is due to be published before the end of 2021.

THE TRADITIONS THAT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF SUNNISM

Traditions that show Imam 'Alī had no ill will towards any of the Caliphs:

One of the most contentious issues between the two major schools of thought in Islam is the right of caliphate. The Shī'ah firmly believe that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) was the rightful successor and caliph of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and that his right was usurped. Some of the narrations mentioned by al-Ḥaskānī portray the relationship between 'Alī (a) and the Caliphs as amiable and without any animosity. For instance:

عن ابن سيرين أنّ أبا بكرٍ لمّا بويع، جلس عليّ في بيته فأتاه رجل فقال: إنّ عليّاً قد كرهك. فأرسل إليه فقال: أكرهتني؟ فقال: والله ما كرهتك غير أنّ رسول الله ﷺ قبض ولم يجمع القرآن، فكرهت أن يزداد فيه فأليت يميني أن لا أخرج إلا إلى الصلاة حتى أجمعه. فقال: نعم ما رأيت!

It is narrated from Ibn Sirīn that when the pledge of allegiance was given to Abū Bakr, 'Alī stayed in his house, so a man came to him and said, "Alī detests you." So he called for 'Alī and asked, "Do you detest me?" 'Alī said, "By Allah, I do not detest you; it is only that the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) passed away while he had not compiled the Qur'ān, and I disliked that anything should be added to it, so I swore that I would not leave [my house] except for prayer until I had compiled it." Abū Bakr said, "What a good thought!" (ḥ. 22)

عن عكرمة قال: لمّا بويع لأبي بكرٍ، تخلّف عليّ في بيته فلقبه عمر فقال: تخلّفت عن بيعة أبي بكرٍ؟ فقال: إني آليت يميناً حين قبض رسول الله ﷺ أن لا أرتدي برداء، إلا إلى الصلاة المكتوبة، حتى أجمع القرآن، فأيتي

خشيت أن ينقلب القرآن.

It is narrated that 'Ikrimah said, "When Abū Bakr was given the pledge of allegiance, 'Alī remained in his house, so 'Umar met him and said, 'Do you refuse to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr?' He replied, 'I took an oath when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) passed away, that I would not wear a cloak [to leave the house] except for the obligatory prayers until I have compiled the Qur'ān, for indeed I feared that the Qur'ān would be distorted.'" (ḥ. 24)

عن محمد بن سيرين قال: نبئت أن أبا بكرٍ لقي علياً رضي الله عنه فقال: أكرهت إمارتي؟ قال: لا، ولكن آليت على يمينٍ أن لا أرتدي رداي، إلا إلى الصلاة، حتى أجمع القرآن. قال: فكتبه على تنزيله، فلو أصبت ذلك الكتاب كان فيه علم كثير. قال محمد بن سيرين: فسألت عكرمة فلم يعرفه.

It is narrated that Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn said, "I was informed that Abū Bakr met 'Alī, may Allah be pleased with him, and said, 'Are you averse to my rule?' He said, 'No, but I have taken an oath not to wear my cloak except for prayer until I have compiled the Qur'ān.'" He [then] said, "So he wrote it (the Qur'ān) according to its [order of] revelation. Had you obtained that book, a lot of knowledge would be found therein." Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn said, "I asked 'Ikrimah about it, but he was not aware of it." (ḥ. 26)

Al-Ḥaskānī also mentions a number of other narrations with the same purport. The message of these traditions is clear: there was no animosity between Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) and the Caliphs. 'Alī (a) was not averse to Abū Bakr's rule. In fact, he swore to that effect. This would imply that Imam 'Alī (a) endorsed Abū Bakr's rule.

Traditions that equate ‘Alī (a) with the other Companions:

In a number of traditions, al-Ḥaskānī equates ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) with other Companions, thereby placing them at par with each other. Some examples of such traditions are as follows:

عن ابن عباسٍ في قوله: «الذين استجابوا لله والرسول» هم أبو بكرٍ وعمر وعليّ وابن مسعودٍ.

It is narrated that Ibn ‘Abbās said regarding the verse: *‘Those who responded to Allah and the Apostle...’* “It refers to Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Alī, and Ibn Mas‘ūd.” (h. 183)

عن عبد الملك بن أبي سليمان قال: سألت أبا جعفرٍ عن قوله: «إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...» قال: أصحاب النبي ﷺ. قلت: يقولون: عليّ. قال: عليّ منهم.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn Abī Sulaymān said, “I asked Abū Ja‘far about the verse: *‘Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful...’* He said, ‘It refers to the Companions of the Prophet (s).’ I said, ‘They say [it refers to] ‘Alī.’ He replied, “Alī is one of them (i.e. the Companions).” (h. 228)

عن محمد بن إبراهيم بن الحرث التيمي أنّ عليّاً وعثمان بن مظعونٍ ونفراً من أصحاب رسول الله ﷺ تعاقدوا أن يصوموا النهار، ويقوموا الليل، ولا يأتوا النساء، ولا يأكلوا اللحم. فبلغ [ذلك] رسول الله ﷺ فأنزل الله تعالى: «يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تحرموا طيبات ما أحلّ الله لكم».

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥarth al-Taymī narrated that ‘Alī, ‘Uthmān ibn Maẓ‘ūn, and a group of other Companions of the

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) made a pact to fast during the day, pray at night, not to approach [their] women, and not to eat meat. The news of this reached the Prophet (ﷺ) so Allah revealed: 'O you who have faith! Do not prohibit the good things that Allah has made lawful to you.'" (ḥ. 252)

It is evident from these examples that some of the traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* put other Companions at the same level as 'Alī (a) in merit, or depict him as simply being one of the Companions, or even include him among those Companions who were rebuked for being overzealous in some of their religious practices. These are all hallmarks of Sunnī traditions, as Shī'ī traditions always distinguish the Ahl al-Bayt (a) as being of a higher status than the Companions.

Traditions narrated by 'Umar and 'Ā'isha in praise of 'Alī:

Two individuals revered in Sunnism whom the Shī'ah consider as having hurt the Ahl al-Bayt (a) most are the second caliph and the youngest wife of the Prophet (ﷺ). In some traditions, al-Ḥaskānī depicts these two individuals as praising 'Alī (a). This in itself is not surprising, as there are a number of traditions even in the mainstream Sunnī sources that quote them praising him. However, there are some unique traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* that are not found in the primary sources. For instance:

عن عائشة قالت: عليّ أعلم أصحاب محمدٍ بما أنزل على محمدٍ ﷺ.

'Ā'isha said, "Alī is the most knowledgeable among the Companions of Muḥammad about what was revealed to Muḥammad (ﷺ)." (ḥ. 40)

قال عمر بن الخطاب: من ترون أنّهم يولّون الأمر غداً؟ قالوا: عثمان بن عفّان. قال: فأين هم عن عليّ بن أبي طالبٍ يحملهم على الطريق

المستقيم؟

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb asked, “Whom do you think they will appoint as the leader tomorrow?” They said, “‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.” ‘Umar said, “Why do they not turn to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who would lead them upon the straight path?” (ḥ. 103)

عن أبي جعفرٍ قال: أمر عمر عليّاً أن يقضي بين رجلين ففضى بينهما، فقال الذي قضى عليه: هذا الذي يقضي بيننا؟ وكأنّه ازدرى عليّاً، فأخذ عمر بتلبيبه فقال: ويلك وما تدري من هذا؟ هذا عليّ بن أبي طالبٍ، هذا مولاي ومولى كلِّ مؤمنٍ، فمن لم يكن مولاه فليس بمؤمنٍ!

Abū Jaʿfar said, “‘Umar asked ‘Alī to judge between two people, so he judged between them. The one who was judged against remarked, ‘Is this the one who judges between us?’ as if to show disdain for ‘Alī. So ‘Umar held his collar and said, ‘Woe to you, do you know who this is? This is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; he is my master and the master of every believer, and whoever does not take him as his master is not a believer!’” (ḥ. 362)

By stating that ‘Alī was the most knowledgeable of the companions, ‘Ā’isha is admitting to his superiority over her own father, Abū Bakr. And when ‘Umar admits that ‘Alī would be a better leader than ‘Uthmān, and that he is in fact the master of all believers, it again shows Imam ‘Alī’s superiority over all the other Companions of the Prophet (ṣ). Such traditions give the impression that there was no jealousy or animosity between these individuals and Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a).

Traditions that praise the Caliphs and Companions:

Praise of Companions is not limited to the Sunnī ḥadīth corpus.

However, the type of praise and the individuals who have been praised varies significantly. In Shīʿī ḥadīth, those Companions who were loyal to the Ahl al-Bayt (a) such as Salmān, Bilāl, Miqdād, Abū Dharr, ʿAmmār and others have been praised. However, those who stood against the Prophet's family, during his lifetime and after he left this world, have not. On the other hand, it is precisely this second group that has received the lion's share of praise and accolades in Sunnī literature. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* contains tens of traditions where the Companions who hurt the Ahl al-Bayt (a) in one way or another have been praised. For instance:

عن عليّ عليه السلام عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله قال: إن تستخلفوا أبا بكرٍ تجدوه صلباً أميناً، زاهداً في الدنيا راغباً في الآخرة، وإن تؤمروا عمر تجدوه قوياً أميناً، لا تأخذه في الله لومة لائم، وإن تؤمروا عليّاً - ولا أظنهم فاعلين - يسلك بهم الصراط المستقيم.

ʿAlī (a) narrated that the Prophet (ṣ) said, “If you make Abū Bakr the caliph [after me], you will find him firm and trustworthy, abstemious towards this world and desirous of the Hereafter. And if you make ʿUmar the caliph, you will find him strong and trustworthy, never fearing the blame of any blamer in the way of Allah. And if you make ʿAlī caliph, [and I do not think they will do so,] he will lead the people towards the straight path.” (ḥ. 100)

A similar narration is also quoted from Ḥudhayfah (ḥ. 97). In these narrations, ʿAlī (a) is shown to be endorsing the caliphate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar by narrating that the Prophet himself implicitly endorsed them.

عن السدي، عن أصحابه [في قوله تعالى: «إن أولياؤه إلا المتقون»] يعني أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وآله.

Al-Suddī narrated from his companions regarding the verse: *‘Its custodians are only the Godwary’* [saying,] “It refers to the Companions of Muḥammad (ṣ).” (ḥ. 291)

Such wholesale praise of the Companions is typically found only in Sunnī works.

إِذَا أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ وَإِنَّمَا أَبُو سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيُّ قَالَ: بَعَثَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَبَا بَكْرٍ بِيْرَاءَ، فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ ضَجْنَانَ سَمِعَ رِغَاءَ نَاقَةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَعَرَفَهُ فَأَتَاهُ. فَقَالَ: مَا شَأْنِي؟ قَالَ: خَيْرٌ؛ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ بَعَثَنِي بِيْرَاءَ وَجَعَلَكَ عَلَى الْمَوْسِمِ. فَأَقَامَا حَتَّى فَرِغَا، فَلَمَّا رَجَعَا انْطَلَقَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَا لِي؟ قَالَ: خَيْرٌ. أَنْتَ صَاحِبِي فِي الْغَارِ وَصَاحِبِي عَلَى الْحَوْضِ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ لَا يَبْلُغُ عَنِّي غَيْرِي أَوْ رَجُلٍ مَنِّي.

Either Abū Hurayrah or Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī said, “The Messenger of Allah sent Abū Bakr with [Sūrah] al-Barā’ah. When he reached Dajnan, he heard the sound of the Prophet’s she-camel and recognized it so he went towards it, [but he saw ‘Alī instead]. He asked him, ‘What is my status?’ He replied, ‘[You are upon] virtue. The Messenger of Allah has commissioned me to take [Sūrah] al-Barā’ah and has instructed you to be present in the *hajj* rituals.’ So they performed *hajj* and when they finished the rituals and returned [to Madīna], Abū Bakr [went to the Prophet (ṣ) and] said, ‘What is my status, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said, ‘[It is] good. You were my companion in the cave and you shall be my companion at the Pond, but no one else can convey my message except a man who is from me.’” (ḥ. 324)

This tradition is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, the obvious praise of Abū Bakr at the end, where the Prophet (ṣ) assures him that he is upon virtue and shall be his ‘companion at the Pond [of Kawthar]’. Second, the apparent disappointment of Abū Bakr when he was

stopped from delivering Sūrah al-Barā'ah to the Makkans. Third, 'Alī (a) is not mentioned anywhere by name in this tradition. Finally, it is also interesting that the transmitter of the tradition is unsure about its original narrator, offering two possibilities.

عبد الله بن مليل قال: سمعت علياً يقول: قال رسول الله ﷺ إنه لم يكن نبياً إلا قد أعطي سبعة رفقاء نجباء وزراء، وإني قد أعطيت أربعة عشر: حمزة، وجعفر، وعلي، وحسن، وحسين، وأبو بكر، وعمر، وعبد الله بن مسعود، وأبو ذر، والمقداد، وحذيفة، وعمار، وسلمان، وبلال.

'Abdullāh ibn Mulayl narrated that he heard 'Alī saying, "The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, 'There is no Prophet but that Allah gave him seven noble friends and aides, but I have been given fourteen: Ḥamzah, Ja'far, 'Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Ma'sūd, Abū Dharr, Miqdād, Ḥudhayfah, 'Ammār, Salmān and Bilāl.'" (h. 517)

The above narration is noteworthy because it equates the family of the Prophet with his Companions. Furthermore, it is said to have been narrated by 'Alī (a) himself, and includes Abū Bakr and 'Umar among the noble friends and aides of the Prophet (ṣ). This is clearly a narration of Sunnī provenance, though it has mostly been mentioned in the *da'if* collections (i.e. those works that list all the weak narrations) of the Sunnī ḥadīth scholars.

عن ابن عباس قال: «أصحاب الصراط السوي» هو - والله - محمد وأهل بيته، والصراط: الطريق الواضح الذي لا عوج فيه، «ومن اهتدى» فهم أصحاب محمد ﷺ.

Ibn 'Abbās said, "I swear by God that 'the people of the right path' are Muḥammad and his Ahl al-Bayt, and *al-ṣirāt* is the clear path in which

there is no deviation, [and the phrase:] ‘*and who is guided*’ refers to the Companions of Muḥammad (ṣ).” (ḥ. 527)

The end of this narration also includes a blanket reference and praise for the Companions as being those whom the Qur’ān refers to as the guided ones.

عن أبي عمر النعمان بن بشيرٍ قال: تلا عليّ [عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ] ليلةً هذه الآية: «إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحَسَنَىٰ [أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ]» [ف] قال: أنا منهم، وأبو بكرٍ منهم، وعمر منهم، وعثمان منهم، وطلحة منهم، والزبير منهم، وسعد منهم، وعبد الرحمن بن عوفٍ منهم. قال: ثمّ أقيمت الصلاة فقام عليّ [عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ] وهو يقول: «لا يسمعون حسيها».

Abū ‘Umar Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr said, “One night, ‘Alī recited the verse: *‘Indeed those to whom there has gone beforehand [the promise of] the best reward from Us [will be kept away from it (i.e. hellfire)]’* and said, ‘I am one of them and Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, Zubayr, Sa’d and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf are [also] among them.’ Then it was time for prayer so ‘Alī stood up saying, *‘They will not hear even its faint sound.’*” (ḥ. 530)

The above report is another example of praise by ‘Alī (a) even for those who opposed his right to the caliphate and fought openly against him in battle.

حدّثنا موسى بن جعفرٍ، عن أبيه عن آبائه في قوله [تعالى]: «محمّد رسول الله والذين معه» أبو بكرٍ الصّدّيق، «أشدّاء على الكفّار» عمر بن الخطّاب، «رحماء بينهم» عثمان بن عفّان، «تراهم ركعاً سجّداً» عليّ بن أبي طالب، «يتنغون فضلاً من الله ورضواناً» طلحة والزبير، «سيماهم في جوههم من

أثر السجود» عبد الرحمن بن عوفٍ وسعد بن أبي وقاصٍ.

Mūsā ibn Ja'far narrated from his father, who narrated from his forefathers [who said] regarding the verse: *Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with him*, “[meaning] Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘are hard against the faithless’ [meaning] ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘and merciful amongst themselves’ [meaning] ‘Uthmān. ‘You see them bowing and prostrating [in worship],’ [referring to] ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘seeking Allah’s grace and [His] pleasure’, [referring to] Ṭalḥa and Zubayr. ‘Their mark is [visible] on their faces, from the effect of prostration’, [referring to] ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ.” (ḥ. 888)

The above narration is interestingly attributed to Imam al-Kāzīm (a) yet contains praise for those Companions of the Prophet who stood against Imam ‘Alī (a).

علي بن رفاعه، عن أبيه قال: حججت فوافيت علي بن عبد الله بن عباس بالمدينة [وهو] يخطب على منبر رسول الله ﷺ، فقرأ: «بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، و العصر إن الإنسان لفي خسر» [قال: هو] أبو جهل بن هشام «إلا الذين آمنوا» أبو بكر الصديق «وعملوا الصالحات» عمر بن الخطاب «وتواصوا بالحق وتواصوا بالصبر» علي بن أبي طالب.

‘Alī ibn Rifā‘ah narrated that his father said, “I attended the *hajj* [pilgrimage] and saw ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abbās in Madīna reciting a sermon on the pulpit of the Prophet of God. He recited these verses: ‘*In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful. By Time! Indeed man is in loss*’, and said that it refers to Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, ‘*except those who have faith*’ refers to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘*and do righteous deeds*’ refers to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘*and enjoin one another to [follow] the truth, and enjoin one another to patience*’ refers to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.” (ḥ. 1153)

In this report, again, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar have been praised along with ‘Alī (a), and the fact that they have been mentioned before him suggests their superiority over him. Of course, since this is not a tradition attributed to the Prophet, it holds little value.

THE TRADITIONS THAT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF SHĪISM

Quoting from known Shī‘ī narrators and sources:

Al-Ḥaskānī quotes some known Shī‘ī narrators who are not accepted by Sunnī ḥadīth scholars as reliable. He also refers to some early Shī‘ah scholars and their works. For instance:

سليم بن قيس الهلالي قال: سمعت علياً يقول: ما نزلت على رسول الله ﷺ آية من القرآن إلا أقرانيها أو أملاها عليّ فأكتبها [كذا] بخطي، وعلمني تأويلها وتفسيرها، وناسخها ومنسوخها، ومحكمها ومتشابهها، ودعا الله لي أن يعلمني فهمها وحفظها، فلم أنس منه حرفاً واحداً.

Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī said, “I heard ‘Alī say, ‘No verse of the Qur’ān was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (ṣ), but that he made me recite it or dictated it to me, and I would write it in my own handwriting. He also taught me its deeper interpretation and exegesis, and informed me of the abrogated and abrogating verses as well as the clear and ambiguous verses, and he supplicated Allah to teach me to understand and memorize it, so I never forgot even a single letter from it.” (h. 41)

وأخرجه العياشي في تفسيره عن علي بن محمد القاشاني الفارسي عن القاسم بن محمد القرشي الأصبهاني، عن سليمان المنقري كذلك.

...This has also been narrated by al-‘Ayyāshī in his *tafsīr* from ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Qāshānī al-Fārsī, from al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Isfahānī, from Sulaymān al-Minqarī. (ḥ. 364)

و [رواه أيضا] عبد الله بن خراش الشيباني عن العوام [كما] في أمالي ابن بابويه

...The above-mentioned tradition has also been narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn Khirāsh al-Shaybānī from al-‘Awwām, as quoted in *al-Amālī* by Ibn Bābawayh. (ḥ. 683)

Here we see a narration from the well-known companion of Imam ‘Alī (a), Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, whom no Sunnī scholar would ever refer to, and other quotations from al-‘Ayyāshī and al-Ṣadūq, both of whom are recognized Shī‘ah authorities. Of course, al-Ḥaskānī also regularly quotes from Sunnī authorities like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others.

Naming ‘Alī (a) as the most learned among the Companions:

There are many traditions to the effect that Imam ‘Alī was the most knowledgeable about the Qur’ān, but there are also some traditions that state he was generally more learned than all the other Companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). And that is something one who is not a Shī‘ah would not readily admit. For instance:

عبد الملك بن أبي سليمان قال: سألت عطاء بن أبي رباح: أكان في أصحاب النبي ﷺ أعلم من عليّ؟ قال: لا، والله لا أعلمه.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn Abī Sulaymān said, “I asked ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, ‘Was there anyone among the Companions of the Prophet (ṣ) more knowledgeable than ‘Alī?’ He said, ‘No, by Allah I do not know of any such person.’” (ḥ. 45)

No other Companion has been praised in the Qurʾān as much as ‘Alī:

عن ابن عباس قال: ما نزل في أحدٍ من كتاب الله ما نزل في علي.

Ibn ‘Abbās said, “That which has been revealed about ‘Alī in the Book of Allah has not been revealed about anyone else.” (h. 49)

عن مجاهد قال: ما أنزل الله آيةً في القرآن إلا عليّ رأسها.

Mujāhid said, “Allah has not revealed any verse in the Qurʾān but that ‘Alī is at its pinnacle.” (h. 52)

عن يزيد بن رومان قال: ما أنزلت في أحدٍ ما أنزل في عليّ من الفضل في القرآن.

Yazīd ibn Rūmān said, “That which has been revealed about the virtues of ‘Alī in the Qurʾān has not been revealed about anyone else.” (h. 54)

These traditions demonstrate the merit and superiority of ‘Alī above all the other Companions, which is in conformity with the Shīʿah position but not the Sunnī one.

Traditions where ‘Alī is portrayed as better than all the Companions:

Some traditions clearly show that ‘Alī was better than all the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). For instance:

عن ابن عباس قال: ما أنزل الله في القرآن آية «يا أيها الذين آمنوا» إلا كان عليّ أميرها وشريفها، ولقد عاتب الله أصحاب محمد ﷺ ولم يذكر علياً إلا بخير.

Ibn ‘Abbās said, “Allah did not reveal a verse [that contains the phrase]

‘*O you who believe*’ in the Qur’ān, but that ‘Alī was its prince and its nobleman, and Allah has rebuked the Companions of Muḥammad (ﷺ) but has not mentioned ‘Alī except with goodness.” (ḥ. 70)

عيسى بن راشد قال: ما أنزل الله في القرآن «يا أيها الذين آمنوا» إلا وعليّ أميرها وشريفها، ولقد عاتب الله أصحاب محمد في غير آية من القرآن وما ذكر عليّاً إلا بخير.

‘Isā ibn Rāshid said, “Allah has not revealed [a verse with the phrase] ‘*O you who believe*’ in the Qur’ān, but that ‘Alī is its prince and nobleman, and Allah has rebuked the Companions of Muḥammad in numerous verses of the Qur’ān but has only mentioned ‘Alī positively.” (ḥ. 82)

These two traditions, from different narrators, distinguish ‘Alī (a) from the Companions by stating that the latter were rebuked in the Qur’ān while ‘Alī (a) was always mentioned in a positive light.

Narrating from other Imams:

One of the first possibilities that comes to mind when we see praise for the Ahl al-Bayt along with acceptance for the Caliphs is that the author might have been a Zaydī. However, despite his narrating a few traditions from Zayd ibn ‘Alī, the fact that he narrates traditions from the other Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) precludes the possibility of his having been Zaydī, or even Ismā‘īlī or Wāqifi. Furthermore, there are some narrations in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* that clearly allude to twelve Imams, so if the author was a Shī‘ī, he must have been a Twelver Imāmī. Herewith are some of the traditions that evince this:

عن عليّ بن موسى الرضا، عن أبيه عن آبائه عن عليّ عليه السلام قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: من أحبّ أن يركب سفينة النجاة ويستمسك بالعروة الوثقى

ويعتصم بحبل الله المتين، فليوال علياً وليأتم بالهداة من ولده.

‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā narrated from his father, from his fathers, from ‘Alī (a), who reported that the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, “Whoever wishes to board the ark of salvation, hold fast to the firmest handle and cling to Allah’s strong rope, should love ‘Alī and follow the guides from his progeny.” (h. 177)

علي بن موسى الرضا قال: أخبرني أبي، عن أبيه جعفر، عن أبيه محمد، عن أبيه علي، عن أبيه الحسين، عن أبيه علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله في هذه الآية: «فأولئك مع الذين أنعم الله عليهم» قال: «من النبيين» محمد، ومن «الصدّيقين» علي بن أبي طالب، ومن «الشهداء» حمزة، ومن «الصالحين» الحسن والحسين، «وحسن أولئك رفيقاً» قال: القائم من آل محمد صلى الله عليه وآله.

‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā narrated from his father, who narrated from his father Ja’far, who narrated from his father Muḥammad, who narrated from his father ‘Alī, who narrated from his father al-Ḥusayn, who narrated from his father ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said about the following verse, “*They are with those whom Allah has blessed, including the Prophets’* meaning Muḥammad, ‘*and the truthful’* meaning ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘*the martyrs,*’ meaning Ḥamzah, ‘*and the righteous’* meaning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, ‘*and excellent companions are they’* meaning the Riser (*qā’im*) from the progeny of Muḥammad.” (h. 207)

Note that these traditions are from Imam ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a). Al-Ḥaskānī narrates many traditions from Imam al-Riḍā (a), including a few with ‘golden chains’ (like the second tradition above). He also narrates a good number of traditions from Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-

Ṣādiq (a). The second tradition above is especially noteworthy for its mention of the *qā'im* from the progeny of the Prophet (ṣ).

عن ابن عباس في قول الله تعالى: «أفمن كان مؤمناً...» قال: نزلت هذه الآية في عليٍّ عليه السلام يعني كان عليٍّ مصدقاً بوحدانيتي، «كمن كان فاسقاً» يعني الوليد بن عقبة بن أبي معيط. و [في] قوله: «وجعلنا منهم أئمةً يهدون بأمرنا» [قال:] جعل الله لبني إسرائيل بعد موت هارون وموسى، من ولد هارون سبعةً من الأئمة، كذلك جعل من ولد عليٍّ سبعةً من الأئمة، ثم اختار بعد السبعة من ولد هارون خمسةً فجعلهم تمام الاثني عشر نقيباً، كما اختار بعد السبعة [من ولد عليٍّ] خمسةً فجعلهم تمام الاثني عشر.

Ibn 'Abbās said regarding the verse: *'Is someone who is faithful...'* "It was revealed about 'Alī (a) and it means that "Alī acknowledged My unity," *'like someone who is a transgressor?'* meaning al-Walīd ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'īt." And about the verse: *'And amongst them We appointed imams to guide [the people] by Our command,'* he said, "After the death of Hārūn and Mūsā, Allah appointed seven leaders for the Banī Isrā'īl from the descendants of Hārūn, and He similarly appointed seven Imams from the descendants of 'Alī. Then, after those seven, He appointed five leaders from the descendants of Hārūn and they became twelve chiefs altogether. In the same way, after seven from the progeny of 'Alī, He appointed five more [as Imams], and they became twelve." (h. 626)

This tradition unequivocally states that there were twelve Imams for the Muslims just as there were twelve chiefs for the Banī Isrā'īl. Of course, there is an issue with the twelve being descendants of 'Alī (a), thereby making him the first of 13 Imams, but the possible reasons for this have

already been explained by scholars.¹⁰

Clear mention of the merits of the Shī'ah of 'Alī (a):

Some traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* explicitly mention and praise the Shī'ah of 'Alī (a) and of the Ahl al-Bayt (a). For instance:

عن محمد بن الفضيل بن يسار، قال: سألت أبا الحسن عن قول الله تعالى: «والتين» قال: الحسن [ثم قال: «والزيتون» الحسين. [وعن قوله: «وطور سينين» قال: إنما هو طور سيناء، وذلك أمير المؤمنين. «وهذا البلد الأمين» قال: ذلك رسول الله ﷺ «إلا الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات» قال: ذلك أمير المؤمنين وشيعتهم كلهم «فلهم أجر غير ممنون».

Muḥammad ibn Fuḍayl ibn Yasār said, “I asked Abū al-Ḥasan about [the interpretation of] Surah al-Tīn. He said, ‘*By the fig*’, [refers to] al-Ḥasan, ‘*and the olive*’, [refers to] al-Ḥusayn, ‘*by Mount Sinai*’, that is, Amīr al-Mu’minīn, ‘*by this secure town*’, that is the Messenger of Allah (ṣ), ‘*Except those who have faith and do righteous deeds*’ refers to Amīr al-Mu’minīn and all their Shī’ah, ‘*There will be an everlasting reward for them.*” (ḥ. 1121)

عن جابر بن يزيد الجعفي عن أبي جعفر محمد بن عليّ عليه السلام قال: [قال] رسول الله ﷺ: «إنّ الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات أولئك هم خير البرية» هم أنت وشيعتك يا عليّ.

Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju’fī narrated that Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī (a) said, “The Messenger of God said “*Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds it is they who are the best of creatures*’ refers to you and

¹⁰ See for instance: <https://www.islamquest.net/fa/archive/fa90341>

your Shī'ah, O 'Alī.” (ḥ. 1132)

عن عبد الله بن عباس في قول الله عزّ وجل: «ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه» يعني لا شكّ فيه أنّه من عند الله نزل، «هدى» يعني بياناً ونوراً، «للمتقين» عليّ بن أبي طالب الذي لم يشرك بالله طرفة عين، اتقى الشرك وعبادة الأوثان وأخلص لله العبادة، يبعث إلى الجنّة بغير حسابٍ هو وشيعته.

From 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās [who said] regarding the verse wherein Allah, to whom belong might and majesty, says: *This is the Book, there is no doubt in it*, “It means that there is no doubt that it is from Allah and was revealed as *'a guidance'*, that is, as an explanation and a light *'for the Godwary'*, [i.e. for] 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who did not associate partners with Allah even for a single moment. He guarded himself from polytheism and idol worship, and reserved worship for Allah alone. He and his Shī'ah will be sent to Paradise without any reckoning.” (ḥ. 106)

These three traditions are particularly interesting since they clearly reference the Shī'ah of 'Alī (a) and, according to the first tradition, of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) as well. The second tradition above has the Prophet (ṣ) himself praising 'Alī and his Shī'ah as being the *'best of creatures'* mentioned in the Qur'ān. In the third tradition, Ibn 'Abbās is quoted as having said that the Shī'ah of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) will be sent to Paradise without reckoning. Of course, traditions of this last kind are explained by scholars to mean those who were practising Shī'ahs in the truest sense.

'Alī's role on the Day of Judgment:

عن أبي جعفر الباقر، عن أبيه، عن جدّه قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: من سرّه أن يجوز على الصراط كالريح العاصف ويلج الجنّة بغير حسابٍ فليتولّ وليّي

ووصيِّي، وصاحبي وخليفتي على أهلي، عليّ بن أبي طالب، ومن سرّه أن يلج النار فليترك ولايته. فوعزّة ربّي وجلاله، إنّه لباب الله الذي لا يؤتى إلاّ منه، وإنّه الصراط المستقيم، وإنّه الذي يسأل الله عن ولايته يوم القيامة.

Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir narrated from his father, from his grandfather, from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who said, "Whoever would like to cross [the bridge of] *al-ṣirāt* [swiftly,] like a strong wind, and enter Paradise without reckoning, should love my intimate, my vicegerent, my companion and my representative in my family, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and whoever would like to enter the Fire should leave his guardianship. I swear by the might and glory of my Lord that he is the Gate of Allah - He cannot be approached except through him, and verily he is the Straight Path, and he is the one about whose guardianship (*wilāyah*) Allah will ask [the people] on the Day of Judgment." (h. 90)

This tradition shows how the guardianship of 'Alī (a) will be one of the factors that distinguishes the people of Paradise from those who end up in Hell.

OTHER INTERESTING TRADITIONS

There are a number of other traditions unique to *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* that merit analysis. Since a detailed dissection is beyond the scope of this study, we will suffice with mentioning the narrations and offering a few comments about them.

عن جابر بن عبد الله قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: إن الله جعل علياً وزوجته وأبناءه حجج الله على خلقه، وهم أبواب العلم في أمتي؛ من اهتدى بهم هدى إلى صراطٍ مستقيمٍ.

Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Verily Allah has made 'Alī, his wife and his sons His proofs over the people, and they are the gates of knowledge among my *ummah*; whoever is guided by them has been guided to the straight path." (ḥ. 89)

This tradition is interesting because it clearly refers to the infallible guides: 'Alī (a), Fāṭimah (a) and the Imams from their progeny.

عن عبد الله بن عباس في قوله تعالى: «ومن يطع الله» يعني في فرائضه «والرسول» في سنته «وأولئك مع الذين أنعم الله عليهم من النبيين» يعني محمداً «والصديقين» يعني علي بن أبي طالب، وكان أول من صدق برسول الله ﷺ، «والشهداء» يعني علي بن أبي طالب، وجعفر الطيار، وحمزة بن عبد المطلب، والحسن، والحسين، هؤلاء سادات الشهداء، «والصالحين» يعني سلمان، وأبا ذر، وصهيب، وبلالاً، وخباباً، وعماراً، «وحسن أولئك» أي الأئمة الأحد عشر، «رفيقاً» يعني في الجنة. «ذلك الفضل من الله وكفى بالله عليمًا» إن منزل علي وفاطمة والحسن والحسين ومنزل رسول الله، وهم في الجنة، واحد.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said regarding the verse: "*Whoever obeys Allah*" meaning in what He has made obligatory, *'and the Apostle*' in his practice, *'they are with those whom Allah has blessed, including the Prophets*' meaning Muḥammad, *'and the truthful*' meaning 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who was the first person to affirm [his belief in] the Messenger of Allah, *'and the martyrs*' meaning 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ja'far al-Ṭayyār, Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, who are the masters of the martyrs, *'and the righteous*', meaning Salmān, Abū Dharr, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, Khabbāb, and 'Ammār, *'and excellent companions*' in Paradise, *'are they*' meaning the eleven Imams. *'That is the grace of Allah,*

and Allah suffices as knower.’ Indeed, the station of ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the station of the Prophet in Paradise is the same. (h. 206)

This unique tradition stands out for a number of reasons, not least among which is its mention of eleven Imams. While at first glance one might assume that it refers to the eleven Imams from the progeny of ‘Alī (a), and that might indeed be the case, another likely yet surprising explanation could be that it refers to the eleven individuals mentioned in the tradition itself: the five martyrs: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ja‘far al-Ṭayyār, Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and the six righteous ones: Salmān, Abū Dharr, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, Khabbāb, and ‘Ammār who, together make the eleven “imams” who shall be excellent companions in Paradise.

عن ابن عباس في قوله: «واتقوا فتنةً لا تصيبنّ الذين...» الآية، قال: حذر الله أصحاب محمد ﷺ أن يقاتلوا علياً.

Regarding the verse: ‘*And beware of a sedition which shall not visit the wrongdoers among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in retribution*’, Ibn ‘Abbās said, “Allah warned the Companions of Muḥammad not to fight ‘Alī.” (h. 277)

This narration from Ibn ‘Abbās is an interesting and unique exegesis of the mentioned verse. According to this commentary, the Companions were forewarned not to rebel against Imam ‘Alī (a).

حدّثنا قبيصة قال سمعت سفيان يقول في هذه الآية: «ونزعنا ما في صدورهم من غلٍّ إخواناً» نزلت في أبي بكرٍ وعمرٍ وعليٍّ وعثمان وابن مسعودٍ رضي الله عنهم.

Regarding the verse: ‘*We will remove whatever rancor there is in their*

breasts; [they will be intimate like] brothers', Qabīṣah said that he heard Sufyān say, "It was revealed about Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alī, 'Uthmān and Ibn Ma'sūd, may Allah be pleased with them!" (ḥ. 441)

This narration implies that even though these Companions had rancor for each other, it will be removed for them before they are admitted into Paradise, where they will reside together like intimate brothers, with nothing but love for one another. Another similar tradition mentions other individuals like Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr, who fought against Imam 'Alī (a) in the Battle of Jamal:

حدَّثنا سفيان عن الكلبيّ في قوله: «ونزعنا ما في صدورهم من غلٍّ» قال: أبو بكرٍ وعمر وعثمان وعليّ وطلحة والزبير وعبد الرحمن وسعد وسعيد وعبد الله بن مسعود.

Sufyān reported that regarding the verse: '*We will remove whatever rancor there is in their breasts*', al-Kalbī said, "It was revealed about Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Sa'd, Sa'īd and 'Abdullāh ibn Ma'sūd." (ḥ. 442)

عن زيد بن عليّ في قوله تعالى: «ثمّ أورثنا الكتاب...» [وساق الآية إلى آخرها، و] قال: «الظالم لنفسه» المختلط منّا بالناس و«المقتصد» العابد و«السابق» الشاهر سيفه يدعو إلى سبيل ربّه.

Regarding the verse: '*Then We made heirs to the Book those whom We chose from Our servants. Yet some of them are those who wrong themselves, and some of them are average, and some of them are those who take the lead in all the good works by Allah's will. That is the greatest grace [of Allah]!*', Zayd ibn 'Alī said, "He who wrongs himself is someone from us who mixes with people; the average one is the worshipper and the one who takes the lead in all the good works is he who takes up the sword and

calls to the way of his Lord.” (h. 783)

This unique narration is attributed to Zayd ibn ‘Alī, the son of Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (a). It is not found in any extant Shī‘ī or Sunnī source and was most likely taken by al-Ḥaskānī from a Zaydī source. The tradition alludes to the Zaydī belief that an Imam must rise in the way of his Lord by the sword.

قال ابن عمر إنّنا إذا عددنا قلنا: أبو بكرٍ وعمر وعثمان. فقال له رجل: يا أبا عبد الرحمن، فعليّ؟ قال ابن عمر: ويحك! عليّ من أهل البيت لا يقاس بهم، عليّ مع رسول الله في درجته، إنّ الله يقول: «والذين آمنوا واتّبعتهم ذرّيتهم» ففاطمة مع رسول الله في درجته وعليّ معهما.

Ibn ‘Umar said, “When we count [the foremost Companions], we say: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān.” A man said to him, “O Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, then [what of] ‘Alī?” Ibn ‘Umar said, “Woe to you! ‘Alī is from the Ahl al-Bayt and no one can be compared to them. ‘Alī is with the Messenger of Allah in his rank. Verily God says, *[As for] the faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith...*’ so Fāṭimah is with the Prophet in his rank and ‘Alī is with them both.” (h. 905)

This tradition is quite telling, since it clearly distinguishes between the Companions and the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and recognizes the latter’s superior position. There is a similar tradition in the *tafsīr* sources, but it varies in its wording.

Conclusion

After a careful study of all the traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, we are left with more questions than answers regarding the confessional identity of its compiler al-Ḥākīm al-Ḥaskānī. Little if anything at all

can be gleaned about his milieu from the compilation. And while every ḥadīth compilation has its own peculiarities, we would venture to say that in general, it is difficult to clearly decipher the identity, ideology, and inclinations of a compiler based solely on the traditions he has compiled. This truth might reveal itself when the works are read and scrutinized from cover to cover, without cherry-picking traditions that suit one's thesis, as has been done by so many [mostly western] scholars. In many cases, compilers have many works to their name, most of them lost. If we had all a compiler's ḥadīth collections then perhaps by studying all his works we might learn more about him than we would from studying a single compilation.

If we preclude the possibility that the text of *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* was altered by later hands, since there is no evidence for that ever happening, and we discount the idea that al-Ḥaskānī compiled only those traditions that were considered acceptable to his interlocutors or were commonly-known and in circulation among the scholars and lay people of his time, due to the fact that the lines between Shī'ism and Sunnism were clearly demarcated by his era, and the traditions he mentions clearly contain some that are of Sunnī provenance and others of Shī'ī origin, then we are taken back to square one when it comes to learning about his own creed and beliefs.

In case we assert that he was a Ḥanafī, how could we possibly reconcile the traditions he mentions which are quite obviously from Shī'ī sources, like those that speak of the superiority of 'Alī (a) over all the Companions? Of course, we must recall how according to his own admission, the authenticity of traditions was not his primary concern. Rather, he only wished to collect whatever he could about the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt in the Qur'ān, even though he knew that some of what he had mentioned would be objectionable to the experts. By clearly stating that he does not deem every tradition he has included in his work to be sound, he has, in a sense, absolved himself. However, it has made our work of judging him based on the traditions he compiled ever

more difficult, if at all possible. This is quite different from those ḥadīth collections whose compilers state, explicitly or implicitly, that they have collected only what they consider to be sound and authentic (such as al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*).

There are a number of possibilities that may be posited regarding al-Ḥaskānī's creed based on what we have found in his work. One possibility is that in the process of compiling this work, he became a Shī'ah and began including Shī'ī traditions. The problem with this hypothesis is that it does not explain why he did not then remove the contradictory Sunnī traditions from his compilation. Perhaps it was because, based on his own admission, he was hasty. Another possibility is that he was always a Shī'ah, but practiced *taqiyyah*, which forced him to include some traditions he did not personally agree with, but with which he could defend himself against accusations of *rafḍ*.

A third possibility would be to use the definition of *tashayyu'* as propounded by the likes of Ibn Taymiyya, who says in his *Minhāj al-Sunnah*: "It is said that al-Ḥākim [al-Naysābūrī] was inclined towards Shī'ism... But his Shī'ism and the Shī'ism of others among the ḥadīth scholars such as al-Nasā'ī, ibn 'Abd al-Barr and their likes does not reach the level of claiming superiority [of 'Alī] over Abū Bakr and 'Umar. There is none among ḥadīth scholars who deemed him superior to them; rather, at most their Shī'ism leads them to deem him superior to 'Uthmān or to say some words against his ('Alī's) enemies or to avoid mentioning the merits of those who fought him. This is because the scholars of ḥadīth are bound by what they know of the authentic traditions about the superiority of the *shaykhaḥayn*."¹¹ So based on this definition, al-Ḥaskānī might have been a Shī'ah Sunnī, meaning a Sunnī with Shī'ī inclinations, like other ḥadīth scholars before him.

This explanation is not tenable, however, since we see that al-Ḥaskānī mentions a number of traditions that plainly show 'Alī's superiority over Abū Bakr and 'Umar, which is what would disqualify

¹¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 7, p. 373.

him from Ibn Taymiyya's 'Shī'ī inclined' Sunnī group of scholars. Other considerations such as the number of Shī'ī traditions in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* being more than the Sunnī ones, or the use of titles such as 'al-Ṣiddīq' for Abū Bakr and 'al-Ṣiddīqah' for 'Ā'isha, or the notion that there was no ill will between the Companions and so on, can shift us either way. In the end, there is plenty of evidence for both sides in this work, and no decisive incontrovertible conclusion can be reached.

If this humble researcher's hand was pushed, and we were forced to choose a position, we would say that it is more likely that al-Ḥaskānī was a Shī'ah. This is because Shī'ah scholars are less averse to referring to Sunnī works and benefiting from them than Sunnī scholars are to Shī'ī works. Furthermore, it might have been a good way of getting a Sunnī audience to read some of the Shī'ah ḥadīth and the inclusion of Sunnī traditions may have served well to cushion the blow, so to speak. Finally, since it was common to accuse a Sunnī scholar of Shī'ism, it would make little sense for one to risk being thus accused unless it was for something they firmly believed in. And in the end, Allah knows best.

3

CONSTRUCTING A TRANSCENDENT *TAWĀTUR* FROM THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS TO PROVE END TIMES PROPHECY

Since the Abrahamic faiths come from the same divine source, it is but natural that there would be many similarities in their teachings. The question that needs to be addressed, however, is: what can we make of these similarities? In this chapter, we have examined what the three Abrahamic traditions have to say about the final apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil during the End of Days, after the advent of the Awaited Redeemer. Having noted the similarities regarding narrations about this battle and the signs that precede it, we have proposed the use of what we term ‘transcendent *tawātur*’ to bring together these various traditions and construct a *tawātur* based on meaning, which would then give rise to certainty about the veracity of this end times prophecy. At the same time, we address the potential problems in the idea of a transcendent *tawātur*, such as the possibility of interfaith “borrowing” or contradictory *mutawātir* reports, and propose an algorithm through which a transcendent *tawātur* may be constructed from the sources of all three Abrahamic traditions without the potential pitfalls.

When the Abrahamic traditions are studied together, one finds that there are quite a few common tenets among them. Some of these beliefs pertain to ethical norms, legal injunctions, end times prophecy, etc. One example of a commonly held belief among these three faiths is the belief in a prophesized apocalyptic end times battle. “End of Days” and other similar terms have been used in the scriptures and early sources of all three Abrahamic traditions to refer to the final period of human

existence in this world. The Hebrew Bible refers to the End of Days using the phrase “*aḥarit ha-yamim*,”¹ and in the New Testament we find this period referred to as “Last Days” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The common phrase for this period in Islam is “*ākhir al-zamān*.” In each of the traditions, a number of signs that herald this final period have been mentioned. Many of these signs of the expected situation of humankind at the end are similar in the three Abrahamic traditions as seen below:

- (i) Hunger and famine has been prophesized as one of the signs of end times in the Tanakh, in Jeremiah 14:1-9, but there is no consensus that it is in reference to the end of days. As a sign of end times, widespread famine and hunger features prominently in Christian and Muslim sources. Matthew 24:7 speaks of famines and earthquakes as signs of the end. There are also a number of ḥadīth reports that prophesize drought and scarcity as a sign of end times.²
- (ii) The prevalence of wars and bloodshed is something foretold in all the Abrahamic traditions. The Book of Daniel speaks of different apocalyptic wars, such as the war that will be waged against the saints (7:21). In the New Testament, Matthew 24:6-7 also states that nations will rise against other nations and wars will become common during the final days. In the Islamic tradition, the *malāḥim* and *fitan* works consist of collections of narrations about war and bloodshed during end times.
- (iii) Disease and pestilence will also increase as the end

¹ Werblowsky and Wigoder, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, p. 28.

² See for example the tradition in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* vol. 5, p. 534 which talks about intense hunger in the world for three years before the appearance of the Dajjāl. Additionally, the Qurʾān also states that if the people of the towns believe and are Godfearing, the floodgates of blessings from the heavens would be opened for them (Q7:96) and since this period will be one of perversion and disbelief, it would also therefore be a period of drought and scarcity.

approaches. Though there is no apparent mention of this in Jewish scriptures, Christian sources mention this prophecy in the Book of Luke (21:11) and in Revelation 6:7-8. In the ḥadīth, the terms used to refer to the epidemic that will wipe out a large section of humankind during end times are *ta'ūn shanī'* (lit. a horrible plague)³ and *al-mawt al-abyaḍ* (lit. white death).⁴

- (iv) Moral decadence and the prevalence of debauchery and licentiousness features prominently as another sign in Christian and Muslim sources. A general state of immorality and is described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and Matthew 24:12 tells us that wickedness will be multiplied in this period. In the ḥadīth about the signs of the end, we are told of the prevalence of shameless women who expose their bodies and seduce men.⁵ There are also explicitly mentioned signs of rampant homosexuality among both males and females.⁶
- (v) The concept of false messiahs is also common to the three faiths. In Judaism individuals like Bar Cochba and Moses of Crete (c. 448) were such false redeemers.⁷ In Christianity also, there have been false messiahs and the New Testament warns believers of pretenders who will come in the future and mislead the people (see: Luke 17:23, Matt. 24:5). The false Mahdīs in Muslim history are also well known and have been studied in depth by some scholars.⁸

³ Al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb*, vol. 2, p. 286.

⁴ Al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghaybah*, p. 278.

⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhū al-Faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 390.

⁶ Al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Taḥṣīl Wasā'il al-Shī'ah ilā Taḥṣīl Masā'il al-Sharī'ah*, vol. 16, p. 276.

⁷ Evans, "Messianic Hopes and Messianic Figures in Late Antiquity", p. 40.

⁸ Cf. *Mahdiyāne Durūghīn* by Rasūl Ja'fariyān.

- (vi) Gog and Magog as end time enemies of humankind are found in the scriptures of all three Abrahamic traditions. The Tanakh portrays Gog and Magog as the force of evil that will rise to fight against the forces of good in the final apocalyptic battle before being annihilated by God's wrath (Ezekiel 39:1-3). Reference to Gog and Magog is also found in the New Testament (Rev. 20:8) and in the Holy Qur'ān (Q21:96) where they are referred to as Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.
- (vii) All Abrahamic traditions prophesize a final battle that will be fought on a global scale. The Tanakh states that all nations will rise against Jerusalem (Zech 12:3). Of course, prophecy states that the enemy will be annihilated (Zech 12:9). The New Testament describes how the Antichrist will gather the kings of the earth to fight the Messiah (Rev. 19:19). Sunnī narrations tell us of huge losses faced by the Muslim army before victory is finally attained.⁹ There are also indications in Shī'ī narrations of large numbers of the enemy being killed.¹⁰

So the question that arises is: what are we to make of these similarities? A comparative analysis of end times prophecy in the Abrahamic traditions reveals many common features, which is not at all surprising given that the source of all the scriptures of these faiths is the same - divine revelation. By building on the commonalities using the idea of a “transcendent *tawātur*,” we can attain a level of certainty regarding the veracity of the prophecy about a final apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil. The use of a *tawātur* that transcends the boundaries of faith to include reports that have been transmitted in other religious traditions is a new approach (based on an old, established concept) that has many other potential benefits.

⁹ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Muttafiq wal-Muftariq*, vol. 1, p. 206.

¹⁰ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, pp. 134, 146, 157.

Exploring the sources of different and frequently competing religious traditions to find common ground is a laudable endeavour in itself and has the capacity to bring about much needed interfaith understanding.

Definitions of *Tawātur*

The earliest lexicographers defined the term *tawātur* as ‘sequential succession’,¹¹ ‘persistence and continuity’,¹² ‘transmission of information through a linked chain of informants, one after another’,¹³ ‘gaps in action or progression’¹⁴ or a combination of these.¹⁵ This constitutes the lexical (*luġhawī*) definition of the term which is not the same as its technical definition. The technical definition of *tawātur*, when applied to reports or narrations, is: the relaying of a piece of information by a group that is so large (and varied) that it precludes the possibility of their colluding to forge or fabricate the information; this therefore leads to certainty about the veracity of that information.¹⁶ Reports and traditions of the infallibles that have been transmitted with *tawātur* are known as *mutawātir*, while those that do not meet the criteria of such traditions are known as *āḥād* (solitary narrations). The latter category makes up the bulk of the traditions in the ḥadīth corpus and are of a weaker epistemic value than the *mutawātir* traditions.

The idea of *tawātur* itself is not strictly Islamic. In fact, it has roots in ancient Greek empiricism.¹⁷ Since it is based solely on a rational premise, there is no religious component that could limit it. It is entirely intuitive to accept that corroboration from multiple different sources enhances the epistemic value of a report to the point of certainty. So for

¹¹ Al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, vol. 8, p. 188.

¹² Al-Harawī, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 4, p. 25.

¹³ Al-Azharī, *Tabdhīb al-Luġha*, vol. 14, p. 223.

¹⁴ Al-Ṣāḥīb ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Luġha*, vol. 9, p. 455.

¹⁵ Al-Jawharī, *Tāj al-Luġha wa Ṣiḥāḥ al-ʿArabīyyah*, vol. 2, p. 843.

¹⁶ Al-Māmqaṇī, *Miqbās al-Hidāyah fī ʿIlm al-Dirāyah*, vol. 1, p. 80.

¹⁷ Van Den Bergh, *Averroes’ Tabafut al-Tabafut*, vol. 1, p. 16 (notes).

example, if we say that there was a historical figure known as Jesus or Muḥammad and base our certainty of this on the numerous concurrent reports about the existence of these two individuals, no rational individual would deny this fact. Hence, we note that even in courts of ‘secular’ law, corroboration of evidence is necessary for criminal convictions. When it comes to religious beliefs, use of corroboration to justify faith can be seen in the works of figures such as Francis Bacon (d. 1626), Descartes (d. 1650) and Joseph Butler (d. 1752) among others.¹⁸

In the Muslim world, the idea of *tawātur* as an epistemological concept of corroborative knowledge that affords certainty was first propounded by the rationalist school of the Mu‘tazilah.¹⁹ Though the term *tawātur* occurs in many Islamic disciplines such as legal theory, theology, grammar and ḥadīth studies, its development commenced after passing through the hands of the classical theologians.²⁰ It was not until the 3rd century of the Hijra that the term *tawātur* came to be used among the ḥadīth scholars to describe multiple concurrent narrations that were numerous and of enough varied provenance as to give rise to certainty about their authenticity.²¹ The goal of each discipline in establishing *tawātur* is the attainment of evidence that is conclusive and *ḥujjah* (i.e. has authoritative probative value).

Muslim scholars realized from the beginning that unlike sense perception and reason, which lead to direct knowledge, narrated reports give rise only to indirect knowledge due to the presence of an intermediary between the report and the one receiving it. Hence, the reliability of the report depends on the reliability of the reporter (see:

¹⁸ See: Abū Zayd, “*Tawātur al-Ḥadīth bi ‘Uyūn Gharbiyyah*,” pp. 135–63.

¹⁹ Hansu, “Notes on the Term Mutawātir and its Reception in Ḥadīth Criticism”, p. 384.

²⁰ See: Laher, “Twisted Threads: Genesis, Development and Application of the Term and Concept of Tawatur in Islamic Thought”.

²¹ The famous Sunnī ḥadīth compilers Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.) and Muslim (d. 261 A.H.) both consider some traditions to be of this category.

Q49:6). *Tawātur* was a means by which narrated reports could attain the highest truth-value and provide necessarily unassailable knowledge. The reports that are classified as *mutawātir*, by their very nature, do not need to go through the rigorous process of verification that the solitary (*āḥād*) reports do, where each narrator is subjected to scrutiny in order to establish his (or her) reliability. It is for this reason that, unlike reports that are considered *mutawātir*, *āḥād* reports are said to provide only conjectural knowledge until further evidence is provided to corroborate them.

Since the strength of legal rulings in Islam depends on the authenticity of the narrations upon which they are based, legal theorists also expressed interest in the classification of narrations based on their epistemic value. Due to its practical implications in the fields of theology and legal theory, *tawātur* was propounded, discussed and applied in these fields before it ever entered into the realm of actual ḥadīth studies.²² When a narration is transmitted by a sufficiently large number of transmitters such that it would have been impossible for them to collude in a lie, that narration is deemed *mutawātir*. However, this is not the only condition required for *tawātur*. For a narration to be considered *mutawātir*, the following conditions must all be realized:

- (i) The narrators of the report should be so many that it would be impossible for them to have colluded in fabricating a lie.
- (ii) The previous condition must obtain in every tier (*ṭabaqah*) of narrators.
- (iii) Each narrator should have certainty about what he (or she) is narrating, and should not be basing it on conjecture.
- (iv) The certainty of each narrator should be based on knowledge attained through sense perception, not rationalization i.e. they must have seen or heard first-hand

²² Hansu, “Notes on the Term Mutawātir and its Reception in Ḥadīth Criticism”, p. 390.

what they are reporting.²³

On the question of the specific minimum number of narrators required (in each tier) for a report to be considered *mutawātir*, there has been a lot of discussion and no consensus exists. Some scholars came up with exact numbers of the minimum required narrators such as five, twelve, twenty, forty, seventy or three hundred and thirteen.²⁴ In his dissertation on *tawātur*, Suheil Laher argues that the number of minimum transmitters required for a report to be deemed *mutawātir* varies according to the type of report. If a report is less believable, it requires a larger group of reporters for it to be deemed *mutawātir* whereas more easily believable reports require a smaller number of narrators to bring about the certitude that *tawātur* does.²⁵ In any case, without a fixed standard that is agreed upon by the majority, there is always room for difference of opinion regarding whether a report is actually *mutawātir* or not. Unless, of course, the number is so great that nobody would challenge its *tawātur* status (like the case of the five daily prayers or going to Makka for pilgrimage, for example).

One of the other questions upon which scholars disagree is whether any *mutawātir* traditions actually exist in the ḥadīth corpus. Some early scholars, like the 4th century ḥadīth expert Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 A.H.), state categorically that all the traditions in the ḥadīth corpus are *āḥād* since there are no reports from more than two reliable transmitters in all tiers going back to the Prophet.²⁶ Later scholars also echoed this in their works, claiming that in actuality, there are no *mutawātir* reports in the corpus of ḥadīth, or if they do exist, they are very rare. It is in all likelihood for this very reason that ḥadīth scholars never really paid attention to the term *tawātur* until much later. It was only around the

²³ Al-Māmqānī, *Miqbās al-Hidāyah fī ʿIlm al-Dirāyah*, pp. 96–97.

²⁴ Hallaq, “Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem”, p. 79.

²⁵ Laher, “Twisted Threads...”, Introduction.

²⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *al-Iḥsān fī Taqrīb Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, vol. 1, p. 156.

9th century that the term became part of the technical jargon of ḥadīth experts.²⁷

The scholars who argue for the presence of *mutawātir* reports in the ḥadīth corpus do so on the basis of a *tawātur* founded on meanings rather than words. While it is true that it is almost impossible to find any *mutawātir* tradition relayed by the required number of transmitters, where each has transmitted the exact same verbatim tradition from an Infallible (also known as *tawātur lafẓī*), it is not as difficult to identify such concurrently transmitted reports where only the content and meaning are the same (*tawātur ma'nawī*). Even in real world scenarios, it is uncommon to have the same report relayed by different channels using the exact same wording. News reports about the same events are presented using different wordings, structures and syntax. Some go into more detail whereas others are brief. This is also the case with early and medieval historians who wrote historical accounts of the same event using different descriptions and expressions. Therefore, to expect verbatim *mutawātir* reports is actually asking for something that is beyond the norm of human behaviour. The only text that has been relayed in such a manner is the Qur'an itself.²⁸

Reports that fall under the category of *tawātur ma'nawī* also yield necessary knowledge of the common shared meaning, excepting those details which are transmitted only in some of the reports. For example, the Nazi Holocaust is an event that took place and cannot be denied since there are too many corroborating reports about it. However, the precise details about the genocide such as the exact number of those killed, the degree of complicity of each Nazi soldier, etc. are not agreed upon. Hence, we may attain a degree of certainty that the event wherein a large group of Jews were killed did take place, but we cannot be certain about exact numbers or other such details. This is an example of *tawātur ma'nawī*. An example of this kind of *tawātur* from within the traditions

²⁷ 'Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fi 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 405.

²⁸ Şūbhī Şālih, *Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalahih 'Arḍun wa Dirāsah*, p. 148.

is the ḥadīth of Ghadīr, which has been narrated so widely and from so many sources, both Shī'ah and Sunnī, that it is undoubtedly *mutawātir*. However, some details regarding it such as the number of people present at Ghadīr Khum, the exact wording of the Prophet's sermon, etc. differ and as such the tradition would be considered as *mutawātir mā'nawī*, that is to say, we are sure that the Prophet (ṣ) delivered a sermon at Ghadīr Khum wherein he proclaimed his cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) to be his successor, but we cannot be certain about all the details pertaining to the event.

Some Muslim scholars have attempted to compile a list of *mutawātir* traditions. In his *al-Azhār al-Mutanāthira*, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 A.H.) collected 112 traditions that he considered to be *mutawātir* and al-Kattānī (d. 1328 A.H.) went a step forward and managed to collect 310 such traditions. Due to the existence of very few *mutawātir* reports, some Orientalist scholars have actually argued that the whole idea of *tawātur* in transmission of ḥadīth is otiose. G. H. A. Juynboll states, for example, that the entire phenomenon of *tawātur* is dead.²⁹ Yet the "discovery" made by Juynboll is not new at all. As mentioned previously, scholars such as Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Ṣalāḥ *et al.* have all maintained that there are no *mutawātir* traditions with identical wording. However, it seems that unlike these scholars, Juynboll neglects to consider the traditions, however few they may be, that have been narrated with identical meanings thereby giving rise to *tawātur mā'nawī*.

Can *Tawātur* Transcend the Bounds of Faith?

It is quite interesting that, though the definition of *tawātur* itself contains no caveat regarding the religious persuasion of the narrators or 'informers', scholars tend to keep themselves restricted to their own

²⁹ Juynboll, "(Re)Appraisal of Some Technical Terms in Ḥadīth Science", p. 344.

sources and narrations in order to establish whether a tradition is *mutawātir* or not. Some even wrongly surmise that, just as in the case of singular or solitary narrations (*āḥād*), for *tawātur* to be established all the narrators have to be ‘reliable’ and ‘just’. This is not the case as these requirements are only for the acceptance and verification of solitary non-*mutawātir* narrations. For solitary reports, it is important to know the religious affiliation of every narrator and what school of thought they espouse. This is because biases are bound to creep into their narrations and even though Shī‘ah scholars accept traditions narrated by reliable Sunnī informants, the level of acceptability of such narrations (classified as *muwaththaq*) is lower than that of those that are narrated only by reliable Shī‘ah narrators (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Sunnī scholars do not even accept the traditions that are narrated by Shī‘ah informants and consider them to be heretics.

When it comes to *tawātur*, however, examining the beliefs of narrators becomes moot. This is because, by their very nature, *mutawātir* reports give rise to certainty and there is no room for doubt about their authenticity, regardless of the reliability or religious affiliation of the individual narrators. A good discussion on this very point has been presented by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Īrwānī in his treatise on establishing the veracity of the 12th Imam’s birth through analysis of the traditions we have in this regard. Al-Īrwānī, who is a well-established and renowned scholar in the religious seminaries of Najaf and Qum, categorically states that in *mutawātir* reports, it is not necessary that all the narrators be ‘reliable’ and ‘just’. He goes on to explain that this is because *mutawātir* reports give rise to certitude not because the narrators are reliable individuals, but because of the sheer number of unrelated narrators who have narrated the same thing, which precludes any possibility of their having come together to fabricate a lie. Hence, the reliability of narrators, or even their religious persuasion, has no bearing in this type of narration.³⁰

³⁰ Al-Īrwānī, *al-Imām al-Mabḍī Bayn al-Tawātur wa Ḥisāb al-Iḥtimālāt*, p. 14.

This means that even if the narrators are sinners or unbelievers, if the report relayed by them reaches the level of *tawātur*, it yields certainty. Hence the character of the individual narrators is of no concern because even if it might have been possible for each individual narrator to be mistaken or to have lied, it is not possible for all of them to have done so, especially when they had different opinions, goals and hailed from different regions in an era when communication was much more difficult than it is today.³¹ As such, we cannot help but ask the question: why is it that Muslim scholars have always limited their search for corroborating traditions, which might elevate any given tradition to the level of *tawātur*, to their own respective ḥadīth corpora? Why have they not tried to look for such corroboration in the traditions of other Muslim sects or even in the scriptures and traditions of non-Muslims?

If indeed the belief or background of the narrators is of no consequence in *mutawātir* reports, surely it would be worthwhile looking into the traditions reported by other Muslim and non-Muslim schools of thought to see if they have anything that can corroborate what is found within one's own traditions. Since in most real-world scenarios reports are not transmitted with the conditions of *tawātur*, their veracity cannot be affirmed apodictically but only in terms of probability. In order to check the probability of the veracity of non-*mutawātir* reports, one of the factors that is examined is the background and character of the narrator. If the person is honest and trustworthy, the probability of his report being accurate is much higher. Nevertheless, it will not yield certainty the way a concurrently narrated *mutawātir* report does. This is because even if a person is honest and reliable, he may have reason to lie or could have been mistaken in what he heard or witnessed. But when a large number of unrelated narrators report the same thing, they could not all have erred or fabricated the exact same lie.

³¹ Hansu, "Notes on the Term Mutawātir and its Reception in Ḥadīth Criticism", p. 402.

In the realm of beliefs and creedal matters in particular (as opposed to religious praxis), it is necessary to attain certainty, and one cannot truly be at ease believing in something that is only probable. Hence, scholars of all faiths always try to seek out the most reliable traditions in order to justify their beliefs. One cannot base his or her faith on traditions that are subject to mendacity, error and falsification. This is where the concept of *tawātur* comes in. That is why it was the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) who first explicated the concept. Hishām ibn Ḥakam (d. 179 A.H.), a companion of the sixth Imam, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (a), was probably the earliest Shī‘ī theologian to propound the idea that when any information is corroborated through multiple channels, albeit from unbelievers, it yields certain knowledge.³² The Mu‘tazilī turned Shī‘ah scholar Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī (d. pre 317 A.H.) also used *tawātur* as an argument to prove the successive designations of the Shī‘ī Imams.³³

The use of *tawātur* as an argument was common in early polemical debates between Muslim sects as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims. Debates between early extremist (*ghulāt*) Shī‘īs and Mu‘tazilī Sunnīs on the integrity of the Qur’ān and the impossibility of distortion in its text hinged primarily on the idea of *tawātur*, with the latter emphasizing *tawātur* in the transmission of the sacred text of the Qur’ān and the former claiming *tawātur* of narrations that speak of alterations in the text.³⁴ As for interreligious debates, there is evidence that such debates were carried out from the early days of Islam.³⁵ These debates then increased during the early Abbasid era due to a number of factors that included curiosity and interest in erudition, rhetoric and debate on

³² Van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra*, vol. 1, p. 437.

³³ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi’ite Islam*, p. 221.

³⁴ See: Laher, “Twisted Threads...”, chapter 3.

³⁵ The work of the 6th century scholar Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Tabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj ‘alā Abl al-Lijāj*, chronicles such interreligious debates during the times of the Imams (a).

the part of some Abbasid caliphs like Ma'mūn (d. 218 A.H.).³⁶ By the 5th century, interreligious debates between Muslims, Christians and Jews featured arguments related to the issue of *tawātur*. For example, Muslim scholars like al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 A.H.), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 A.H.) and Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415 A.H.) argued that unlike the Qur'ān, the Bible lacked *tawātur*.³⁷

Both Jews and Christians also resorted to the concept of *tawātur* to justify their claims and beliefs. In response to Muslim criticism of the Bible for example, Jewish scholars insisted that there were multiple transmissions of the Torah. If these were not enough to reach the level of *tawātur*, they said, it is only because of the frequent invasions and wars against ancient Israel which led to devastation that ultimately resulted in the broken transmissions of the holy text.³⁸ Having understood the proof-value of *tawātur*, some Jewish and Christian apologists also appealed to the concept of *tawātur* to argue for their own beliefs. In his *Kitāb al-Amānāt wal-Itiqādāt*, the Jewish philosopher Sādyā Gaon (d. 330 A.H.) states that wilful distortion cannot occur in a large and collective group since it would be impossible for them all to agree upon a lie.³⁹ In his discourse on acceptable traditions, Dāwūd ibn al-Muqammiṣ (d. 325 A.H.)⁴⁰ insists that a tradition must be transmitted by several individuals from different nations and in different languages for it to be acceptable. Sarah Stroumsa notes that

³⁶ Heidarynejad, "*Tabyīne Munāsibāt bayne Mamūn wa Mu'tazila*", pp. 113–24.

³⁷ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds – Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, p. 42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁹ Al-Fayyūmī, *Kitāb al-Amānāt wal-Itiqādāt*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ Dāwūd ibn al-Muqammiṣ, who is considered to be the first Jewish philosopher to leave identifiable written works, was influenced by Christianity to such an extent that he converted to the Christian faith for some time before finally reverting to Judaism. See: Daniel J. Lasker, "Muqammiṣ, David Ibn Marwān Al-," October 1, 2010, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/muqammiṣ-david-ibn-marwan-al-SIM_0016080.

this was a “typical Christian requirement.”⁴¹

Other examples of Christian scholars emphasizing the value of a large number of witnesses also exist. John of Damascus (d. 132 A.H.) insisted that the main events mentioned in the Bible, such as the giving of laws to Moses, have been transmitted by more witnesses than what has reached us about the experiences of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁴² The anonymous 8th century (A.H.) author of *The Letter from the People of Cyprus* argues against the distortion of the Bible using an argument based on *tawātur* and asks: how could a book written in so many languages and with thousands of extant copies have been distorted?⁴³ More recently, the British missionary William Temple Gairdner (d. 1928), in his paper on the comparison between ḥadīth and the Gospels, actually states that the message of the Gospels has indeed been transmitted by the process of *tawātur*.⁴⁴

Muslims do believe in the divine revelation of the Torah (*tawrāt*) and the Gospels (*injīl*), but this belief is based on the teachings of the Qurʾān, which is considered to be the most perfect example of a *mutawātir* text. Though the scriptures of other Abrahamic traditions were indeed revealed to divinely appointed messengers, Muslims believe that over time, they have been distorted intentionally or otherwise by the followers of the respective traditions. The level of distortion and whether any part of the scriptures of Jews and Christians may be deemed authoritative today is a matter of debate. As a general rule, however, anything that is related in the present-day Torah or Gospels that contradicts the teachings of the Qurʾān and authentic traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) is considered to be a distortion.

Since the idea that concurrent and successively transmitted reports

⁴¹ Stroumsa, “The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature”, p. 113.

⁴² Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The “Heresy of the Ishmaelites”*, p. 135.

⁴³ Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Gairdner, “Muhammedan Tradition and Gospel Record - The Hadith and the Injil”, p. 379.

yield certitude is purely rational, adherents of other faiths also used *tawātur*-based arguments in their polemical debates, as we have noted. Suheil Laher makes the case for what he terms “meta-*tawātur*” where a *tawātur*-like corroboration operates at the level of groups rather than just individuals. This would apply to those reports that different sects or schools of thought have related, for example.⁴⁵ What we propose goes a step further and actually transcends the bounds of religion – a ‘transcendent *tawātur*’. This would mean that reports that come to us from transmitters with different religious backgrounds can be brought together to form a *mutawātir* report if what they narrate and relate has the same meaning.

Theoretically, there is nothing “new” being proposed here. As noted earlier, the religious affiliation and character or background of individual transmitters is not important in *mutawātir* reports. Hence, we do not aim to shift any paradigms. Rather, what we propose is the actual application and classification of reports from without the Islamic tradition that support and echo what already exists within the tradition as coming together to form *tawātur*. As it currently stands, only the traditions that are narrated with numerous successive chains are considered *mutawātir*, without any consideration given to reports not included in the ḥadīth corpus, be they from within the Islamic tradition or from other traditions. Including reports from other sources and traditions may very possibly lead to the discovery of more *mutawātir* traditions and could change the way certain traditions are perceived and interpreted.

The idea of a transcendent *tawātur* (and also meta-*tawātur*) is further supported by the principle of the “testimony of the foe.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Laher, “Twisted Threads...”, chapter 1.

⁴⁶ This principle states: *al-faḍl mā shahīdat bihī al-aḍā’u* “merit is that to which even the enemies attest” and is based on the rational premise that when one’s enemy or opponent testifies to something in one’s favour, then the likelihood of it being true is much greater because there would be no other reason for one’s enemy to bear witness to something that was in his foe’s favour.

Actually, when opposing groups testify to the same thing or give identical reports, the likelihood of that report being factual is much higher. When both friend and foe attested to the merits of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), Shī‘ah scholars were quick to point out that this was something that could now not be denied. Similarly, the agreement of opposing factions of the Mu‘tazilah, Khawārij and Murji‘ah regarding the inerrancy of the text of the Qur‘ān, gives rise to certitude about its inerrancy. For an instance of transcendent *tawātur*, our subject of study would be a good example. Since the Abrahamic traditions all have reports that prophesize a final battle between the forces of good and evil during end times, it constitutes a *tawātur* that goes beyond the bounds of faith. Hence, we could say with a level of certainty that this prophecy about the apocalyptic battle is indeed true.

Potential Pitfalls of this Approach and How to Avoid them

Trying to arrive at certainty about the prophecy of the final apocalyptic battle by appealing to a transcendent *tawātur*, where the reports and narrations found within all the Abrahamic traditions are brought together and the common themes within them bolster each other, giving rise to *tawātur*, is a novel approach. While this approach has a number of benefits, such as the potential to open up new avenues for dialogue between adherents of different religions, gaining a deeper and more nuanced understanding of other religious traditions by studying their scriptures, dispelling misconceptions and false ideas about the “other,” etc., there are some possible pitfalls that need to be addressed and avoided.

The first potential problem that this method may lead to is disregarding the presence of “borrowed” material in the traditions. It is indisputable that there are some reports in the ḥadīth corpus that have Jewish or Christian origins. Early Orientalist scholars, noting the presence of material in the Qur‘ān that is similar to what is found in the

Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, even claimed that much of the Qurʾān had been sourced from these (and other) earlier scriptures. The *qiṣas al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets) genre was of particular interest to many of these scholars. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, individuals such as Petrus Alfonsi (d. 1140) and Ricoldus de Montecrucis (d. 1320) insisted that the Prophet Muḥammad had been influenced by Judaism and had sourced the Qurʾān and other teachings from Jewish scriptures.⁴⁷

Abraham Geiger's work published in 1833 titled *What did Muhammad borrow from Judaism?*⁴⁸ addresses this very question. Geiger considered Judaism to be the source of both Christianity and Islam, which he called its 'daughter' religions. As such, he insisted that due to its originality, only Judaism can truly lay claim to any spiritual authenticity.⁴⁹ Later, two Christian scholars, William St. Clair Tisdall (d. 1928) and Charles C. Torrey (d. 1956), also claimed that the teachings of Islam were a garbled form of biblical narrative.⁵⁰ Some medieval Christians went as far as to claim that Muḥammad himself was a renegade Christian or that the Muslims were actually a sect of Christians who had deviated from true Christianity due to external and cultural influences.⁵¹

Recent western scholarship on Islam and the Qurʾān has started leaning against this traditional Orientalist position. Marilyn Waldman's classic study, for example, argues that too much insistence on the derivative nature of the Qurʾān has prevented appreciation of the Qurʾān's uniqueness. By carrying out an in-depth comparative study of

⁴⁷ Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran: The Problem of the Jewish 'Influence' on Islam", p. 652.

⁴⁸ The original title in German is: *Was hat Mohamed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*

⁴⁹ Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran...", p. 649.

⁵⁰ Daneshgar and Saleh (Eds.), *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*, p. 168.

⁵¹ Johnson, "Muhammad and Ideology in Medieval Christian Literature", pp. 333–46.

the story of Joseph (Yūsuf) in the Qurʾān and the Bible, she has demonstrated that in many ways the literary aspect of the Qurʾān is far more developed.⁵² Angelika Neuwirth’s work on rhetorical and literary analysis of the Qurʾān also clearly shows the development of passages within the Qurʾān itself, thereby giving lie to the notion of mere copying from earlier scriptures.⁵³

Furthermore, the idea that “borrowing” was unilateral, from earlier traditions by later ones, has also been effectively disproven. Brannon Wheeler has shown that it was not always Islam or Christianity that “borrowed” from Judaism. Rather, at times the Jews “borrowed” from Islamic literature. He points out that the Qurʾānic story of Moses and the unnamed servant of God (often identified with Khidhr) was wrongly purported to be based on the midrashic story of Elija and Rabbi Joshua, when in reality the midrashic story itself is actually based on a Muslim exegesis that was appropriated by the 11th century Jewish scholar, Ibn Shāhīn.⁵⁴ In his later monograph, Wheeler further shows how other Qurʾānic stories about Moses found their way into Jewish literature.⁵⁵

Muslims believe that the Qurʾān is the word of God, and any similarity between the Qurʾān and other scriptures is simply due to the fact that those scriptures were also revealed by the Almighty. The Qurʾān itself attests to the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) was unlettered, lest the disbelievers claim that he had copied the revelation from other sources (Q29:48). However, a number of early Jewish converts to Islam did play a role in the infiltration of biblical material into the ḥadīth

⁵² Waldman, “New Approaches to ‘Biblical’ Materials in the Qurʾān”, pp. 1–13.

⁵³ Neuwirth, “Qurʾān, Crisis and Memory: The Qurʾānic Path towards Canonization as Reflected in the Anthropogenic Accounts,” in *Crisis and Memory in Islamic Societies*, pp. 113–52.

⁵⁴ Wheeler, “The Jewish Origins of Qurʾān 18:65-82? Re-examining Arent Jan Wensinck’s Theory”, pp. 153–71.

⁵⁵ Cf. Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Qurʾān and Islamic Exegesis*, Routledge Studies in the Qurʾān.

corpus. This extraneous material which found its way into Islamic literature is termed *isrāʿīliyyāt* and Muslim scholars have been aware and wary of this kind of material from the very beginning. Individuals such as Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, ʿAbdullāh ibn Salām and Wahb ibn Munabbih are known to have propagated some of the teachings of their previous Jewish faith among the Muslims.⁵⁶ The presence of *isrāʿīliyyāt* in ḥadīth literature gives one reason to question whether any tradition that matches the beliefs of Jews and Christians is actually an original Islamic tradition from the Prophet (ṣ) or one that had been fabricated by erstwhile Jews who attributed it to the Prophet after having entered the fold of Islam.

The second potential problem is that of the possibility of contradictions in reports that are considered to be *mutawātir* by adherents of different religious traditions. As a rule, since *tawātur* logically leads to certainty, there can be no room for two contradictory *mutawātir* reports as that would be tantamount to contradicting facts, which is logically impossible. However, due to a number of factors and biases, claims about *tawātur* at times lead to this very contradiction. For example, Muslims believe that the Qurʾān has been passed down through a process of *tawātur* while the scriptures of the Jews and Christians have not. The Qurʾān itself speaks of the distortion that has crept into the scriptures due to the fabrications and alterations made by certain unscrupulous rabbis and monks (see: Q4:46, Q5:13 & Q5:41 for example). Nevertheless, some Jewish (and Christian) scholars argue that the public revelation of the Torah to Moses at Mt. Sinai is ample evidence for its *tawātur*.⁵⁷

Another example of seemingly contradictory “*mutawātir*” reports are the Christian narratives of the crucifixion of Jesus and the Islamic accounts of the same. Muslims believe that someone else was crucified

⁵⁶ Tottoli, “Origin and Use of the Term Isrāʿīliyyāt in Muslim Literature”, pp. 193–210.

⁵⁷ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds – Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, p. 43.

in place of Jesus and the Qurʾān states: *And for their saying, “We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the apostle of Allah” though they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them (Q4:157)*. However, the claim that a large group of Christian reporters have narrated his crucifixion poses a problem, as it leads to what looks like a contradiction of two *mutawātir* reports. Muslim scholars have, over the ages, proposed a number of responses to this problem. The famous Muslim polymath Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505 A.H.) notes that even though a large group purportedly witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, they only saw someone resembling him on the cross and mistakenly thought it was Jesus who was crucified.⁵⁸ For al-Ghazzālī, this was a special case of divine intervention which does not impugn the validity of *tawātur* in any way. However, the renowned exegete Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 A.H.) begged to differ. Instead of the view that God intervened and intentionally ‘mised’ the people into thinking that it was Jesus on the cross, al-Rāzī questioned the *tawātur* of the Christian report itself. He stated that since the report ends with a small number of individuals, it is not *mutawātir* and could well have been fabricated.⁵⁹

The third potential problem that could arise with this approach is the assumption that the present-day Bible and Torah hold the same probative value as the Qurʾān, or that Jewish and Christian scriptures can be referred to by Muslims for any issue under the sun. While Islam recognizes the Old Testament prophets and even Jesus, the Messiah, as guides for humankind, it limits their scope to their respective peoples and periods. This, added to the alterations and distortions in the scriptures of these Abrahamic traditions, would give any Muslim pause, and it is probably for the same reason that scholars have not harkened to the possibility of a transcendent *tawātur*. However, this has not stopped scholars from referring to the Bible to find corroborating

⁵⁸ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mustafā fī Ilm al-Usūl*, vol. 1, p. 139.

⁵⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*, vol. 11, p. 261.

evidence (*qarā'in*) for what they have already gleaned from Islamic sources.

In order to avoid these potential pitfalls and problems that could arise with the approach of appealing to a transcendent *tawātur*, we propose a specific algorithm for its implementation. The algorithm involves a number of steps which, if followed correctly, would greatly reduce, if not do away with, all the aforementioned problems. The steps are:

- (1) Start off with a ḥadīth from the Shī'ī corpus that has a sound chain of transmission (*sanad/isnād*) and is not contradicted by any other sound ḥadīth from the same corpus. This ḥadīth should be such that there is no reason to suspect that it might be a fabrication, and it should not contain anything that is against the general teachings of the Qur'ān and Islam.
- (2) Search for similar narrations within the Shī'ah and Sunnī ḥadīth corpus, irrespective of the soundness of their chains of transmission.
- (3) Locate any verses of the Torah or the Bible that deal with the same subject and have a similar purport as the first ḥadīth.
- (4) Look for passages dealing with the subject in other authoritative Jewish and Christian literature.
- (5) Bring all the material together and look for what is common between them. Details that vary should be kept aside and only similar themes that are found in all the texts can then be said to form a transcendent *tawātur*.

Following this method will enable one to avoid the potential pitfalls because the starting point is a sound tradition which, though not necessarily giving rise to certainty itself, has probative value. Then, the next step is to build upon the foundation of that sound tradition by looking for any and all other traditions that support it from within and without the Shī'ī ḥadīth corpus. If material is found in other Abrahamic

religious traditions that support the first ḥadīth, an argument can be made for a transcendent *tawātur*. In this way, there would be no possibility of the common theme having been “borrowed” from the Abrahamic traditions to begin with, and we will also have safeguarded ourselves from the charge of considering the Jewish and Christian scriptures to be at par with the Qurʾān.

Conclusion

For Muslims, studying the scriptures and early sources of the Abrahamic traditions is something from which many positive outcomes may be derived. The Qurʾān states: *Say, “O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship none but God, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides God.” But if they turn away, say, “Be witnesses that we are Muslims”* (Q3:64). Hence Muslims are encouraged to look for terms that are common between themselves and the People of the Book as that is the best and most positive way to build bridges between the believing communities. Indeed, there is a lot in common between the Abrahamic faiths, such as ethical teachings, their monotheistic belief, etc. and by highlighting these commonalities, the adherents of these faiths can be brought closer.

The fact that in accordance with their nature, it is not possible for a large group of unrelated people to conspire to lie or remain silent about momentous events such as war, the assassination of a famous individual, etc. coupled with the paucity of extant early sources that have managed to survive thought the ages, leads us to appreciate the idea of appealing to a *tawātur* that extends beyond the bounds of a single faith-based tradition. This kind of “transcendent *tawātur*” has some potential pitfalls; however, these may be mitigated or alleviated by following a specific algorithm when deriving this kind of *tawātur*. In the end, the similar reports that have been narrated by different, and at

times rival, traditions serve only to bolster one another and give rise to certainty about their overall veracity – as in the case of the prophecy of a global, apocalyptic, end of days battle.

4

A STUDY OF THE NARRATIONS ABOUT THE GREAT BATTLE DURING THE END TIMES

The doctrine of a final saviour of humanity, known as the “Mahdī” in Islam, is reflected even in non-Abrahamic traditions, though it finds greater meaning and significance in the Abrahamic religions. This goes to show, as we shall demonstrate, that the actual doctrine of a messianic saviour is based on strong evidence, even if many of the details pertaining to his appearance or reappearance may have gradually developed at later stages in history. The name *Mahdī* literally means “the rightly guided one.” God guides him so that he can carry out his salvific mission to rid mankind of all corruption and injustice. Though the term Mahdī does not appear in the Qur’ān, there are at least 315 instances in it of derivations from the same root: *h-d-y*.

The term *malāḥim* is often used to refer to eschatological events before and immediately after the rise of the Mahdī. *Malāḥim* is the plural of *malḥamah*, which is an event wherein a great number of individuals are killed.¹ Some lexicographers say it refers specifically to the massacre that will take place during the *fitna* (a term which, when used in the eschatological context, refers to the upheaval of the End of Days).² Commentators of ḥadīth, however, have specifically defined this term as the apocalyptic battles and wars that will be fought during end times.³

The traditions that have reached us regarding this apocalyptic encounter between the forces of good and evil refer to the battle as *al-*

¹ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 4, p. 147.

² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 12, 537.

³ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj: Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn al-Hajjāj*, vol. 16, p. 78.

malḥamah al-kubrā or *al-malḥamah al-ʿuẓmā*, where both terms signify the superlative sense of greatness, meaning that this will be the battle to dwarf all other battles, which is appropriate given that it will be the final battle in which evil will be completely vanquished. The side of good will be led by the Mahdī, who will initially have three hundred and thirteen companions (*aṣḥāb*) but will later be joined by thousands of supporters (*anṣār*).⁴ There are many other end times figures mentioned in the traditions including Prophet ʿĪsā (a), the Dajjāl, the Sufyānī, the Yamānī and the Khurāsānī. Each of these figures is portrayed as playing a role either before, during or after the apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil, as we shall see in this chapter.

Even though all Muslims believe in the concept of the Mahdī, he is deemed a central figure in Shīʿī theology as he is the last of the infallible Imams and the avenger of the injustices faced by the family of the Prophet at the hands of the enemies. Yet, as attested by some well-respected Shīʿī scholars, the concept of the final awaited saviour predates the religion of Islam itself.⁵ This does not mean that it is a borrowed or fabricated concept as many sceptics and Orientalists would have us believe.⁶ Rather, it means that the promise of an end times saviour is found even in earlier revelations like the Torah and the New Testament. The importance of belief in the Mahdī in Shīʿism is further confirmed by the numerous supplications in which believers pray for the quick return of the Imam of the Age (*ṣāhib al-zamān*), one of the commonly

⁴ Tāj al-Dīn, *Al-Majālis al-Mahdawiyya*, p. 240.

⁵ Al-Ṣadr, *Baḥṭh Hawl al-Mahdī*, p. 8.

⁶ For example, D. S. Margoliouth asserts that the whole concept of a ‘deliverer’ must have found its way into Islam from Judaism and Christianity, particularly in the period of strife (*fiṭna*). He further claims that the first person to use the term “Mahdi” was Mukhtār al-Thaqafī when he addressed Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah with this title in order to further his own political ambitions. (Cf. Margoliouth, *On Mahdis and Mahdism*, pp. 1-21). Other Orientalists with similar views include J. Darmesteter (Cf. *The Mahdi, Past and Present*) and Goldziher (Cf. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*).

used titles of the Mahdī.

Though the Sunnīs and Shīʿahs differ regarding the identity of the Mahdī and whether he has been born or will be born in the future, with the Sunnīs claiming the latter, the concept of the Mahdī as the end times saviour is generally agreed upon. Furthermore, both Sunnī and Shīʿī sources say that he will rise with ‘the sword’, meaning that he will take up arms and fight the enemy. Finally, the sources of both schools also speak of a battle to end all battles – a final encounter between the forces of good and evil – after which the victorious believers will inherit the earth and live in peace and harmony under the leadership of the Mahdī. Hence, we find that even though there are some differences regarding the details, the general belief in the coming of the Mahdī is held by all Muslims.

Nevertheless, as always, there some exceptions to the rule. Some Sunnī scholars have questioned and even denied the traditions that prophesize the rise of the Mahdī. This was possible since, unlike the Shīʿahs, the Sunnīs do not consider belief in the Mahdī to be a fundamental principle of faith.⁷ Therefore, we find some renowned Sunnī scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Khaldūn expressing strong reservations about the authenticity of the ‘Mahdī traditions’.⁸ Some modern scholars also deny the very existence of the Mahdī, claiming him to be nothing more than a mythical figure whose story is an embellished version of Judeo-Christian prophecy.⁹

Since Muslims were always aware of the prophecies regarding the Mahdī, the rulers and would-be rulers would at times take advantage of the hope of the masses by fabricating traditions or misinterpreting existing traditions to legitimize their rule. A good example of this was what the Abbasids did when they sought to overthrow the Umayyads

⁷ Saritoprak, “The Mahdī Tradition in Islam: A Social-Cognitive Approach,” p. 656.

⁸ Dawānī, “*Mawʿūdī ke Jahān dar Intezāre Ūst*,” pp. 63–64.

⁹ See for example: al-Khaṭīb, *Al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar wa Man Yantazirūnah*, pp. 14, 82, 112.

and soon after they came to power. Aside from manufacturing traditions to the effect that the Mahdī will be from the progeny of al-‘Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ), they also gave many of their caliphs the title ‘al-Mahdī’.¹⁰ The first two Abbasid caliphs, al-Saffāḥ (d. 131 A.H.) and al-Manṣūr (d. 158 A.H.) were both addressed by this title, and the latter even named his son al-Mahdī, hoping that people would accept him as the awaited Mahdī.¹¹

In trying to understand the philosophy behind the rise of the Mahdī, which had been prophesied by none other than the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself, one need only see how this prophecy gave hope to Muslims, generation after generation, as they suffered from different forms of hardship and tribulation. The famous Prophetic tradition which states that God will send a man from his progeny to establish justice and rid the world of evil, even if there is but a single day remaining of this world, is a clear message of hope.¹² The traditions that describe the harmony and felicity that will exist under the Mahdī’s rule only enhance this hope. We are told, for example, that during his reign, money and wealth will be so abundant that it will be disbursed without counting.¹³

Interestingly, though Muslim philosophers have mulled over the question of the afterlife in terms of what form it will take, whether it will be physical or spiritual, how human beings will be resurrected, etc. they have not delved into the philosophy of the rise of the Mahdī. However, some of the philosopher-mystics have spoken about the Mahdī in their discourses. The famous Andalusian mystic, Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 637 A.H.), discusses the rise of the Mahdī in his works and mentions the Great War that will take place. He even seems to have had a vision

¹⁰ See: Mannā’ī and Ma‘ārif, “*Barrasiye Ahādīthe Intesābe Mahdiyye Maw‘ūd be ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib dar Manābi‘ Able Sunnat,*” (1437 A.H.).

¹¹ Saritoprak, “The Mahdī Tradition in Islam: A Social-Cognitive Approach,” p. 661.

¹² Ibid, p. 658.

¹³ Ibid.

regarding the length of the Mahdī's reign and the number of his helpers but does not reveal the details.¹⁴

In order to understand where the concept of the Mahdī derives, we need to go back to the primary sources, i.e. the Qur'an and the traditions (*ahādīth*). Upon examination, it will be seen that there is indeed a Qur'anic basis for the belief in the Mahdī, who, despite not being mentioned explicitly in the holy book, has been referred to implicitly in numerous verses. As for the ḥadīth corpus, the most authentic collections of both the Sunnī and Shī'ī traditions mention the rise of the Mahdī. Some have even devoted entire chapters to the phenomenon.¹⁵ While it is beyond the scope of this article to examine each and every tradition, we have selected some of the most authentic and relied upon traditions that show that the Mahdī will rise during end times and will fight against the forces of evil and corruption.

The advent of the Mahdī as the redeemer who will come to rid the world of all injustice and tyranny has been referred to implicitly in many verses of the Glorious Qur'an.¹⁶ For instance, there are a number of verses which state that Islam will one day dominate all other religions, such as:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ
 الْمُشْرِكُونَ

It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth,

¹⁴ Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. 3, p. 329.

¹⁵ Abū Dāwūd has a chapter titled: "Kitāb al-Mahdī" (The Chapter Concerning the Mahdī) in his compendium, for example.

¹⁶ It is not the case, as Sachedina claims in his *Islamic Messianism* (p. 3), that the concept of salvation in the Qur'an had never envisaged the rise of a redeemer at the end times and that the concept of the Mahdī was only the result of personal hope and devotion on the part of the faithful. Rather, numerous verses in the Qur'an are such that they cannot be interpreted to mean anything other than the eventual rise of the Mahdī (atf).

that He may make it prevail over all religions, however much the polytheists may be averse.

(Q9:33 and Q61:9)

Many Shī'ī commentaries say that this verse refers to the rise of the awaited Mahdī,¹⁷ and among the Sunnī exegetes, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 A.H.) comments regarding this verse that some Companions have narrated that it refers to the time when Prophet 'Īsā (a) will come, followed by the Mahdī.¹⁸ Other verses of the Qur'ān tell us that the righteous shall inherit the earth:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

And We desired to show favour to those who were abused in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the heirs.

(Q28:5)

There are many other Qur'ānic verses that exegetes have related to the advent and rise of the Mahdī; suffice it to say that there is an undeniable Qur'ānic basis for the belief in the Mahdī and his advent, which will lead to the eradication of all evil, tyranny and injustice from the world.

THE FINAL BATTLE IN SUNNĪ TRADITIONS

When we turn to the *ahādīth*, we find that Sunnī traditions have some interesting descriptions of the final battle at the End of Days. All the traditions we mention below have been classified as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) or good (*ḥasan*) by ḥadīth scholars, although some scholars have offered different opinions regarding the grading of these traditions in certain cases. Furthermore, they are found in the most reliable sources of Sunnī ḥadīth, such as the six canonical works (*al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sittah*) and the

¹⁷ See for instance: Al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 1, p. 289.

¹⁸ Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8, p. 122.

earliest available works that discuss the subject of the end times tribulations, such as the book *al-Fitan* by Nu‘āym ibn Ḥammād (d. 229 A.H.).

1) The Betrayal of the Romans

The great final battle between the forces of good and evil is portrayed in some Sunnī traditions as being a war between Islam and the West, or, more precisely, between Muslims and Romans. These traditions include:

[١] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا روح، حدّثنا الأوزاعي، عن حسان بن عطية، عن خالد بن معدان، عن ذي مخمر: رجل من أصحاب النبي ﷺ، قال: سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: ستصالحكم الروم صلحاً آمناً، ثم تغزون وهم عدواً، فتصرون وتسلمون وتغنمون، ثم تنصرفون حتى تنزلوا بمرج ذي تلول، فيرفع رجل من النصرانية صليباً فيقول: غلب الصليب، فيغضب رجل من المسلمين، فيقوم إليه فيدقّه، فعند ذلك يغدر الروم ويجمعون للملحمة.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reported: Rawḥ narrated to us that al-Awzā‘ī narrated from Ḥassān ibn ‘Atiyyah, from Khālīd ibn Ma‘dān, from Dhī Mikḥmar that one of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) say: “You will surely make peace with the Romans, and then you will join forces with them to fight an enemy. You will attain victory, overcome the enemy and gain the spoils of war. Then you shall proceed until you arrive at the hilly grasslands,¹⁹ whereat one of the Christians will raise a cross and say, “The Cross is

¹⁹ *Marj dhī talūl* is the description of an unspecified location. Though some have speculated on where exactly it is, no evidence has been produced for such speculations.

victorious!” Upon hearing this, one of the Muslims will get enraged. He will stand up and strike him with a blow. When this happens, the Romans will betray the Muslims and gather for the final [apocalyptic] encounter.”²⁰

[٢] قال البخاري: حدّثنا الحميدي، حدّثنا الوليد بن مسلم، حدّثنا عبد الله بن العلاء بن زبير، قال: سمعت بسر بن عبيد الله، أنّه سمع أبا إدريس، قال: سمعت عوف بن مالك، قال: «أتيت النبي ﷺ في غزوة تبوك، وهو في قبّة من آدم، فقال: اعدد ستّاً بين يدي الساعة: موتي، ثمّ فتح بيت المقدس، ثمّ موتان يأخذ فيكم كقعاص الغنم، ثمّ استفاضة المال حتّى يعطى الرجل مائة دينارٍ فيظللّ ساخطاً، ثمّ فتنة لا يبقى بيت من العرب إلا دخلته، ثمّ هدنة تكون بينكم وبين بني الأصفر، فيغدرون، فيأتونكم تحت ثمانين غايّةً، تحت كلّ غايّة اثنا عشر ألفاً».

Al-Bukhārī said: al-Ḥumaydī narrated to us, from al-Walīd ibn Muslim, from ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Alā’ ibn Zabīr who said that he heard Busr ibn ‘Ubaydillāh who heard Abā Idrīs, who in turn heard ‘Awf ibn Mālik say: “I went to the Prophet (ﷺ) during the Expedition of Tabūk, while he was sitting in a leather tent. He said, ‘Count six things as signs that indicate the approach of the Hour: my death, the conquest of Jerusalem, a plague that will afflict you (and cause you to die in large numbers) like the plague that afflicts sheep, increase in wealth to such an extent that even if one is given a hundred gold coins, he will not be satisfied; then an affliction which no Arab house will escape, and then a truce between you and Banī al-Aṣfar (lit. the *yellow folk*) who will betray you and attack you under eighty flags – with twelve thousand

²⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 28, p. 31.

soldiers under each flag.”²¹

[٣] قال الخطيب البغدادي: أخبرنا الحسن بن أبي بكر، قال أخبرنا أحمد بن محمد ابن عبد الله القطان، قال حدثنا محمد بن غالب بن حرب، قال وذكر أحمد بن حاتم، عن إبراهيم بن يزيد البصري، عن ابن عون، عن ابن سيرين، عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «تجيش الروم على والٍ من عترتي اسمه يواطىء اسمي فيقبلون بمكانٍ يقال له العمّاق فيقتلون فيقتل من المسلمين الثلث أو نحو ذلك، ثمّ يقتلون يوماً آخر فيقتل من المسلمين نحو ذلك، ثمّ يقتلون اليوم الثالث فتكون على الروم، فلا يزالون حتى يفتتحوا القسطنطينية بينما هم يقسمون فيها بالأترسة إذ أتاهم صارخ أنّ الدجال قد خلفكم في ذراركم».

Al-Khātib al-Baghdādī reports from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Bakr, who narrated from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Qaṭṭān, from Muḥammad ibn Ghālīb ibn Ḥarb, from Aḥmad ibn Ḥātim, from Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Baṣrī, from Ibn ‘Aun, from Ibn Sīrīn, from Abū Hurayrah who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘Rome will gather an army against a ruler from my progeny whose name will be similar to my name. They will proceed towards a place known as al-‘Ammāq where about one-third of the Muslims will be killed. Then they will fight on another day and a similar number of Muslims will be killed. Then they (i.e. the Muslims) will fight on a third day and will overpower the Romans. They will then continue until they have conquered Constantinople. Then, just as they are dividing the spoils, a crier will come to them and proclaim: the Dajjāl has taken your place

²¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 5, p. 251.

among your progeny!”²²

[٤] قال عبد الرزّاق: أخبرنا معمر عن ابن أبي ذئبٍ عن سعيد المقبري قال: قال أبو هريرة: لا تذهب الليالي والأيام حتى يغزو العادي روميّة، فيقفل إلى القسطنطينيّة، فيرى أن قد فعل، ولا تقوم الساعة حتى يسوق الناس رجل من قحطان.

‘Abd al-Razzāq reported from Ma‘mar, from Ibn Abī Dhi‘b, from Sa‘īd al-Maqbarī, from Abū Hurayrah who said, “The nights and days will not come to an end until the Muslims have battled the Romans. Then they will turn to Constantinople and it too will be seen conquered. And the Hour will not come to pass until a man from Qaḥṭān leads the people.”²³

[٥] قال مسلم بن الحجاج: حدّثنا قتيبة بن سعيد، حدّثنا جرير عن عبد الملك بن عمير، عن جابر بن سمرة، عن نافع بن عتبة قال: كنّا مع رسول الله ﷺ في غزوة. قال: فأتى النبي ﷺ قوم من قبل المغرب، عليهم ثياب الصوف، فوافقوه عند أكمة. فإنهم لقيام ورسول الله ﷺ قاعد. قال: فقالت لي نفسي: ائتهم فقم بينهم وبينه لا يغالونه. قال: ثمّ قلت: لعلّه نجى معهم. فأتيتهم فقم بينهم وبينه. قال: فحفظت منه أربع كلماتٍ أعدّهنّ في يدي. قال «تغزون جزيرة العرب، فيفتحها الله ثمّ فارس، فيفتحها الله ثمّ تغزون الروم، فيفتحها الله ثمّ تغزون الدجال، فيفتحه الله». قال: فقال نافع: يا جابر! لا نرى الدجال يخرج حتى تفتح الروم.

²² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Muttafiq wal-Muftariq*, vol. 1, p. 206.

²³ Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Muṣannaḥ ‘Abd al-Razzāq*, vol. 11, p. 388.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj reports that Qutaybah ibn Saʿīd narrated from Jarīr, from ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr, from Jābir ibn Samurah, from Nāfiʿ ibn ʿUtbaḥ who said, “We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in an expedition when a group of people came to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) from a region in the west. They were dressed in woollen garments and they approached him near a hillock. When they met him, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was sitting, while they were standing. I said to myself: ‘Better go to them and stand between him and them, so that they may not attack him.’ Then I thought that perhaps there might be some secret discussion between them. Nevertheless, I went to them and stood between him and them, and I memorized four statements [spoken by the Prophet (ﷺ) on that occasion] which I can recount clearly. He (ﷺ) said, ‘You will push against the Arabian Peninsula and Allah will enable you to conquer it; then you will campaign against Persia and He will make you conquer it. Then you shall attack Rome and Allah will enable you to conquer it; then you will fight the Dajjāl and Allah will enable you to vanquish him.’” Nāfiʿ said, “O Jābir, we will not witness the emergence of al-Dajjāl until Rome has been conquered.”²⁴

Appraisal:

The “Romans” mentioned in these traditions are understood to refer to various probable entities. From the descriptions given, the term obviously does not refer to those who hail from the present day Italian city of Rome. Rather, the more plausible interpretation would be that it is a term that symbolizes the western superpower of the day²⁵ – just as the Byzantines²⁶ were the western superpower at the time of the

²⁴ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 2225.

²⁵ Ṭayy, *al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar Bayn al-Dīn wal-Fikr al-Basharī*, p. 184.

²⁶ Even though the Western Roman Empire had fallen in the 5th Century, the Eastern Empire (Byzantines) continued to identify themselves as Romans.

Prophet (ﷺ). Of course, some scholars have offered other interpretations, such as the Trinidadian shaykh Imran Hosein, who insists that it refers to the Russians.²⁷

The Romans are described as being the staunchest enemies of the Muslims who will finally be defeated by the latter when the Hour comes.²⁸ The enmity between the Romans and Muslims started right from the nascent period of Islam, when they fought two battles at Mūta and Tabūk. This is probably the reason they are described as being those who are farthest from Islam and least likely to ever accept Islam and the Muslims.²⁹ As the Hour approaches, the Romans will be very strong and will have the largest population and army. They will be seemingly invincible and will hypocritically propagate humanistic ideals such that people will assume them to be the most caring and compassionate of all people.³⁰

The third tradition clearly identifies the Mahdī as the leader of the Muslim army that will fight in the final apocalyptic battle against the Romans. He is an individual from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) whose name will be the same as that of the Prophet, i.e. Muḥammad. The Shīʿahs believe that the twelfth Imam, who is currently in occultation, bears this name and even those in the Sunnī world who, at one time or another in history, claimed to be the awaited Mahdī, used the same name or title as the Prophet (ﷺ) in order to enhance their standing and conform to the description given by the Prophet himself.

The first tradition above describes how the actual war will commence and how the treaty between the Romans and the Muslims will be broken. The second tradition gives some indication of the same, terming the cause “a betrayal” by the Romans. Therefore we can deduce

²⁷ “When Would the Muslims Make an Alliance with Rum, Is Rum the Rome in Italy?” <http://www.imranhosein.org/faq/28-muslim-village/326-rum-rome.html>.

²⁸ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 29, p. 551.

²⁹ Al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Usāmah, *Bughyat al-Bāḥith ‘an Zawāʿid Musnad al-Ḥārith*, vol. 2, p. 670.

³⁰ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 2222.

from these two traditions that it is the Romans who will vitiate the truce with the Muslims, which will then result in an apocalyptic battle between the two sides. The number of soldiers mentioned in the Roman army will be close to a million, and if we assume that the Muslim army will be equally large, then the scale of the war will surely be apocalyptic.

The last two traditions inform us of the expected chronology of events, with the battle against the Romans preceding the conquest of Constantinople, which is then followed by the emergence of the Dajjāl. Therefore, the final victory of the Muslims will not be achieved by merely defeating the Romans; rather, it is only when the Dajjāl is ultimately vanquished and killed that a complete and final victory shall be achieved. It is then that the reign of justice and equity under the Mahdī will pervade all the lands of the world.

2) The Conquest of Constantinople as a Precursor to Armageddon

[١] قال ابن ماجه: حدّثنا هشام بن عمّار، قال: حدّثنا الوليد بن مسلم وإسماعيل بن عيّاش، قالوا: حدّثنا أبو بكر بن أبي مریم، عن الوليد بن سفيان بن أبي مریم، عن يزيد بن قطيب السكوني - وقال الوليد: يزيد بن قطبة - عن أبي بحريّة، عن معاذ بن جبل، عن النبي ﷺ، قال: «الملحمة الكبرى وفتح القسطنطينة وخروج الدجال، في سبعة أشهر».

Ibn Mājah reports from Hishām ibn ‘Ammār, who narrated that al-Walīd ibn Muslim and Ismā‘il ibn ‘Ayyāsh said that Abū Bakr ibn Abī Maryam reported from al-Walīd ibn Sufyān ibn Abī Maryam, from Yazīd ibn Quṭayb al-Sakūnī (but al-Walīd said it was Yazīd ibn Quṭbah), from Abū Baḥriyyah, from Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) who said, “The great battle, the conquest of Constantinople and the coming of the Dajjāl will all take place within a span of seven

months.”³¹

[٢] قال أبو داود: حدّثنا حيوة بن شريح، حدّثنا بقيّة، حدّثني بحير بن سعد، عن خالد بن معدان، عن ابن أبي بلال، عن عبد الله بن بسر، أنّ رسول الله ﷺ قال: «بين الملحمة وفتح المدينة ستّ سنين، ويخرج مسيح الدجال في السابعة».

Abū Dāwūd reports that Ḥaywah ibn Shurayḥ narrated from Baqiyyah, from Baḥīr ibn Sa’d, from Khālid ibn Ma’dān, from Ibn Abī Bilāl, from ‘Abdullāh ibn Busr, from the Prophet (ṣ), who said, “The time between the great war and the conquest of the city (i.e. Constantinople) will be six years, and the Dajjāl will emerge during the seventh [year].”³²

[٣] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا زيد بن الحباب، حدّثنا عبد الرحمن بن ثوبان، حدّثني أبي، عن مكحول، عن معاذ بن جبل، قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «عمران بيت المقدس خراب يثرب، وخراب يثرب خروج الملحمة، وخروج الملحمة فتح القسطنطينيّة، وفتح القسطنطينيّة خروج الدجال». ثمّ ضرب على فخذه أو على منكبه، ثمّ قال: «إنّ هذا لحقّ كما أنّك قاعد». وكان مكحول يحدّث به عن جبير بن نفير، عن مالك بن يخامر، عن معاذ بن جبل، عن النبيّ ﷺ، مثله.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reported from Zayd ibn al-Ḥubāb, who narrated from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Thaubān, who narrated from my father, from Makḥūl, from Mu’ādh ibn Jabal who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘The flourishing of Bayt al-Maqdis will mean the destruction of

³¹ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 5, p. 546.

³² Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 4, p. 1837.

Yathrib, and the destruction of Yathrib will lead to the advent of the final battle, and the advent of the final battle will lead to the conquest of Constantinople, and the conquest of Constantinople will be followed by the appearance of the Dajjāl.’ Then he hit his thigh or his arm and said, ‘This is the truth, just as you are seated here.’” Makḥūl used to relate something similar to this from Jubayr ibn Nufayr, from Mālik ibn Yakhāmīr, from Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, from the Prophet (ﷺ).³³

[٤] قال مسلم بن الحجاج: حدّثني زهير بن حرب، حدّثنا معلى بن منصور، حدّثنا سليمان بن بلال، حدّثنا سهيل عن أبيه، عن أبي هريرة، أنّ رسول الله ﷺ قال: «لا تقوم الساعة حتّى ينزل الروم بالأعماق، أو بدابق. فيخرج إليهم جيش من المدينة، من خيار أهل الأرض يومئذٍ، فإذا تصافوا قالت الروم: خلّوا بيننا وبين الذين سبوا منّا نقاتلهم. فيقول المسلمون: لا، والله! لا نخلي بينكم وبين إخواننا. فيقاتلونهم، فينهزم ثلث لا يتوب الله عليهم أبداً. ويقتل ثلثهم، أفضل الشهداء عند الله، ويفتح الثلث لا يفتنون أبداً. فيفتتحون قسطنطينية، فينما هم يقتسمون الغنائم، قد علّقوا سيوفهم بالزيتون، إذ صاح فيهم الشيطان: إنّ المسيح قد خلفكم في أهليكم! فيخرجون، وذلك باطل. فإذا جاءوا الشام خرج، فينما هم يعدّون للقتال، يسوّون الصفوف، إذ أقيمت الصلاة، فينزل عيسى ابن مريم ﷺ فأمرهم. فإذا رآه عدوّ الله، ذاب كما يذوب الملح في الماء. فلو تركه لانداب حتّى يهلك، ولكن يقتله الله بيده، فيريهم دمه في حربته.»

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj reported from Zuhair ibn Ḥarb, who narrated from Mu‘allā ibn Manṣūr, from Sulaymān ibn Bilāl, from Suhail, from

³³ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 36, p. 352.

his father, from Abū Hurayrah who said, “The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The Final Hour will not come until the Romans land at al-A‘māq or in Dābiq. An army consisting of the finest people on earth at that time will come from Madīna to face them. As they arrange themselves in ranks, the Romans will say, “Do not stand between us and those (Muslims) who took prisoners from amongst us. Let us fight them.” But the Muslims will respond, “No, by Allah, we will never stand by and let you fight our brothers!” They will thus fight them and a third of them will flee, may Allah never forgive them. A third of them will be killed, and they shall be considered the most excellent martyrs in the sight of Allah. The final third will succeed in battle and they will never be put to trial. Thus will they conquer Constantinople, and as they get busy distributing the spoils of war [amongst themselves] after hanging their swords on olive trees, Satan will cry out, “The [Anti-]Messiah has taken your place among your family!” They will thus leave [the city], but it shall be found to be a lie. Instead, when they arrive in Syria, he will emerge while they are preparing themselves for battle, drawing up the ranks. Then, as the time of prayer sets in, ‘Īsā son of Maryam (peace be upon them) will descend and lead them [in prayer]. When the enemy of Allah sees him, he will begin melting away just as salt dissolves in water, and if he (‘Īsā (a)) were to leave him, he would fade away completely, but Allah will kill him by his hand and he will show them his blood on his lance.”³⁴

[٥] قال نعيم بن حماد: حدثنا رشدين عن ابن لهيعة عن أبي قبيلى، عن أبى فراس، عن عبد الله بن عمرو بن العاص قال: تغزون القسطنطينية ثلاث غزوات: فأما غزوة واحدة فتلقون بلاءً وشدةً، والغزوة الثانية يكون بينكم وبينهم صلح حتى يبتنى فيها المسلمون المساجد ويغزون معهم وراء

³⁴ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 2221.

القسطنطينية، ثم يرجعون إليها، والغزوة الثالثة يفتحها الله لكم بالتكبير فتكون على ثلاثة أثلاثٍ يخرب ثلثها، ويحرق ثلثها، ويقسمون الثلث الباقي كيداً.

Nu‘aym ibn Ḥammād reported from Rishdayn, from Ibn Lahī‘ah, from Abī Qubayl, from Abī Firās, from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ who said, “You will battle Constantinople thrice. In the first battle, you will meet great trials and hardships. The second battle will end in a truce between you and them, such that the Muslims will even [be allowed to] build mosques in it (i.e. Constantinople) and will fight together with them against outside enemies before returning to it. But with the final battle, Allah will cause you to attain victory through the *takbīr*; and it shall be divided into three parts where one is destroyed, the second is burned and the third is divided as spoils.”³⁵

Appraisal:

What is meant by “Constantinople” in these traditions has been the subject of some debate amongst scholars. Some have posited that it represents the capital of eastern Christendom, as it was in the nascent period of Islam. Hence, they have related it to present-day Moscow, as it is the current capital of Orthodox Christianity. Alternatively, it could refer to the actual Turkish city itself, which is presently called Istanbul.³⁶

³⁵ Al-Marwazī, *al-Fitan*, p. 326.

³⁶ It could be argued that this understanding is flawed since the Turks already conquered Constantinople in 1453. As such, historical events have seemingly challenged this interpretation of the prophecy. However, such an assertion is easily countered by the fact that the future remains unknown and it might well be that present day Turkey is conquered by western (or other) forces in the future, in which case the prophecy could still come to pass. All in all, it is in the very nature of prophecy to espouse a variety of possible readings and interpretations.

Even though it is a Muslim-majority country, Turkish governments have many times taken positions that are contrary to the teachings and principles of Islam.³⁷ Hence there is no consensus among scholars on the exact location being referred to in these traditions.

Mu'adh ibn Jabal describes the great battle that will take place during the conquest of Constantinople just before the Dajjāl emerges. He relates that the Prophet (ṣ) said, "... the occurrence of a fierce and bloody battle (*al-malḥamah*) will transpire after the destruction of Yathrib (present day Madīna). This fierce battle will lead to the conquest of Constantinople, and the conquest of Constantinople will lead to the appearance of the Dajjāl." Scholars like al-Barzanjī have interpreted this to mean that when the Mahdī rises, he will first have to fight the hypocrites who have taken control of Madīna and after he has gotten rid of all of them, only the righteous believers will remain in the Prophet's city.³⁸

Regarding how the Mahdī will conquer these cities and vanquish their armies, a tradition attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) sheds some light on this: "He (the Mahdī) will then proceed, along with those among the Muslims who have joined him, towards the cities. They will not pass by any fortress in the land of Rome but that they will proclaim upon it, 'There is no god but Allah,' whereupon its walls will collapse. Then they will come to Constantinople and recite the *takbīr* ("Allāhu Akbar") whereat its bay will be rent asunder and its walls will fall. After Constantinople is conquered, the Mahdī will turn towards 'Rūmiyyah'³⁹ and when they arrive there, the Muslims will recite the *takbīr* thrice which will lead it (i.e. the city) to be ground to dust."⁴⁰

³⁷ Ṭayy, *al-Mahdī al-Muntazar Bayn al-Dīn wal-Fikr al-Basharī*, p. 185.

³⁸ Al-Barzanjī, *al-Ishā'ah li Ashrāt al-Sā'ah*, pp. 237–38.

³⁹ There are differences of opinion about the exact location of this city. Some state that rather than referring to a particular city, it could be a reference to any European capital, like Berlin, or an American state like New York or Washington (Ref: Ṭayy, *al-Mahdī al-Muntazar Bayn al-Dīn wal-Fikr al-Basharī*, p. 186).

⁴⁰ Al-Maqdisī, *ʿIqd al-Durar fī Akhbār al-Muntazar*, pp. 187–88.

The fifth tradition tells us that this final victory will be preceded by two other battles, meaning the Muslims will have to actually fight against their enemies before they attain victory through divine succour, which is represented metaphorically as the *takbīr*, in the final battle. Hence, it would be wrong to surmise that there will be no bloodshed and a miraculous victory will be won without loss of life. Furthermore, on the issue of the timeframe of events, there seems to be a contradiction between the first and second narrations, which has led some scholars to categorize the second tradition as weak. However, it is quite possible that scribal error or forgetfulness on the part of the narrator led to seven years being reported as seven months, or vice versa.⁴¹

3) A Great Battle at the End of Time

[١] قال أحمد بن حنبل: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «لا تقوم الساعة حتى تقتل فئتان عظيمتان، يكون بينهما مقتلة عظيمة ودعواهما واحدة».

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reports that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) said, “The Hour will not come to pass until two large armies fight each other, with there being great loss of life between them, while their claim will be one and the same.”⁴²

[٢] قال البخاري: حدّثني عبد الله بن محمّد، حدّثنا عبد الرزّاق، أخبرنا معمر، عن همّام، عن أبي هريرة عن النبي ﷺ، قال: «لا تقوم الساعة حتى يقتل فتيان، فيكون بينهما مقتلة عظيمة، دعواهما واحدة، ولا تقوم الساعة حتى يبعث دجالون كذابون قريباً من ثلاثين، كلّهم يزعم أنّه رسول الله».

⁴¹ Al-ʿAsūd, *al-Aḥādīth al-Wāridah fī al-Malḥamah al-Kubrā*, p. 353.

⁴² Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 13, p. 485.

Al-Bukhārī narrates from ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad, who narrated that ‘Abd al-Razzāq narrated from Ma‘mar, from Hammām, from Abī Hurayrah, from the Prophet (ﷺ) who said, “The Hour will not come until two groups will fight each other in a colossal battle, yet their claim will be the same. And the Hour will not come until lying deceivers emerge, almost thirty of them, each of whom surmises himself to be a messenger of God.”⁴³

[٣] قال مسلم بن الحجاج: حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَعَلِيُّ بْنُ حَجْرٍ، كِلَاهُمَا عَنْ ابْنِ عَلِيَّةَ (وَاللَّفْظُ لِابْنِ حَجْرٍ). حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَيُّوبَ، عَنْ حَمِيدِ بْنِ هَلَالٍ، عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ الْعَدَوِيِّ، عَنْ يَسِيرِ بْنِ جَابِرٍ قَالَ: هَاجَتْ رِيحٌ حَمْرَاءَ بِالْكُوفَةِ، فَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ لَيْسَ لَهُ هَجِيرَى إِلَّا: يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ مَسْعُودٍ، جَاءَتْ السَّاعَةُ! قَالَ: فَقَعَدَ وَكَانَ مَتَكِّنًا، فَقَالَ: إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا تَقُومُ حَتَّى لَا يَقْسَمَ مِيرَاثًا، وَلَا يَفْرَحَ بَغْنِيمَةٍ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: بِيَدِهِ هَكَذَا (وَنَحَاهَا نَحْوَ الشَّامِ)، فَقَالَ: عَدُوٌّ يَجْمَعُونَ لِأَهْلِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَيَجْمَعُ لَهُمْ أَهْلَ الْإِسْلَامِ. قُلْتُ: الرُّومُ تَعْنِي؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، وَتَكُونُ عِنْدَ ذَاكُمُ الْقِتَالِ رَدَّةً شَدِيدَةً، فَيَشْتَرِطُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ شَرْطَةً لِلْمَوْتِ لَا تَرْجِعُ إِلَّا غَالِبَةً. فَيَقْتُلُونَ حَتَّى يَحْجُزَ بَيْنَهُمُ اللَّيْلُ، فَيَفِيءُ هَوْلَاءَ وَهَوْلَاءَ. كُلٌّ غَيْرُ غَالِبٍ، وَتَفْنَى الشَّرْطَةُ. ثُمَّ يَشْتَرِطُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ شَرْطَةً لِلْمَوْتِ، لَا تَرْجِعُ إِلَّا غَالِبَةً. فَيَقْتُلُونَ حَتَّى يَحْجُزَ بَيْنَهُمُ اللَّيْلُ، فَيَفِيءُ هَوْلَاءَ وَهَوْلَاءَ، كُلٌّ غَيْرُ غَالِبٍ وَتَفْنَى الشَّرْطَةُ. ثُمَّ يَشْتَرِطُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ شَرْطَةً لِلْمَوْتِ، لَا تَرْجِعُ إِلَّا غَالِبَةً. فَيَقْتُلُونَ حَتَّى يَمْسُوا، فَيَفِيءُ هَوْلَاءَ وَهَوْلَاءَ، كُلٌّ غَيْرُ غَالِبٍ وَتَفْنَى الشَّرْطَةُ. فَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمَ الرَّابِعِ، نَهَدَ

⁴³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, vol. 6, p. 54.

إليهم بقية أهل الإسلام. فيجعل الله الدبرة عليهم، فيقتلون مقتلةً - إما قال: لا يرى مثلها، وإما قال: لم ير مثلها - حتى إن الطائر ليمرّ بجناباتهم، فما يخلفهم حتى يخزّ ميتًا. فيتعادّ بنو الأب، كانوا مائةً، فلا يجدونه بقي منهم إلا الرجل الواحد. فبأيّ غنيمّة يفرح؟ أو أيّ ميراثٍ يقاسم؟ فبينما هم كذلك إذ سمعوا ببأسٍ، هو أكبر من ذلك. فجاءهم الصرخ: إنّ الدجال قد خلفهم في ذراريهم. فيرفضون ما في أيديهم و يقبلون، فيبعثون عشرة فوارس طليعةً. قال رسول الله ﷺ: «إني لأعرف أسماءهم، وأسماء آبائهم، وألوان خيولهم. هم خير فوارس على ظهر الأرض يومئذٍ - أو من خير فوارس على ظهر الأرض يومئذٍ».

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj narrates from Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah and ‘Alī ibn Ḥujr, both of whom reported from Ibn ‘Ulayyah (but the words are Ibn Ḥujr’s). They reported from Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm from Ayyūb, from Ḥumayd ibn Hilāl, from Abī Qatādah al-‘Adawiyī, from Yusayr ibn Jābir who said, “Once there was a red storm in Kūfa and there came a man who had nothing to say but [the following]: ‘O ‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd, the Hour is upon us!’ He (‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd) sat up, as he had been reclining against something, and said, ‘The Hour will not come until shares of inheritance stop being distributed and there is no rejoicing over spoils of war.’ Then he said, pointing towards Syria with his hand, ‘The enemy shall muster strength against Muslims and the Muslims will also muster strength against them.’ I said, ‘You mean Rome?’ He said, ‘Yes, and there will be an intense battle, and the Muslims will prepare a detachment that is ready to fight to the death, and not return except victorious. They will fight until the night comes between them, when both sides return without attaining victory and their condition (i.e. that they will not return except after victory) will

be nullified. The Muslims will again prepare a detachment for fighting unto death so that they may not return except victorious. But when night falls, they too will return without victory and the condition will be nullified. This will happen continuously for three days. On the fourth day, a new detachment from the remaining Muslims shall be prepared and Allah will decree that the enemy should be routed [by them]. They shall fight in such a manner, the likes of which would never have been seen; so much so that even if a bird were to pass their flanks, it would fall down dead before reaching the end. [There will be such a large scale massacre that] when a count is taken, only one out of a hundred men related to one another would be found alive. So what joy can there be with the spoils of such a war and what inheritance would be divided?! They shall be in this very state when they will hear of a calamity that is even more horrible. A cry shall reach them that the Dajjāl has taken their place among their offspring. They will, therefore, throw away what is in their hands and advance, sending ten [of their fastest] horsemen as a scouting party. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “Verily I know their names and the names of their fathers and the colour of their horses. They will be the best horsemen on the face of the earth on that day, or amongst the best horsemen on the face of the earth on that day.”⁴⁴

[٤] قال نعيم بن حماد: قال جرّاح، عن أرطاة: فالملحمة الأولى في قول دانيال تكون بالإسكندرية، يخرجون بسفنههم فيستغيث أهل مصر بأهل الشام، فيلتقون فيقتتلون قتالاً شديداً، فيهزم المسلمون الروم بعد جهدٍ شديدٍ، ثمّ يقيمون عليها ويجمعون جمعاً عظيماً، ثمّ يقبلون فينزلون يافا فلسطين، عشرة أميالٍ، ويعتصم أهلها بذراريهم في الجبال، فيلقاهم

⁴⁴ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 2223-2224.

المسلمون فيظفرون بهم، ويقتلون ملكهم. والملحمة الثانية: يجمعون بعد هزيمتهم جمعًا أعظم من جمعهم الأول، ثمّ يقبلون فينزلون عكًا، وقد هلك ملكهم ابن المقتول، فيلتقي المسلمون بعكًا، ويحبس النصر عن المسلمين أربعين يومًا، ويستغيث أهل الشام بأهل الأمصار، فيطئون عن نصرهم، فلا يبقى يومئذٍ مشرك حرّ ولا عبد من النصرانية إلا أمدّ الروم، فيفرّ ثلث أهل الشام، ويقتل الثلث، ثمّ ينصر الله البقية فيهزمون الروم هزيمةً لم يسمع بمثها، ويقتلون ملكهم. والملحمة الثالثة: يرجع من رجع منهم في البحر، وينضمّ إليهم من كان فرّ منهم في البرّ، ويملّكون ابن ملكهم المقتول، صغيرًا لم يحتلم، وتقذف له مودّة في قلوبهم، فيقبل بما لم يقبل به ملكاهم الأولان من العدد، فينزلون عمق أنطاكية، ويجمع المسلمون فينزلون بإزائهم، فيقتلون شهرين، ثمّ ينزل الله نصره على المسلمين فيهزمون الروم، ويقتلون فيهم وهم هاربون طالعون في الدرب، ثمّ يأتيتهم مدد لهم، فيقفون وئيدًا من المسلمين، فتكرّ عليهم كرّةً فيقتلونهم وملكهم، وتنهزم بقيّتهم، فيطلبهم المهاجرون فيقتلونهم قتلاً ذريعًا. فحينئذٍ يبطل الصليب، وينطلق الروم إلى أممٍ من ورائهم من الأندلس، فيقتلون بهم حتّى ينزلوا الدروب، فيتميّز المهاجرون نصفين، فيسير نصف في البرّ نحو الدرب، والنصف الآخر يركبون في البحر، فيلتقي المهاجرون الذين في البرّ ومن في الدرب من عدوّهم، فيظفرهم الله بعدوّهم فيهزمهم هزيمةً أعظم من الهزائم الأولى. ويوجّهون البشير إلى إخوانهم في البحر: إنّ موعدكم المدينة، فيسيّرهم الله أحسن سيرةً حتّى ينزلوا على المدينة فيقتحمونها ويخربونها،

ثمّ يكون بعد ذلك أندلس وأمّم، فيجتمعون فيأتون الشام فيلقاهم
المسلمون فيهزمهم الله عزّ وجلّ.

Nu‘aym ibn Ḥammād reported from Jarrāḥ, who reported from Arṭāt, who said, “The first Great War [with the Romans], according to [Prophet] Daniel, will be in Alexandria. They (i.e. the Romans) will come in their ships. The people of Egypt will ask the people of Syria for help. The two sides will meet and fight each other fiercely. The Muslims will defeat the Romans after exerting tremendous effort. Then, the Romans shall amass a large army and disembark at Yafa (Jaffa) in Palestine and advance 10 miles inland. Its inhabitants (i.e. the Palestinians) will seek refuge with their children in the mountains. The Muslims will meet the Romans in battle, defeat them and kill their king. In the second Great War, after their defeat in the first battle, the Romans will amass an army larger than their first army. Then, they will head to and disembark in Akka (Acre, in Palestine). They will have chosen the son of their king who was killed [in battle] as their new king. He will meet the Muslims [in the battlefield] in Akka. Victory will be withheld from the Muslims for forty days. So the people of Syria will ask for help from the people of all Muslim lands, but they will be slow to send supporting armies. [On the Roman side,] there will be no Christian, free man or slave, who will not go to help the Romans. As a result, one-third of the people of Syria will flee, one-third will be killed and Allah will grant victory to the remaining third. They will defeat the Romans with such a defeat the likes of which has never been heard of before, and they will [again] kill the king of the Romans. In the third Great War, whoever [among the enemy] fled by sea will return and whoever from them fled by land will rejoin them. They will choose the son of their slain king, who will be so young that he will not yet have reached puberty. They will have great love for him. For this reason, troops will assemble for him in much larger numbers compared to the two previous kings. They will disembark in the valley of Antioch. The

Muslims will gather across from them. They will fight for two months. Then, Allah will send His succour to the Muslims so they will defeat the Romans, and they will slay them as they flee and escape. Supporting armies will then arrive to help the Romans and they will stand to fight again. The Muslims will ambush them and kill their king and the rest shall be defeated. Immigrant Muslims will continue fighting the fleeing Romans until the Cross is abolished. The Romans will flee to nations behind them, specifically Andalusia. The Immigrants will split into two groups. Half of them will march on land and the other half will sail by sea. The Immigrants who are on land will meet their enemies and defeat them more decisively than their previous defeats. They will then send someone to convey the good news to their brothers at sea, and inform them that their rendezvous will be the City. Allah will support them in their sailing until they disembark at the City. They will overrun it and conquer it. After this, only Andalusia and some other nations will stand [as their enemy] and they will come to Syria where the Muslims will meet them in battle and defeat them.”⁴⁵

[٥] قال البخاري: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الصَّبَّاحِ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ زَكْرِيَاءَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سُوْقَةَ، عَنْ نَافِعِ بْنِ جَبْرِ بْنِ مَطْعَمٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي عَائِشَةُ قَالَتْ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «يَغْزُو جَيْشُ الْكَعْبَةِ، فَإِذَا كَانُوا بِيَدَاءِ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَخْسِفُ بِأَوْلِهِمْ وَأَخْرَهُمْ. قَالَتْ: قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، كَيْفَ يَخْسِفُ بِأَوْلِهِمْ وَأَخْرَهُمْ، وَفِيهِمْ أَسْوَأُهُمْ وَمَنْ لَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ؟! قَالَ: يَخْسِفُ بِأَوْلِهِمْ وَأَخْرَهُمْ، ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُونَ عَلَى نِيَّتِهِمْ».

Al-Bukhārī reported that Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ narrated from Ismā‘īl ibn Zakariyyā, from Muḥammad ibn Sūqah, from Nāfi‘ ibn Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘am who said, “Ā’isha reported that the Messenger of

⁴⁵ Al-Ḥammād, *Al-Fitan*, p. 310.

Allah (ﷺ) said, ‘An army will invade the Ka‘bah and when it reaches al-Baydā’, the ground will sink and swallow them all, first to last.’ I asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), how will they all be swallowed up while amongst them will be their traders and others who are not part of them (i.e. the invaders)?’ The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, ‘They will be swallowed up one and all, but they will all be resurrected and judged according to their [own] intentions.’⁴⁶

Appraisal:

These traditions are the clearest and most explicit indications in the Sunnī ḥadīth corpus that there will be a great, bloody battle between two large armies during the End of Days. This war will result in huge casualties and a large portion of the global population will be affected by it. The fight will be between the believers and the infidels, between justice and falsehood, between righteousness and tyranny. Nevertheless, the first tradition tells us that both factions will lay claim to the same thing. This is something we can relate to very well today as in most of the conflicts being witnessed in the world, both sides claim to be fighting terrorism and terrorists while upholding the important principles of human rights. They do this to appease their detractors and to grant legitimacy to their violence.

The second tradition goes a step further and tells us that there will be many false prophets during this time – up to thirty, no less! The third tradition is one of the lengthiest and most detailed traditions regarding the final battle. As seen in the earlier section, it is not going to be a single encounter. Rather, there will be a number of encounters and only in the last battle will there be a decisive victory. The word “days” which is used to distinguish one encounter from the next does not necessarily refer to single twenty-four hour periods. Rather “*yawm*”

⁴⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 4, p. 43.

refers to any specific span of time, and can last up to a number of years.⁴⁷ In the fourth battle, after fierce fighting, the Muslims will finally attain victory.

The fourth tradition describes how the Roman side will prepare for the battle and it gives us some details that are not found in any other tradition, such as how their king will be killed each time they come face to face with the Muslims, and they will have to regroup each time and select another king to lead them. Some other interesting points that can be gleaned from this tradition is that while the Romans will be able to rally all the polytheists (*mushrikīn*) to come to their aid, the Muslims will be slow to respond to their brothers' pleas for support. In the fifth tradition, the enemy that is proceeding towards the Ka'bah is swallowed up by the earth in a miraculous show of divine succour.

4) The Prominence of Syria

[١] قال أبو داود: حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَمْزَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ جَابِرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زَيْدُ بْنُ أَرْطَاةٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ جَبْرِ بْنَ نَفِيرٍ يَحَدِّثُ عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: «إِنَّ فِسْطَاطَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ يَوْمَ الْمَلْحَمَةِ بِالْغَوْطَةِ إِلَى جَانِبِ مَدِينَةٍ يُقَالُ لَهَا دِمَشْقُ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَدَائِنِ الشَّامِ».

Abū Dāwūd reports from Hishām ibn ‘Ammār, who narrated from Yahyā ibn Ḥamzah, from Ibn Jābir, from Zayd ibn Arṭāt who said, “I heard Jubayr ibn Nufayr narrate from Abū Dardā’ that the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘Verily the place where the Muslims will assemble for the final apocalyptic battle will be al-Ghūṭah which is located near a city that is known as Damascus, which is one of the best cities of

⁴⁷ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 12, p. 650.

Syria.”⁴⁸

[٢] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا إسحاق بن عيسى، حدّثنا يحيى بن حمزة، عن زيد بن واقد، حدّثني بسر بن عبيد الله، حدّثني أبو إدريس الخولاني عن أبي الدرداء قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «بيننا أنا نائم إذ رأيت عمود الكتاب احتمل من تحت رأسي، فظننت أنه مذهب به، فأتبعته بصري، فعمد به إلى الشام. ألا وإنّ الإيمان حين تقع الفتن بالشام».

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reports from Ishāq ibn ‘Īsā who narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah, from Zayd ibn Wāqid, from Busr ibn ‘Ubaydillāh, from Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī, from Abū Dardā’ who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘I was asleep when I saw a column of books being carried from under my head. I thought it was being drawn away, so I continued looking at it until it was taken to Syria. Indeed, when the time of tribulation and upheaval [during the end times] comes, faith will rest in Syria.”⁴⁹

[٣] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا يزيد، أخبرنا شعبة، عن معاوية بن قرّة، عن أبيه قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «إذا فسد أهل الشام فلا خير فيكم. ولا يزال أناس من أمّتي منصورين، لا يبالون من خذلهم، حتّى تقوم الساعة».

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reported from Yazīd, from Shu‘bah, from Mu‘āwiyā ibn Qurrah, from his father who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘When the people of Syria become corrupt, then there will be no good [remaining] among you. The people of my nation will continue receiving [divine] succour, and will not care about those who abandon

⁴⁸ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 4, p. 1838.

⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 36, p. 62.

them, until the Hour comes.”⁵⁰

[٤] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا عبد الصمد، حدّثنا حمّاد، عن الجريري، عن أبي المشاء وهو لقيط بن المشاء، عن أبي أمامة قال: «لا تقوم الساعة حتّى يتحوّل خيار أهل العراق إلى الشام، ويتحوّل شرار أهل الشام إلى العراق» وقال رسول الله ﷺ: «عليكم بالشام».

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reports from ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, from Ḥammād, from al-Jurayrī, from Abū al-Mashshā’, who is Laqīṭ ibn al-Mashshā’, from Abū Umāmah who said, “The Hour will not come to pass until the best people of Iraq move to Syria and the worst people of Syria go to Iraq. And the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘Cling to Syria.’”⁵¹

[٥] قال النسائي: أخبرنا أحمد بن عبد الواحد قال: حدّثنا مروان الطاطاري قال: أنبأ خالد بن يزيد بن صالح بن صبيح المري قال: حدّثنا إبراهيم بن أبي عبلة عن الوليد بن عبد الرحمن الجرشي، عن جبير بن نفير، عن سلمة بن نفيل الكندي قال: كنت جالساً عند رسول الله ﷺ، فقال رجل يا رسول الله: «أذال الناس الخيل ووضعوا السلاح وقالوا: لا جهاد، قد وضعت الحرب أوزارها». فأقبل رسول الله ﷺ بوجهه فقال: «كذبوا، الآن جاء القتال ولا يزال من أمتي أمة يقاتلون على الحق، ويزيغ الله لهم قلوب أقوام ويرزقهم منه حتّى تقوم الساعة أو حتّى يأتي وعد الله، والخيل معقود في نواصيها الخير إلى يوم القيامة، وهو يوحى إليّ أنّي مقبوض غير ملبّث، وأنتم متبعوني أفناداً يضرب بعضكم رقاب بعض، وعقر دار المؤمنين

⁵⁰ Ibid, vol. 24, p. 362.

⁵¹ Ibid, vol. 36, p. 461.

Al-Nasā'ī narrated from Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid, from Marwān al-Ṭāṭārī, from Khālīd ibn Yazīd ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṣubayḥ al-Murrī, from Ibrāhīm ibn Abī 'Ablah, from Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jurashī, from Jubayr ibn Nufayr, from Salamah ibn Nufayl al-Kindī who said, "We were seated in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) when a man said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, the people have lost interest in horses and put down their weapons, and they say there is no [more] *jihād*, and that war has ended.' The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) turned to face him and said, 'They are lying. Fighting has now come and there will always be a group among my nation who will fight for the truth, and Allah will cause the hearts of some people to deviate regarding them, and will grant them provision until the Hour comes or until the promise of Allah is realized. Goodness is tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection. It has been revealed to me that I am going to die and will not stay long, and you will follow me group after group, striking one another's necks. And the place of safety for the believers is Syria.'"⁵²

Appraisal:

Syria (or *shām*, as it is referred to in the traditions) is a place about which many traditions have been narrated. In the Shī'ī ḥadīth corpus, due to a number of reasons, foremost among which was the rule of Mu'āwiyā and his son, who were staunch enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (the household of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)), Syria is generally portrayed in a negative light. On the other hand, Sunnī traditions speak very highly of Syria. Nevertheless, traditions tell us of the plight and suffering that the Syrians will face during end times.⁵³

⁵² Al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. 3, p. 35.

⁵³ See for example: Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 2220.

In the second tradition, the “column of books” being referred to by the Prophet (ﷺ) has been interpreted as a metaphor for learning and that which the believers refer to and turn to for their guidance. This tradition tells us, therefore, that Syria will be a locus of faith during the final days, when the whole world will be facing upheaval.⁵⁴ The location of al-Ghūṭah mentioned in the first tradition, which will be the headquarters of the Muslim army during the End of Days battle, is described as a place in Syria that has plentiful water and vegetation and is close to the city of Damascus.⁵⁵

The corruption of the inhabitants of Syria referred to in the third tradition is either a corruption of faith which will prevail among most but not all of the people, or a destruction of the country. Since Syria is portrayed in other traditions as the last bastion of Islam and the Prophet (ﷺ) is said to have advised the Muslims to take care of Syria, the second meaning seems more plausible. However, if we consider the fourth tradition to mean that evil elements will overrun the country, then it could be understood to mean that corruption will enter Syria from outside. In any case, there seems to be some ambiguity about the third and fourth traditions. Suffice it to say that Syria will suffer a period of hardship at the hands of those who are corrupt during the end times.

The fifth tradition in this section is interesting as it speaks about a continual struggle against falsehood which will carry on until the Hour comes. Muslims are not to expect peace before then. Interestingly, in this tradition the Prophet (ﷺ) informs the believers that they will quarrel and fight among themselves and even strike each other’s necks, possibly referring to the numerous civil wars, uprisings and rebellions that would come after him. In the end, he (ﷺ) is reported to have said that the place where believers will have some semblance of security and safety is Syria. Of course, that is, before the Hour comes.

⁵⁴ Al-‘Asūd, *Al-Aḥādīth al-Wāridah fī al-Malḥamah al-Kubrā*, p. 206.

⁵⁵ Ābādī, *‘Aun Al-Ma’būd: Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 11, p. 273.

5) The State of Muslims during the Days Preceding the Apocalyptic Battle

A number of traditions describe the state of Muslims during the period just prior to the final End of Days battle. Some of these include:

[١] قال ابن ماجه: حدّثنا عثمان بن أبي العاتكة، عن سليمان بن حبيب المحاربي، عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: «إذا وقعت الملاحم، بعث الله بعثًا من الموالى، هم أكرم العرب فرسًا وأجوده سلاحًا، يؤيد الله بهم الدين».

Ibn Mājah reported from ‘Uthmān ibn Abī al-Ātikah, from Sulaymān ibn Ḥabīb al-Muḥārībī, from Abū Hurayrah who said, “The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said, ‘When the fierce [apocalyptic] battles take place, Allah will send a troop of freed slaves who will be [better than] the best Arab horsemen and the best marksmen, by whom Allah will support His religion.’”⁵⁶

[٢] قال أحمد بن حنبل: حدّثنا عبد الله بن محمّد بن أبي شيبة، قال عبد الله بن أحمد: وسمعتُه أنا من عبد الله بن محمّد بن أبي شيبة، قال: حدّثنا زيد بن الجباب، قال: حدّثني الوليد بن المغيرة المعافري، قال: حدّثني عبد الله بن بشر الخثعمي، عن أبيه أنه سمع النبي ﷺ يقول: «لتنفتح القسطنطينية، فلنعم الأمير أميرها، ولنعم الجيش ذلك الجيش». قال: فدعاني مسلمة بن عبد الملك فسألني، فحدّثته، فغزا القسطنطينية.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reports from ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Shaybah, from ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad, from Zayd ibn al-Ḥubāb, from

⁵⁶ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 5, p. 545.

al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah al-Ma‘āfirī, from ‘Abdullāh ibn Bishr al-Khath‘amī, from his father who heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say, “Constantinople will most surely be conquered [by the Muslims], and the best ruler shall be its ruler, and the best army will be that army [which conquers it].” He (the narrator) said, “Maslamah ibn ‘Abd al-Malik called me and asked me about this and I narrated it to him, so he invaded Constantinople.”⁵⁷

[٣] قال مسلم بن الحجاج: حَدَّثَنَا قَتِيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيْدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا لَيْثٌ، وَحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ رَمْحٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا اللَّيْثُ عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَمْرٍ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَهُوَ مُسْتَقْبِلُ الْمَشْرِقِ يَقُولُ: «أَلَا إِنَّ الْفِتْنَةَ هَا هُنَا. أَلَا إِنَّ الْفِتْنَةَ هَا هُنَا، مِنْ حَيْثُ يَطْلُعُ قَرْنُ الشَّيْطَانِ».

Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj reports from Qutaybah ibn Sa‘īd, from Layth, from Muḥammad ibn Rumḥ, from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar who said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say while he was facing the east, “Indeed the upheaval and tribulation will be right there. Indeed the tribulation [of end times] will be from right there, for it is the place from where the horns of Satan shall rise.”⁵⁸

[٤] قال مسلم بن الحجاج: حَدَّثَنَا قَتِيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيْدٍ عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ، فِيمَا قَرَأَ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: «لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى يَمْرُؤَ الرَّجُلُ بِقَبْرِ الرَّجُلِ فَيَقُولُ: يَا لَيْتَنِي مَكَانَهُ».

Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj reports from Qutaybah ibn Sa‘īd, from Mālik ibn Anas, from Abī al-Zannād, from al-A‘raj, from Abū Hurayrah who reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “The Hour will not come

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 31, p. 287.

⁵⁸ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 2228.

to pass until such a time when a man walks by the grave of another and says, ‘How I wish I was in his place!’”⁵⁹

[٥] قال أحمد بن حنبل: - قال أبو القاسم صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «لا تقوم الساعة حتى يقبض العلم، وتظهر الفتن، ويكثر الهرج»، قالوا: وما الهرج يا نبي الله؟ قال: «القتل».

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal reports that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) said, “The Hour will not come to pass until knowledge is taken away, tribulations become manifest and upheavals increase.” People asked, “What are these upheavals, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Massacre[s].”⁶⁰

Appraisal:

These are just some of the many traditions that are considered sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), which describe the state of Muslims during the end times. We are told that during this final period, despite their large numbers,⁶¹ the Muslims will initially be unable to withstand the onslaught against them. So much so that a sense of despondency will overtake them and the living among them will wish that they were dead and buried. Only after the rise of the Maḥdī, and a specific group of Muslims who shall be his followers, and, as the first tradition in this section tells us, will be mostly from the non-Arab Muslims, will the virtuous believers regain their rightful station as the vicegerents of God on earth.

The second tradition shows how expectation of the realization of prophecy was something that shaped the Muslim mindset from the very early days of Islam. It was not something that only resulted from the suffering and tribulation that the Muslim community had to endure,

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 2231.

⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 12, p. 458.

⁶¹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 4, p. 1838.

as we note that even during the golden age of Islam, some of the rulers were well aware of what the Prophet (ﷺ) had prophesied for the future and even tried to become part of it. Hence the idea that the Messianic figure of the Mahdī was a later concoction of the Muslim mind that resulted from a need to hold on to some hope for the future is flawed to say the least.

The place that is identified by the Prophet (ﷺ) as being the source of tribulation for Muslims in the third tradition is simply referred to as being in “the east.” However, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has narrated a tradition which explicitly states that the area being referred to by the Prophet (ﷺ) is Najd, which is located to the east of Ḥijāz.⁶² The “horns of Satan” metaphor symbolizes the tyranny and evil that will lead to great tribulation and upheaval for the righteous believers. And, as the last tradition in this section informs us, the meaning of “upheaval” is bloodshed and massacre.

The “east” in the third ḥadīth can also be interpreted to mean the place whence Gog and Magog will appear, which is somewhere in Central Asia where the Gates built by Dhul Qarnayn are located. The upheaval and tribulation would then be a reference to the chaos and destruction carried out by Gog and Magog before the end of history. This ḥadīth contrasts with the prophecies seen earlier regarding the fall of Constantinople, however both traditions make up part of the entire image of end times as prophesied in ḥadīth.

THE FINAL BATTLE IN SHĪʿĪ TRADITIONS

In Shīʿī traditions, there are numerous direct and indirect references to the final battle between the forces of good and evil. Some of these refer to battles that take place before the coming of the Mahdī whereas others speak of the war that will ensue after his reappearance. Considering all

⁶² Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥābah*, vol. 2, p. 904.

the traditions together, we conclude that the final apocalyptic battle will actually take place under the leadership of the Mahdī, though there will be many other wars that are fought before it as well.

1) The Uprooting of Strife

[١] قال الكليني: [روى] علي بن إبراهيم، عن أبيه، عن ابن أبي عمير، عن عمر بن اذينة، عن محمد بن مسلم قال: قلت لأبي جعفر عليه السلام: قول الله عز وجل: «وقاتلوهم حتى لا تكون فتنة ويكون الدين كله لله»، فقال: لم يجئ تأويل هذه الآية بعد، إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله رخص لهم لحاجته وحاجة أصحابه، فلو قد جاء تأويلها لم يقبل منهم، لكنهم يقتلون حتى يوحد الله عز وجل، وحتى لا يكون شرك.

Al-Kulaynī reported that ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm narrated from this father, from Ibn Abī ‘Umayr, from ‘Umar ibn Udhaynah, from Muḥammad ibn Muslim who said, “I asked Abū Ja‘far (a) about the verse wherein Allah, to whom belong might and majesty, says: *Fight them until faithlessness is no more, and religion becomes [exclusively] for Allah.* (Q2:193). He said, “The hidden meaning [of this verse] has not yet come to pass. Verily, the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) granted them leave [to abstain from fighting] for anything he needed or his companions needed. But when the hidden meaning of this verse is realized, no excuse will be accepted from them. Rather, they will [have to] fight until Allah, the Almighty, is believed [by all] to be One, and there is no more polytheism.”⁶³

[٢] قال النعماني: حدثنا محمد بن همام ومحمد بن الحسن بن جمهور جميعاً عن الحسن بن محمد بن جمهور، عن أبيه، عن سليمان بن سماعة،

⁶³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, p. 201.

عن أبي الجارود، عن القاسم بن الوليد الهمداني، عن الحارث الأعور الهمداني قال: قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: بأبي ابن خيرة الإماء - يعني القائم من ولده عليه السلام - يسومهم خسفاً ويسقيهم بكأسٍ مصبرةٍ، ولا يعطيهم إلا السيف هرجاً، فعند ذلك تتمنى فجرة قريشٍ لو أنّ لها مفاداةً من الدنيا وما فيها ليغفر لها، لا تكفّ عنهم حتى يرضى الله.

Al-Nu'mānī reported that Muḥammad ibn Hammām and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Jumhūr both narrated from al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Jumhūr, from his father, from Sulaymān ibn Samā'ah, from Abī al-Jārūd, from al-Qāsim ibn al-Walīd al-Hamdānī, from al-Ḥārith al-A'war al-Hamdānī who said, "Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn (a) said, 'May my father be ransomed for the son of the noblest of slavewomen,' meaning the Qā'im from his progeny (a). 'He will abase them and make them drink from the cup of bitter disgrace. He will give them nothing but the sword and turmoil. It is then that the evil ones among the infidels will wish that they had something beneficial of this world that they could exchange for their redemption, but they will not be left until Allah is pleased.'"⁶⁴

[٣] قال النعماني: وأخبرنا أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد، قال: حدّثنا محمد بن سالم بن عبد الرحمن الأزديّ من كتابه في شوالٍ سنة إحدى وسبعين ومائتين، قال: أخبرني عثمان بن سعيد الطويل، عن أحمد بن سليمان، عن موسى بن بكرٍ الواسطيّ، عن بشير النبال قال: لما قدمت المدينة قلت لأبي جعفر عليه السلام: إنهم يقولون إنّ المهديّ لو قام لاستقامت له الأمور عفواً ولا بهريق محجمة دمٍ. فقال: كلاً والذي نفسي بيده، لو استقامت لأحدٍ عفواً

⁶⁴ Al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghaybah*, p. 229.

لاستقامت لرسول الله ﷺ حين أدميت ربايعيته وشجّ في وجهه. كلاً والذي نفسي بيده، حتى نمسح نحن وأنتم العرق والعلق ثم مسح جبهته.

Al-Nu‘mānī reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd narrated from Muḥammad ibn Sālīm ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī, from his book in the month of Shawwāl in the year 271 A.H., that ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Ṭawīl reported from Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān, from Mūsā ibn Bakr al-Wāsiṭī, from Bashīr al-Nabbāl who said, “When I arrived in Madīna, I said to Abū Ja‘far (a), ‘They say that when the Mahdī rises, matters will be set in order for him and not even the smallest amount of blood will be spilled.’ He said, ‘No. By He in whose Hand is my soul, if it was possible for the affairs to be set aright themselves for anyone, then it would have happened for the Messenger of Allah (ṣ). Instead, his front teeth were broken and his face was wounded [in battle]. No! Rather, the affair will be so severe that [both] we and you will wipe off sweat mixed with blood,’ then he wiped his forehead.”⁶⁵

[٤] قال الصفّار: حدّثنا إبراهيم بن هاشم، عن أبي سليمان الديلمي، عن معاوية الدهني، عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام في قول الله عزّ وجل «يعرف المجرمون بسيماهم فيؤخذ بالنواصي والأقدام» قال: يا معاوية، ما يقولون في هذا؟ قال: قلت: يزعمون أنّ الله تبارك وتعالى يعرف المجرمين بسيماهم يوم القيامة، فيأمر بهم فيؤخذ بنواصيهم وأقدامهم ويلقون في النار. قال: فقال لي: وكيف يحتاج الجبّار تبارك وتعالى إلى معرفة خلقه أنشأهم وهو خلقهم؟ قال: فقلت: فما ذاك، جعلت فداك؟ قال: ذلك لو قد قام قائمنا، أعطاه الله السيماء فيأمر بالكافر فيؤخذ بنواصيهم وأقدامهم، ثم

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 284.

يخبط بالسيف خطأً.

Al-Ṣaffār reported that Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim narrated from Abū Sulaymān al-Daylamī, from Mu‘āwiya al-Duhnī, from Abū ‘Abdillāh (a) who, regarding the verse wherein Allah, to whom belong might and majesty, says: *The guilty will be recognized by their mark; so they will be seized by the forelocks and the feet* (Q55:41), asked: “O Mu‘āwiya, what do they say about this [verse]?” Mu‘āwiya said, “I replied, “They think that Allah, to whom belong might and majesty, will recognize the guilty by their marks on the Day of Judgment and will command that they be taken, so they will be seized by their forelocks and feet, and will be thrown into the fire of Hell.’ He (a) said to me, ‘How is it that the Almighty Lord would need to recognize His creation in this way when He is the one who originated them and created them?’ I said, ‘Then, may I be your ransom, what does it mean?’ He replied, ‘It is referring to when our Qā’im rises. Allah will give him the ability to recognize the infidels by their marks, so they will be seized by their forelocks and feet before being put to the sword [by him].’”⁶⁶

[٥] قال الكليني: [روى] الحسين بن محمد، عن معلى بن محمد، عن الوشاء، عن المثنى الحنّاط، عن قتيبة الأعشى، عن ابن أبي يعفور، عن مولى لبني شيبان، عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال: إذا قام قائمنا وضع الله يده على رؤوس العباد، فجمع بها عقولهم وكملت به أحلامهم.

Al-Kulaynī reported that al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad narrated from Mu‘allā ibn Muḥammad, from al-Washshā’, from al-Muthannā al-Ḥannāt, from Qutaybah al-A‘shā, from Ibn Abī Ya‘fūr, from a client of the Banī Shaybān, from Abū Ja‘far (a) who said, “When our Qā’im rises, Allah will place his hand over the heads of the servants, by which their

⁶⁶ Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt fi Fadā’il Āl Muḥammad*, 356.

minds will come together and their intellects will become perfect.”⁶⁷

Appraisal:

The first tradition in this section has a sound chain of narrators⁶⁸ and tells us about the deeper meaning of a Qur’ānic verse – a meaning that goes beyond what is commonly understood from the apparent connotation of the verse. The Imam tells one of his close companions, Muḥammad ibn Muslim, that the verse in question refers to the final battle from which no believer will be exempt and no rebellious unbeliever will be spared – a fight that will continue until disbelief is uprooted in its entirety. The second tradition is not found in any other early Shī’ī ḥadīth collections. Nevertheless, it has been adduced by many Shī’ī scholars over the ages⁶⁹ and is generally accepted as a valid tradition as far as its general purport is concerned.

In the third tradition, the Imam uses a logical argument to dismiss the notion that when the Mahdī comes, all affairs will be put in order automatically, miraculously, and without the need for bloodshed. He says that if this was ever meant to happen, it would have happened during the time of the Prophet (ṣ) himself. Since the Prophet had to face the enemy in battle and was even wounded as a result, it is foolhardy to think that when the Mahdī rises, he will establish order without any need to quell dissent or defeat enemies. Then, as if to emphasize the point, the Imam wipes his brow as he exclaims that the

⁶⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 56.

⁶⁸ The analysis of chains of transmitters has been carried out by referring to what is arguably the most authoritative work on the subject of *Rijāl*, namely Syed al-Khū’ī’s *Muḥam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*. In cases where no information is available on specific narrators, we have relied upon other methods to establish the soundness of traditions such as referring to corroborating evidence or relying on the compiler’s judgment, as in the case of al-Kulaynī who deems all the traditions he has collected in *al-Kāfi* to be sound (Cf. *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 16).

⁶⁹ Cf. *Dānishnāme Imām Mahdī (a)* vol. 9, 91.

severity of the affair will be such that blood will get mixed with perspiration.

The fourth tradition is another explanation of the correct interpretation of a Qur'ānic verse by the Imam (a). The verse is interpreted by one of the Imam's companions, and indeed by many exegetes to this day, to refer to how the disbelievers will be recognized by special marks that appear on their faces on the Day of Judgment. However, the Imam dismisses this interpretation saying that the Almighty does not need any external means (like marks on faces) to recognize the evildoers and disbelievers. Rather, he goes on to explain, this verse refers to the marks that will appear on the disbelievers when the Mahdī rises, and it is through these marks that they will be recognized by him and destroyed.

The fifth and final tradition in this section is weak as far as the chain of transmitters is concerned.⁷⁰ Moreover, it does not refer to any bloodshed as such and had it not been for the overwhelming number of traditions that tell us how the Mahdī will rise with the sword, it might have been in order for us to interpret this tradition as referring to the non-violent means by which divergent minds would be brought together and united. However, when we take all the other traditions into consideration, we understand that this tradition refers to how, after all the evil has been vanquished and strife is uprooted, all the people are united so as to ensure that no future dissension comes about. The tradition tells us that it will be through a divinely given ability that the Mahdī will be able to unite the minds of the believers.

2) Confronting the Hypocrites

[١] قال الكشي: حدثنا محمد بن عيسى، عن يونس بن عبد الرحمن، عن

⁷⁰ This is due to the existence of an unknown narrator who is simply referred to as "one of the clients of Banī Shaybān."

يحيى الحلبي، عن المفضل بن عمر، قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام يقول: لو قام قائمنا بدأ بكذّابي الشيعة فقتلهم.

Al-Kashshī narrated from Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, from Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from Yahyā al-Ḥalabī, from Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar who said, “I heard Abā ʿAbdillāh (a) say, ‘If our Qāʾim were to rise, he would start with the liars among the Shīʿah and kill them.’”⁷¹

[٢] قال الطوسي: عنه، عن يعقوب، عن الحسن بن علي بن فضال، عن شعيب العرقوفيّ، عن أبي حمزة الثماليّ قال: قال أبو عبد الله عليه السلام: لن تبقى الأرض إلا وفيها منّا عالم يعرف الحقّ من الباطل. قال: إنّما جعلت التقيّة ليحقن بها الدم، فإذا بلغت التقيّة الدم فلا تقيّة. وإيم الله! لو دعيتم لتنصرونا لقلتم: لا نفع لنا إنّما نتقي، ولكانت التقيّة أحبّ إليكم من آباءكم وأمهاتكم، ولو قد قام القائم عليه السلام ما احتاج إلى مسائلتكم عن ذلك، ولأقام في كثيرٍ منكم من أهل النفاق حدّ الله.

Al-Ṭūsī narrated from Yaʿqūb, from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Faḍḍāl, from Shuʿayb al-ʿAqarqūfī, from Abī Ḥamzah al-Thumālī who said, “Abū ʿAbdillāh (a) said, ‘The earth will remain without a scholar from us who distinguishes truth from falsehood.’ He [further] said, ‘Dissimulation was only prescribed as a means to protect lives, so when it leads to loss of life, there is no dissimulation. By Allah, if you were called to come and assist us, you would say, “We will not do so as we are practicing dissimulation.” Dissimulation is indeed more beloved to you than your own fathers and mothers! But when the Qāʾim rises, he will not need to ask you for your assistance, and he will surely carry out Allah’s

⁷¹ Al-Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl* vol. 2, p. 589.

punishment upon many of you who are hypocrites.”⁷²

[٣] قال المفيد: وروى أبو الجارود عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام في حديثٍ طويلٍ، أنه إذا قام القائم عليه السلام، سار إلى الكوفة فيخرج منها بضعة عشر ألف نفسٍ يدعون البترية، عليهم السلاح، فيقولون له: ارجع من حيث جئت، فلا حاجة لنا في بني فاطمة. فيضع فيهم السيف حتى يأتي على آخرهم ثم يدخل الكوفة فيقتل بها كل منافقٍ مرتابٍ، ويهدم قصورها ويقتل مقاتلتها حتى يرضى الله عزّ وعلا.

Al-Mufid reported that Abū al-Jārūd narrated from Abū Jafar (a) [who said], in a lengthy tradition, that when the Qā'im (a) rises, he will proceed to Kūfa and expel from it some ten thousand individuals known as the Butriyyah, an armed group; and they will say to him, “Return from whence you came, for we have no need for [anyone from] the progeny of Fāṭimah!” So he will raise the sword against them and fight them until their last number. Then he will enter Kūfa and kill every hypocrite therein before destroying its palaces and fighting its battalions until Allah, the Mighty and High, is pleased.⁷³

[٤] قال الكليني: [روى] سهل عن محمدٍ عن أبيه، عن أبي بصيرٍ قال: قلت لأبي عبد الله عليه السلام: قوله تبارك و تعالی «وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمانهم لا يبعث الله من يموت، بلى وعداً عليه حقاً ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعلمون». قال: فقال لي: يا أبا بصيرٍ، ما تقول في هذه الآية؟ قال: قلت: إن المشركين يزعمون ويحلفون لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله أن الله لا يبعث الموتى. قال: فقال: تباً لمن قال

⁷² Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhib al-Ahkām* vol. 6, p. 172.

⁷³ Al-Mufid, *al-Irshād fī Ma'rifat Hujajillāh 'alā al-'Ibād*, vol. 2, p. 384.

هذا! سلهم هل كان المشركون يحلفون بالله أم باللات والعزى؟ قال: قلت: جعلت فداك، فأوجدنيه. قال: فقال لي: يا أبا بصير، لو قد قام قائمنا، بعث الله إليه قوماً من شيعتنا قباع سيوفهم على عواتقهم، فيبلغ ذلك قوماً من شيعتنا لم يموتوا فيقولون: بعث فلان وفلان وفلان من قبورهم وهم مع القائم، فيبلغ ذلك قوماً من عدونا فيقولون: يا معشر الشيعة، ما أكذبكم هذه دولتكم وأنتم تقولون فيها الكذب. لا والله ما عاش هؤلاء، ولا يعيشون إلى يوم القيامة. قال: فحكى الله قولهم فقال: «وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمانهم لا يبعث الله من يموت».

Al-Kulaynī reported that Sahl narrated from Muḥammad, from his father, from Abū Baṣīr who said, “I asked Abū ‘Abdillāh (a) about the verse wherein Allah says: *They swear by Allah with solemn oaths that Allah will not resurrect those who die. Yes indeed, it is a promise binding upon Him, but most people do not know* (Q16:38), so he said to me, ‘O Abā Baṣīr, what do you think this verse is talking about?’ I said, ‘The polytheists believed and even swore to the Prophet (ṣ) that Allah will not resurrect the dead.’ He said, ‘Wretched are those who say this! Ask them if the polytheists swore by Allah or by [their idols] Lāt and ‘Uzzah?’ I said, ‘May I be your ransom! Then please help me understand it.’ He said, ‘O Abā Baṣīr, when our Qā’im rises, Allah will resurrect a group of our followers and send them to him with their swords hanging from their shoulders. Some of our followers who had not died will hear about this, so they will say: so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so have been resurrected from their graves and they are with the Qā’im. When the news of this reaches a group of our enemies, they will exclaim, “O Shī’ahs, how great liars you are! This is your government and yet you are fabricating lies. No, by God, these people have not come back to life and shall not be resurrected until the Day of Judgment.” So

Allah has relayed their words and said: *They swear by Allah with solemn oaths that Allah will not resurrect those who die...*⁷⁴

[5] قال النعماني: وأخبرنا أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد، قال: حدّثنا عليّ بن الحسن التيملي، قال: حدّثنا محمد وأحمد ابنا الحسن، عن أبيهما، عن ثعلبة بن ميمون، عن أبي كهمس، عن عمران بن ميثم، عن مالك بن ضمرة، قال: قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: يا مالك بن ضمرة، كيف أنت إذا اختلفت الشيعة هكذا؟ - وشبك أصابعه وأدخل بعضها في بعض - فقلت: يا أمير المؤمنين، ما عند ذلك من خير. قال: الخير كلّه عند ذلك يا مالك، عند ذلك يقوم قائمنا فيقدم سبعين رجلاً يكذبون على الله وعلى رسوله صلى الله عليه وآله، فيقتلهم ثم يجمعهم الله على أمرٍ واحد.

Al-Nu'mānī reports that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd narrated from 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Taymulī, from Muḥammad and Aḥmad ibnā al-Ḥasan, from their father, from Tha'laba ibn Maymūn, from Abī Kahmas, from 'Imrān ibn Maytham, from Mālīk ibn Ḍamrah who said, "Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) said [to me], 'O Mālīk ibn Ḍamrah, how will you react when the Shī'ah dispute with each other like this?' - then he opened the fingers of both his hands and intertwined them. I said, 'O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, there is nothing good that will come of it.' He said, 'Rather, all that will come of it is good! O Mālīk, it is at that time when our Qā'im will rise and first take action against the seventy men who are lying against Allah and His Prophet (ṣ), killing them. Only then will Allah gather them all together on one course.'⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 51.

⁷⁵ Al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghaybah*, p. 206.

Appraisal:

The traditions in this section generally describe how some of the first people to oppose the Mahdī when he rises will be the hypocrites among the believers themselves. Hence, they will be dealt with first before the final apocalyptic battle, since it is generally the hypocrites who are responsible for the internal strife in any community. Many examples of this can be evinced in history such as how, after the martyrdom of Imam al-Kāẓim (a), some of his trusted representatives turned their backs on his successor and claimed that the Imam had not died but was in occultation. They did this in order to hold on to the wealth and power they had acquired as representatives of the Imam. This then led to the formation of a splinter group known as the Wāqifiyyah. Such instances abound in history, so it is small wonder that the Mahdī will first “clean house” so to speak, before embarking on his mission to establish global justice and equity.

The first tradition states that the Qā’im will punish the liars among the Shī’ah. It does not elaborate on who these individuals will be, but other similar traditions state that they will be a group who will have doubts regarding the existence of the awaited Mahdī and will only hypocritically profess faith in him. The second tradition is a well-known and oft-referred to tradition that jurists use to define the limits of dissimulation in Islamic law. However, towards the end of the tradition, the Imam states that when the Qā’im rises, there will be no more dissimulation and the hypocrites will be punished by the command of the Almighty.

The third tradition identifies the Iraqi city of Kūfa as the place from which certain groups of hypocrites, including those referred to as the Butriyyah, will arise and reject the Mahdī. As a result of their outright rebellion, the Imam will be left with no alternative but to fight and destroy them. Though the fourth tradition is weak, we have nonetheless included it here because it depicts the reaction of the non-Shī’ahs to the rise of the Qā’im. In the fifth and final tradition, Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a)

describes to one of his interlocutors how the Qā'im will kill the hypocrites and liars among the Shī'ah before they finally unite on a single path behind him.

3) The Bearer of the Sword

[١] قال الكليني في الكافي: [روى] الحسين بن محمد الأشعري، عن معلى بن محمد، عن الوشاء، عن أحمد بن عائذ، عن أبي خديجة، عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام، أنه سئل عن القائم فقال: كلنا قائم بأمر الله، واحد بعد واحد، حتى يجيء صاحب السيف، فإذا جاء صاحب السيف جاء بأمر غير الذي كان.

Al-Kulaynī reports in *al-Kāfi* from al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Ash'arī, who narrated from Mu'allā ibn Muḥammad, from Washshā', from Aḥmad ibn 'Ā'idh, from Abī Khadījah, from Abī 'Abdillāh (peace be upon him) who, when asked about the Qā'im, said, "All of us rise up [against injustice] by the command of Allah, one after the other, until the Bearer of the Sword comes. When the Bearer of the Sword comes, he will come with another order."⁷⁶

[٢] قال الكليني في الكافي: [روي عن] عدّة من أصحابنا، عن أحمد بن محمد، عن علي بن الحكم، عن الحسين بن أبي العلاء، قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام يقول: إنّ عندي الجفر الأبيض. قال: قلت: فأيّ شيء فيه؟ قال: زبور داوود، وتوراة موسى، وإنجيل عيسى، وصحف إبراهيم عليهم السلام، والحلال والحرام، ومصحف فاطمة عليها السلام، ما أزعم أنّ فيه قرآناً، وفيه ما يحتاج الناس إلينا ولا نحتاج إلى أحد، حتى فيه الجلدة،

⁷⁶ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 536.

ونصف الجلدة، وربع الجلدة، وأرش الخدش. وعندى الجفر الأحمر. قال:
قلت: وأي شيء في الجفر الأحمر؟ قال: السلاح، وذلك إنما يفتح للدم،
يفتحة صاحب السيف للقتل.

Al-Kulaynī reports in *al-Kāfi*: A number of our companions narrated from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥakam, from al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-‘Alā’ who said, “I heard Abā ‘Abdillāh (peace be upon him) saying, ‘Verily I have the White Cipher.’ I asked, ‘What is contained therein?’ He said, ‘The Zabūr of Dawūd, Tawrāt of Mūsā, Injīl of ‘Īsā, Ṣuḥuf of Ibrāhīm (peace be upon them all), the lawful and unlawful, and the Codex of Fāṭimah (a). However, it does not contain the Qur’ān⁷⁷ and has all that would make people need us and make us needless of anyone. It even has instructions about the penalty of a single lash of the whip, half a lash, a quarter lash and a single scratch. And I also have the Red Cipher.’ I asked, ‘What is contained in the Red Cipher?’ He said, ‘It is a weapon and is only to be opened for blood. The Bearer of the Sword will open it for battle.’”⁷⁸

[٣] جاء في الأصول الستة عشر: [عن] جعفر، عن عبد الله بن طلحة، عن
أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: سلوني قبل أن تفقدوني، فإنكم إن فقدتموني لم
تجدوا أحداً يحدّثكم مثل حديثي، حتى يقوم صاحب السيف.

It has been reported in *al-Uṣūl al-Sittata ‘Ashar* from Ja’far, who narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Ṭalḥa, from Abī ‘Abdillāh (peace be upon him) who said, “Ask me before you lose me, for if you lose me, you will not find anyone to speak to you like I do until the Bearer of the Sword

⁷⁷ It is likely that this was mentioned as a clarification for those who would think that the Codex of Fāṭimah (a) was in any way an extension of the Qur’ān or comparable to it.

⁷⁸ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 240.

riser.”⁷⁹

[٤] قال الصدوق: حدّثنا أبي ومحمّد بن الحسن رضي الله عنهما، قالاً: حدّثنا عبد الله بن جعفر الحميري، عن محمد بن عيسى، عن سليمان بن داوود، عن أبي بصير، قال: سمعت أبا جعفر عليه السلام يقول: في صاحب هذا الأمر أربع سنين من أربعة أنبياء عليهم السلام: سنة من موسى، وسنة من عيسى، وسنة من يوسف، وسنة من محمد عليه السلام؛ فأما من موسى فخائف يترقب، وأما من يوسف فالحبس، وأما من عيسى فيقال: إنّه مات، ولم يمت، وأما من محمد عليه السلام فالسيف.

Al-Ṣadūq reported: My father and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, may Allah be pleased with them both, narrated that ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja‘far al-Ḥimyarī narrated to them from Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā, from Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd, from Abū Baṣīr who said, “I heard Abū Ja‘far (a) say, ‘The Bearer of this Authority will have four precedents from four Prophets: a precedent from Mūsā, a precedent from ‘Īsā, a precedent from Yūsuf and a precedent from Muḥammad (ṣ). As for the precedent from Mūsā, it is being fearful and vigilant; the precedent from Yūsuf is confinement [in occultation]; the precedent from ‘Īsā is that it will be said, “He has died,” while he will not have died; and the precedent from Muḥammad (ṣ) is the sword.”⁸⁰

[٥] قال النعماني: عليّ بن الحسين، عن محمد بن يحيى، عن محمد بن الحسن الرازي عن محمد بن عليّ الكوفي، قال: حدّثنا يونس بن يعقوب، عن المفضل بن عمر قال: قلت لأبي عبد الله عليه السلام: ما علامة القائم؟ قال: إذا

⁷⁹ Maḥmūdī and Jalīlī (Eds.), *al-Uṣūl al-Sittata ‘Ashar*, p. 242.

⁸⁰ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, pp. 326–27.

استدار الفلك، فقيل: مات أو هلك، في أيّ وادٍ سلك! قلت: جعلت فداك، ثمّ يكون ماذا؟ قال: لا يظهر إلاّ بالسيف.

Al-Nu‘mānī reports that ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn narrated from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Rāzī, from Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Kūfī who said, “Yūnus ibn Ya‘qūb narrated to us that al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar said, ‘I asked Abā ‘Abdillāh (peace be upon him), ‘What is the sign of the Qā’im?’ He said, ‘When time elapses and it is said: He has died or perished, [and we know not] through what valley he passed!’ I said, ‘May I be your ransom, then what will happen?’ He said, ‘He will not [then] reappear except with the sword.’”⁸¹

[٦] قال النعماني: أخبرنا أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد بن عقدة، قال: حدّثنا عليّ بن الحسن التيمليّ من كتابه في صفر سنة أربع وسبعين ومئتين، قال: حدّثنا العبّاس بن عامر بن رباح الثقفيّ، عن موسى بن بكر، عن بشير النبال؛ وأخبرنا عليّ بن أحمد البندنجيّ، عن عبيد الله بن موسى العلويّ، عن أيّوب بن نوح، عن صفوان بن يحيى، عن بشير بن أبي أراكة النبال - ولفظ الحديث على رواية ابن عقدة - قال: لمّا قدمت المدينة انتهيت إلى منزل أبي جعفر الباقر عليه السلام، فإذا أنا ببغلته مسرجةً بالباب، فجلست حيال الدار، فخرج فسلمت عليه، فنزل عن البغلة وأقبل نحوي، فقال: ممّن الرجل؟ فقلت: من أهل العراق. قال: من أيّها؟ قلت: من أهل الكوفة. فقال: من صحك في هذا الطريق؟ قلت: قوم من المحدثّة، فقال: وما المحدثّة؟ قلت: المرجئة. فقال: ويح هذه المرجئة! إلى من يلجؤون غداً إذا قام قائمنا؟

⁸¹ Al-Nu‘mānī, *al-Ghaybah*, p. 156.

قلت: إنهم يقولون: لو قد كان ذلك كُنّا وأنتم في العدل سواءً. فقال: من تاب تاب الله عليه، ومن أسرّ نفاقاً فلا يبعد الله غيره، ومن أظهر شيئاً أهرق الله دمه. ثم قال: يذبجهم - والذي نفسي بيده - كما يذبج القصاب شاته - وأوماً بيده إلى حلقه. قلت: إنهم يقولون: إنّه إذا كان ذلك استقامت له الامور فلا يهريق محجمة دم. فقال: كلاً والذي نفسي بيده، حتى نمسح وأنتم العرق والعلق - وأوماً بيده إلى جبهته.

Al-Nu‘mānī reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd ibn ‘Uqḍah said: ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Taymulī narrated to us from his book, in the month of Safar 274 years after the Hijra, saying, “Al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Āmir ibn Rabāḥ al-Thaqafī narrated to us from Mūsā ibn Bakr, from Bashīr al-Nabbāl; and ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Bandanijī narrated to us from ‘Ubaydillāh ibn Mūsā al-‘Alawī, from Ayyūb ibn Nūḥ, from Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, from Bashīr ibn Abī Arākah al-Nabbāl, and the words of the tradition are based on what was narrated by Ibn ‘Uqḍah, who said, “When I arrived at Madīna, I proceeded to the house of Abū Ja‘far al-Bāqir (a). I saw his mule tethered outside the door of his house. I sat opposite the doorstep and when he came out, I greeted him. He alighted from his mule and came towards me. He asked, “Where are you from?” I replied, “From Iraq.” He asked, “Where in Iraq?” I replied, “From Kūfa.” He said, “Who accompanied you on the way here?” I responded, “A group of the Muḥaddithah.” He asked, “Who are the Muḥaddithah?” I replied, “The Murji’ah.” He said, “Woe be to these Murji’ah! With whom will they seek refuge tomorrow when our Qā’im rises?” I said, “Verily they say: if such a thing happens [and the Qā’im establishes global justice], we and you will be on the same level in his justice.” He said, “Whoever repents, Allah accepts his repentance, and whoever acts hypocritically, it is he whom Allah will remove [from His mercy]. And whoever openly rebels, Allah shall cause his blood to be

shed.” Then he said, “By He in whose hand is my soul, he will slaughter them the way a butcher slaughters his sheep.” And he made a gesture with his hand to his neck. I said, “They say: when he comes, the affairs will be set right for him so there will be no bloodshed whatsoever.” He replied, “No, by He in whose hand is my soul, it is not so – even until we and you wipe our perspiration mixed with blood,” and he pointed towards his forehead.”⁸²

[٧] قال العياشي: عن عبد الأعلى الجبلي: قال أبو جعفر عليه السلام: ... لا يقبل صاحب هذا الأمر الجزية كما قبلها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وهو قول الله: «وقاتلوهم حتى لا تكون فتنة ويكون الدين كله لله». قال أبو جعفر عليه السلام: يقاتلون - والله - حتى يوحد الله ولا يشرك به شيئاً، وحتى تخرج العجوز الضعيفة من المشرق تريد المغرب ولا ينهاتها أحد، ويخرج الله من الأرض بذرها، وينزل من السماء قطرها، ويخرج الناس خراجهم على رقابهم إلى المهدي عليه السلام، ويوسع الله على شيعتنا، ولولا ما يدركهم من السعادة لبغوا، فيينا صاحب هذا الأمر قد حكم ببعض الأحكام وتكلم ببعض السنن، إذ خرجت خارجة من المسجد يريدون الخروج عليه، فيقول لأصحابه: انطلقوا فتلقوا بهم في التمارين، فيأتونه بهم أسرى ليأمر بهم، فيذبحون، وهي آخر خارجة تخرج على قائم آل محمد عليه السلام.

Al-Ayyāshī reports that ‘Abd al-A‘lā al-Jabalī narrated that Abū Ja‘far (a) said, “...The Bearer of this Authority will not accept the *jizyah* tax the way the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) accepted it. This is what is meant by the verse wherein Allah says: *Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted [solely] to God. If they cease hostilities, there can be no*

⁸² Ibid, p. 283.

[further] hostility, except towards aggressors (Q2:193).” Abū Ja‘far (a) [also] said, “By Allah, they will fight until God is believed to be One, without anything associated with Him. Then, even a frail old lady will be able to come out from the east and travel to the west without a single person obstructing her. And Allah will cause seeds to germinate from the earth and rain to fall from the sky, and the people will take the taxes that they owe to the Mahdī (a). Allah will thus make our followers prosperous; and were it not for their becoming felicitous, they would become corrupt. Then, just as the Bearer of this Authority explicates certain rulings and speaks about certain [legal] precedents, a group of dissenters will exit the mosque with the intention of stirring up strife against him. He (the Mahdī) will tell his companions, ‘Go and meet them at the Date-sellers’ Market.’ They will overpower them and bring them as captives to him, awaiting his instructions. In the end the dissenters will be killed, and this will be the last group that will come out against the Qā’im from the progeny of Muḥammad (ṣ).”⁸³

[٨] قال ابن أبي الحديد في شرحه عن الإمام عليّ عليه السلام: فانظروا أهل بيت نبيكم فإن لبدوا فالبدوا، وإن استنصروكم فانصروهم، فليفرجن الله الفتنة برجلٍ من أهل البيت. بأبي ابن خيرة الإمام، لا يعطيهم إلا السيف هرجاً هرجاً، موضوعاً على عاتقه ثمانية أشهر حتى تقول قريش: لو كان هذا من ولد فاطمة لرحمنا، يغريه الله ببني امية حتى يجعلهم حطاماً ورفاتاً: «ملعونين أينما تقفوا أخذوا وقتلوا تقتيلاً، سنة الله في الذين خلوا من قبل ولن تجد لسنة الله تبديلاً».

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd in his commentary [on *Nahj al-Balāgha*] narrates the following from Imam ‘Alī (a): “Watch the family of your Prophet, if

⁸³ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr Al-‘Ayyāshī* Vol. 2, p. 56.

they espouse quietism then espouse quietism but if they [rise up and] seek support then support them. Indeed Allah will remove the sedition through a man from among us – the holy progeny. May my father be ransomed for that son of the most special of maidservants! He will give them naught save the sword and war, and he will continue this for eight months, until the Quraysh will say: ‘If this man was indeed from the progeny of Fāṭimah, he would have shown us mercy!’ Allah will cause him to vanquish the Banī Umayyah such that they become like debris and rubble. *Accursed are they. Wherever they are found, they will be seized and slain violently. This is Allah’s precedent with those who passed away before, and you will never find any change in Allah’s precedent* (Q33:61-62).”⁸⁴

[٩] قال الصدوق: وحدثنا محمد بن محمد بن عصام، رضي الله عنه، قال: حدثنا محمد بن يعقوب الكليني، قال: حدثنا القاسم بن العلاء، قال: حدثنا إسماعيل بن عليّ القزويني، قال: حدثني عليّ بن إسماعيل، عن عاصم بن حميد الحنّاط، عن محمد بن مسلم الثقفي الطحّان، قال: دخلت على أبي جعفر محمد بن عليّ الباقر عليه السلام وأنا أريد أن أسأله عن القائم من آل محمد عليه السلام، فقال لي مبتدئاً: يا محمد بن مسلم، إنّ في القائم من آل محمد عليه السلام شهماً من خمسة من الرسل: يونس بن متى، ويوسف بن يعقوب، وموسى، وعيسى، ومحمد عليه السلام. فأما شبهه من يونس بن متى فرجوعه من غيبته وهو شابّ بعد كبر السنّ؛ وأما شبهه من يوسف بن يعقوب عليه السلام فالغيبية من خاصّته وعامتته، واختفائه من إخوته، وإشكال أمره على أبيه يعقوب عليه السلام، مع قرب المسافة بينه وبين أبيه وأهله وشيعته؛ وأما شبهه من

⁸⁴ Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* vol. 7, p. 58.

موسى عليه السلام فدوام خوفه و طول غيبته، و خفاء ولادته، و تعب شيعته من بعده ممّا لقوا من الأذى والهوان، إلى أن أذن الله عزّ وجل في ظهوره ونصره وأيده على عدوّه؛ وأمّا شبهه من عيسى عليه السلام فاختلف من اختلف فيه حتّى قالت طائفة منهم: ما ولد، وقالت طائفة: مات، وقالت طائفة: قتل و صلب؛ وأمّا شبهه من جدّه المصطفى صلى الله عليه وآله فخروجه بالسيف، وقتله أعداء الله وأعداء رسوله صلى الله عليه وآله والجبارين والطواغيت، وأنّه ينصر بالسيف...

Al-Ṣadūq narrates from Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Iṣām, may Allah be pleased with him, from Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī, from al-Qāsim ibn al-‘Alā, from Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Alī al-Qazwīnī, from ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl, from ‘Āṣim ibn Ḥumayd al-Ḥannāṭ, from Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafī al-Ṭahḥān who said, “I visited Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir (a) with the intention of asking him about the Qā’im from the progeny of Muḥammad (ṣ). However, before I could speak, he said to me, ‘O Muḥammad ibn Muslim, verily in the Qā’im from the progeny of Muḥammad are traits that resemble those of five Prophets: Yūnus ibn Mattā, Yūsuf ibn Ya‘qūb, Mūsā, ‘Īsā and Muḥammad (ṣ). As for his resembling Yūnus ibn Mattā, it is in his return from occultation while he is a young man after having aged. As for his resembling Yūsuf ibn Ya‘qūb, it is in his occultation itself, from his family and the general public, and his being hidden from his brothers, and his affair being difficult to bear for his father Ya‘qūb (a), despite there having been but a short distance between him and his father, his family and his followers. As for his resembling Mūsā (a), it is in the constant fear he faces, the length of his absence, his concealed birth and the hardship his followers faced after he left, including the torture and abasement they had to undergo until he returned to them and was granted divine aid and succour to overcome his enemy. As for his resembling ‘Īsā (a), it is in the disagreement and difference of

opinions concerning him. So much so that a group said that he has not yet been born while another said he has died, and another group said that he has been killed and crucified. As for his resembling the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), it is in his rising with the sword and killing the enemies of God and His Prophet (ﷺ), and annihilating the tyrants and despots, and verily he shall attain victory by the sword...⁸⁵

[١٠] قال الكليني: [روي عن] عدّة من أصحابنا، عن أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى، عن عليّ بن الحكم، عن زيد أبي الحسن، عن الحكم بن أبي نعيم، قال: أتيت أبا جعفر عليه السلام وهو بالمدينة، فقلت له: عليّ نذر بين الركن والمقام إن أنا لقيتك أن لا أخرج من المدينة حتّى أعلم أنّك قائم آل محمد أم لا؟ فلم يجبني بشيء، فأقمت ثلاثين يوماً، ثمّ استقبلني في طريقي، فقال: يا حكم، وإنّك لها هنا بعد؟ فقلت: نعم، إنّي أخبرتك بما جعلت لله عليّ، فلم تأمرني ولم تنهني عن شيء، ولم تجبني بشيء، فقال: بكر عليّ غدوة المنزل، فغدوت عليه، فقال عليه السلام: سل عن حاجتك. فقلت: إنّي جعلت لله عليّ نذراً وصياماً وصدقةً بين الركن والمقام إن أنا لقيتك أن لا أخرج من المدينة حتّى أعلم أنّك قائم آل محمد أم لا، فإن كنت أنت رابطتك، وإن لم تكن أنت سرت في الأرض فطلبت المعاش. فقال: يا حكم، كلنا قائم بأمر الله. قلت: فأنت المهديّ؟ قال: كلنا نهدي إلى الله. قلت: فأنت صاحب السيف؟ قال: كلنا صاحب السيف، ووارث السيف. قلت: فأنت الذي تقتل أعداء الله، ويعزّ بك أولياء الله، ويظهر بك دين الله؟ فقال: يا حكم، كيف أكون أنا وقد بلغت خمساً وأربعين سنة؟ وإنّ

⁸⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 328.

صاحب هذا الأمر أقرب عهداً باللّين منّي، وأخفّ على ظهر الدابة.

Al-Kulaynī reports in *al-Kāfi*: A number of our companions narrated from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥakam, from Zayd Abī al-Ḥasan, from Ḥakam ibn Abī Nuʿaym who said, “I came to Abā Jaʿfar (a) while he was in Madīna and said to him, ‘I have taken an oath next to the Kaʿbah that if I meet you, I will not leave the city until I have established whether you are the Qāʾim from the progeny of Muḥammad or not; [so are you him]?’ He did not give me any answer so I remained in Madīna for thirty days. Then he met me outside one day and said, ‘O Ḥakam, you are still here?’ I replied, ‘Yes. I had informed you of my oath, and you did not respond to me in the affirmative or negative, and you gave me no answer.’ He said, ‘Come to my home early in the morning tomorrow.’ So I went to him the next morning. He (a) said to me, ‘Ask what you wish.’ I said, ‘I have made an oath to Allah next to the Kaʿbah – and vowed to fast and give charity – that if I meet you, I will not leave the city until I come to know whether you are the Riser from the progeny of Muḥammad or not. If it is indeed you, I will remain by your side, but if you are not him, I will be on my way and carry on with seeking my livelihood.’ He replied, ‘O Ḥakam, we [the Ahl al-Bayt] are all risers who establish the will of Allah.’ I asked, ‘Are you the Mahdī?’ He replied, ‘We all guide [others] towards Allah.’ I asked, ‘Then you are the Bearer of the Sword?’ He replied, ‘We all bear the sword and inherit the sword.’ I asked, ‘Then you are the one who will kill the enemies of Allah, and through whom the friends of Allah will gain authority, and by whom the religion of Allah will prevail [over all others]?’ He said, ‘O Ḥakam, how can I be that person when I have already reached the age of forty-five, while the one you speak of will be much younger and more agile⁸⁶ than me?’⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Lit. ...lighter on the back of the mount [than me].

⁸⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, pp. 709-10.

Appraisal:

The first two traditions in this section have sound chains of transmitters and are thus categorized as *ṣaḥīḥ*.⁸⁸ Both these traditions refer to the Mahdī as the Bearer of the Sword. It should be understood from the outset that rising with the “sword” is not meant literally i.e. he will not come with the traditional weapon, with a mere blade and hilt. Rather, it means that he will take up arms against the enemy and will confront them using military might. Hence, the question of how the Mahdī could possibly win a war with a mere sword against all the latest weaponry is moot.⁸⁹ The whole question of why the Imam will rise in this manner as opposed to coming as a peaceful redeemer has been the subject of much debate from the earliest ages. This is because the Prophet (ﷺ) himself is referred to as a “mercy for the worlds” (Q21:107) and hence, it would stand to reason that his vicegerent would also be a man of mercy and compassion, and not one who will spill blood.

However, the Qur’ān tells us that in certain instances, bloodshed and war between different groups is actually a mercy for humankind and is a requirement to prevent worse calamities (Q22:40 for example). In addition, as Ali Raad has pointed out, the infallible Imams would never adopt violence in order to reform the people.⁹⁰ Hence, it is not the case that violence will be used as a means to force the people into submission. Rather, it will be the only recourse against those who are adamant in their opposition to the order that the Mahdī wishes to establish in accordance with the command of God. This is something that is also reflected in the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. No expansionism was ever witnessed in the battles that were carried out under his command. Rather, all the wars were defensive in nature.

The traditions regarding the Mahdī as the Bearer of the Sword are,

⁸⁸ Cf. Al-Khū‘ī, *Muṣṣam Rijāl al-Hadīth*, 1413 A.H.

⁸⁹ Al-Amīnī, *Ḥiwārāt Ḥawl al-Munqidh*, pp. 298–301.

⁹⁰ Raad, “*Tahlīlī Bar Aḥādīthe Kushtār*,” p. 94.

for the most part, in the form of questions that were put forward to either Imam al-Bāqir (a) or Imam al-Ṣādiq (a). There are almost no traditions about this from the later Imams and very few from the preceding Imams (except Imam ‘Alī (a), who has a few traditions attributed to him on the subject). This has led some to believe that people were more interested in knowing about the rise of the final saviour at that time due to the tumultuous experience they underwent during the fall of the Umayyad dynasty and the subsequent rise of the Abbasids. However, a more likely reason for this surge in traditions about the end times could simply be that this was the period in which relative freedom for the Imams meant that people from all walks could readily approach them and ask about any religious subject under the sun. That is also why the only traditions that describe the Ḥajj pilgrimage in detail are those that have reached us from these two Imams.

Though the third tradition in this section has an unknown narrator in its chain of transmitters,⁹¹ since it comes to us in one of the earliest ḥadīth texts to be written or recorded, forming the only extant portion of the renowned four-hundred *uṣūl*, it is worthy of consideration. The fourth tradition is classified as the Shīʿī-specific ḥadīth type known as *muwaththaq* (where one [or more] of the narrators, though being reliable, does not ascribe to the Shīʿī school of thought), because Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd was an ‘Āmmī (i.e. a Sunnī). This type of tradition is considered reliable and serves as authoritative proof (*ḥujjah*) for the Shīʿah, unlike in the Sunnī school where the mere presence of a Shīʿī narrator in the chain of transmitters renders the tradition weak.

The tradition is from the fifth Imam and highlights the similarities between the Mahdī and some of the earlier Prophets. Aside from being vigilant like Mūsā (a) and being thought of as having died like ‘Īsā (a),

⁹¹ He is Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn Shurayḥ al-Ḥaḍramī, the author of one of the sixteen extant *uṣūl*. Since there is no clear information about his reliability, the chain is technically rendered weak. (Cf. al-Khūʿī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 5, p. 82).

he will also fight the enemies and defend the righteous with the sword like the last Prophet, Muḥammad (ṣ). This theme is recurrent in many traditions and even in the *ziyārāt* (encomiastic salutations) that are recited addressing the awaited saviour. His being the heir of all the Prophets means that he represents them all. The ninth tradition in this section is a detailed explanation of this very idea, and though its chain is technically weak, the presence of one of the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmāʿ* in the chain⁹² may be used to make up for the weakness, for these were individuals who never narrated from unreliable sources.

The fifth tradition highlights the fact that the Mahdī will remain in occultation for so long that people will think he has died. Then, all of a sudden, he will rise – and he will do so with the sword. This tradition is one of many that inform us of the situation among some of the believers during the advent of the Mahdī, i.e. that they will be in a state of doubt or uncertainty about him and will even assume that he must have died due to the length of time he was in occultation. There are many possible explanations for this long occultation. However, the fact that such a long absence will lead to doubts even in the minds of some believers may partly explain why he will have to rise with the sword (and take action against the hypocrites among the Muslims).

The sixth tradition is explicitly illustrative and no words are minced by the Imam when he describes how those who rebel openly will be slaughtered by the Mahdī like sheep. Then, in response to the idea put forward by the Murjiʿah that things will sort themselves out such that when the Mahdī comes, there will be no need for bloodshed, the Imam states categorically that blood will indeed be shed and there is no escaping it. The following tradition goes further and states that the Mahdī will not even be willing to accept the *jizyah* tax as the Prophet (ṣ) did. This means that he will not give dissenters the option of compromise.

⁹² Namely, Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafī (Cf. al-Khūʿī, *Muʿjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*).

The seventh tradition further describes the fruits of the Mahdī's revival of justice, describing how even the weak will move unencumbered in the land and how God will shower his blessings upon the earth and its inhabitants. However, even after justice prevails, there will be some pockets of resistance, but no dissent will be tolerated by the Qā'im. It should be noted that the specific mention of enemies like the Quraysh, the Banī Umayyah, etc. are monikers that refer to the epitome of evil at that time and are in no way restrictive. The eighth tradition is related from Imam 'Alī (a) and describes how, for at least eight months, the Mahdī will fight his enemies in battle, until he finally vanquishes them. The ferocity with which he attacks his enemies shall lead some to doubt that he is a descendant of the illustrious daughter of the Prophet, the kind and compassionate Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (a).

The last tradition in this section comes to us from *al-Kāfi*, albeit with a weak chain of narrators.⁹³ Nevertheless, it is supported by other traditions and gives us some valuable insight on the mindset of the believers, right from the early days. Due to the prophecies concerning the Mahdī by the Prophet and Imam 'Alī (a), the believers were waiting for and expecting the arrival of the Mahdī even during the time of the Imams. In this tradition we see how one of the companions wished to know for certain if Imam Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (a) was the awaited Mahdī or not. For some reason, the Imam seems to give vague answers and evades his question until, after a lot of persistence, he finally tells the questioner that he cannot possibly be the awaited saviour as he is old while the one who will come will be young and agile. One of the titles the man uses in his query is the oft-mentioned 'Bearer of the Sword'.

⁹³ The chain is rendered weak due to the presence of the unknown narrator Zayd Abū al-Ḥasan.

4) Al-Sufyānī, the Commander of the Enemy Forces

[١] قال النعماني: أخبرنا أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد، قال: حدّثنا عليّ بن الحسن، عن العباس بن عامرٍ، عن عبد الله بن بكيرٍ، عن زرارة بن أعين، عن عبد الملك بن أعين، قال: كنت عند أبي جعفر عليه السلام فجرى ذكر القائم عليه السلام، فقلت له: أرجو أن يكون عاجلاً ولا يكون سفياني. فقال: لا والله، إنّه لمن المحتوم الذي لا بدّ منه.

Al-Nu‘mānī reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd narrated from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan, from al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Āmir, from ‘Abdullāh ibn Bukayr, from Zurārah ibn A‘yan, from ‘Abd al-Malik ibn A‘yan who said, “I was with Abū Ja‘far (a) when the subject of the Qa‘im was broached, so I said to him, ‘I wish that it (i.e. his coming) would be hastened and that Sufyānī would not appear.’ He said, ‘No, by Allah! It (i.e. the Sufyānī’s rising) is something that has been foreordained and must come to pass.’”⁹⁴

[٢] قال الصدوق: حدّثنا محمد بن عليّ ماجيلويه رضى الله عنه، قال: حدّثنا عمّي محمد بن أبي القاسم، عن محمد بن عليّ الكوفي، عن محمد بن أبي عمير، عن عمر بن اذينة قال: قال أبو عبد الله عليه السلام: قال أبي عليه السلام: قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: يخرج ابن آكلة الأكباد من الوادي اليابس، وهو رجل ربعة، وحش الوجه، ضخم الهامة، بوجهه أثر جذريّ، إذا رأته حسبته أعور، اسمه عثمان وأبوه عنبسة، وهو من ولد أبي سفيان، حتّى يأتي أرضاً ذات قرارٍ ومعينٍ، فيستوي على منبرها.

⁹⁴ Al-Nu‘mānī, *al-Ghaybah*, p. 301.

Al-Ṣadūq reports that Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Mājilawayh narrated from Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Qāsim, from Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Kūfī, from Muḥammad ibn Abī ‘Umayr, from ‘Umar ibn Udhaynah who said, “Abū ‘Abdillāh (a) narrated that his father told him that Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (a) said, ‘The [grand]son of the liver-eater (i.e. Hind bint Abī Sufyān) will emerge from the arid valley. He will be of average height, possessing a terrifying countenance, and hefty in stature. He will have a pockmarked face and when one sees him, he would assume him to be one-eyed. His name will be ‘Uthmān and his father will be ‘Anbasah. He will be from the progeny of Abū Sufyān. He will proceed until he comes to a land with lush meadows and springs, and then he will sit upon its pulpit.’”⁹⁵

[٣] قال الكليني: [روى] محمد بن يحيى، عن أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى، عن علي بن الحكم، عن أبي أيوب الخزاز، عن عمر بن حنظلة، قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام يقول: خمس علاماتٍ قبل قيام القائم: الصيحة، والسفنياني، والخسف، وقتل النفس الزكية، واليماني. فقلت: جعلت فداك، إن خرج أحد من أهل بيتك قبل هذه العلامات أنخرج معه؟ قال: لا. فلما كان من الغد، تلوت هذه الآية «إن نشأ نزل عليهم من السماء آيةً فظلت أعناقهم لها خاضعين» فقلت له: أهي الصيحة؟ فقال: أما لو كانت، خضعت أعناق أعداء الله عز وجل.

Al-Kulaynī reported that Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā narrated from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā, from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥakam, from Abī Ayyūb al-Kharrāz, from ‘Umar ibn Ḥanzalah who said, “I heard Abā ‘Abdillāh (a) say, ‘There are five signs that will herald the rise of the Qā’im: a loud cry, the Sufyānī, swallowing up [of the army] by the earth, the murder

⁹⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, vol. 2, p. 651.

of the Pure Soul, and the Yamānī.’ I said, ‘May I be your ransom, if anyone from your household rises before these signs should we follow him?’ He said, ‘No.’ The next day [when I met him] I recited the verse: *If We wish We will send down to them a sign from the sky before which their heads will remain bowed in subservience* (Q26:4) and then asked him ‘Does this refer to the loud cry?’ He replied, ‘Indeed, when it happens, the necks of God’s enemies will be lowered [in disgrace].’⁹⁶

[٤] قال الصدوق: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ الْوَلِيدِ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى الْعَطَّارُ وَأَحْمَدُ بْنُ إِدْرِيسَ جَمِيعاً، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ عَمْرَانَ الْأَشْعَرِيِّ، عَنِ السَّيَّارِيِّ، عَنِ الْحَكَمِ بْنِ سَالِمٍ، عَمَّنْ حَدَّثَهُ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: إِنَّا وَآلُ أَبِي سَفْيَانَ أَهْلُ بَيْتَيْنِ تَعَادَيْنَا فِي اللَّهِ، قُلْنَا: صَدَقَ اللَّهُ، وَقَالُوا: كَذَبَ اللَّهُ! قَاتَلَ أَبُو سَفْيَانَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَقَاتَلَ مَعَاوِيَةَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَقَاتَلَ يَزِيدُ بْنُ مَعَاوِيَةَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَالسَّفِيَانِيَّ يُقَاتِلُ الْقَائِمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

Al-Ṣadūq reports that Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Walīd narrated from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-‘Aṭṭār and Aḥmad ibn Idrīs, both from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn ‘Imrān al-Ash‘arī, from al-Sayyārī, from al-Ḥakam ibn Sālim, from another narrator, from Abū ‘Abdillāh (a) who said, “We and the progeny of Abū Sufyān are two houses that are enemies for the sake of Allah. We say Allah has spoken the truth while they claim that Allah has lied! Abū Sufyān fought against the Holy Prophet (ṣ), [his son] Mu‘āwiya fought against ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), and [his grandson] Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya fought against al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī (a). Similarly, the Sufyānī will fight

⁹⁶ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 15, p. 694.

against the Qā'im (a) [when he rises]."⁹⁷

[5] قال المفيد: [روى] عمرو بن أبي المقدم عن جابر الجعفي قال: قال لي أبو جعفر عليه السلام: يا جابر، الزم الأرض ولا تحرك يداً ولا رجلاً حتى ترى علاماتٍ أذكرها لك إن أدركتها. أولها اختلاف ولد فلانٍ - وما أراك تدرك ذلك ولكن حدث به بعدي، ومنادٍ ينادي من السماء، ويجيئكم الصوت من ناحية دمشق بالفتح، ويخسف بقريّة من قرى الشام تسمى الجابية، وتسقط طائفة من مسجد دمشق الأيمن، ومارقة تمرق من ناحية الترك ويعقبها مرج الروم، ويستقبل إخوان الترك حتى ينزلوا الجزيرة، ويستقبل مارقة الروم حتى تنزل الرملة، فتلك السنة، يا جابر، فيها اختلاف كثير في كل أرضٍ من ناحية المغرب. فأول أرض المغرب أرض تخرب الشام، يختلفون عند ذلك على ثلاث راياتٍ: راية الأصهب، وراية الأبقع، وراية السفيناني. فيلقى السفيناني الأبقع فيقتلون فيقتله ومن معه، ويقتل الأصهب ثم لا يكون همّه إلا الإقبال نحو العراق، ويمرّ جيشه بقريسا فيقتلون بها مائة ألف رجلٍ من الجبارين، ويبعث السفيناني جيشاً إلى الكوفة وعدّتهم سبعون ألف رجلٍ فيصيرون من أهل الكوفة قتلاً وصلباً وسيباً. فبينا هم كذلك إذ أقبلت رايات من ناحية خراسان تطوي المنازل طياً حثيثاً، ومعهم نفر من أصحاب القائم عليه السلام، وخرج رجل من موالي أهل الكوفة فيقتله أمير جيش السفيناني بين الحيرة والكوفة، ويبعث السفيناني بعثاً إلى المدينة فينفر المهديّ منها إلى مكّة. فبلغ أمير جيش السفيناني أنّ

⁹⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma'ānī al-Akhhār*, p. 346.

المهديّ قد خرج من المدينة فيبعث جيشاً على أثره، فلا يدرّكه حتّى يدخل مكة خائفاً يترقب على سنة موسى بن عمران عليه السلام، وينزل أمير جيش السفينانيّ البيداء فينادي منادي من السماء: يا بيداء أيدي القوم! فيخسف بهم البيداء فلا يفلت منهم إلا ثلاثة، يحوّل الله وجوههم في أوقيتهم وهم من كلب، وفيهم نزلت هذه الآية: «يا أيها الذين أتوا الكتاب آمنوا بما نزلنا مصدّقاً لما معكم من قبل أن نظمس وجوهاً فردّها على أدبارها» الآية. قال: والقائم يومئذ بمكة قد أسند ظهره إلى البيت الحرام مستجيراً به، ينادي: يا أيها الناس، إنّنا نستنصر الله ومن أجابنا من الناس، فإنّا أهل بيت نبيكم ونحن أولى الناس بالله وبمحمد صلى الله عليه وآله، فمن حاجني في آدم فأنا أولى الناس بآدم، ومن حاجني في نوح فأنا أولى الناس بنوح، ومن حاجني في إبراهيم فأنا أولى الناس بإبراهيم عليه السلام، ومن حاجني في محمد صلى الله عليه وآله فأنا أولى الناس بمحمد صلى الله عليه وآله، ومن حاجني في النبيين فأنا أولى الناس بالنبيين! أليس الله يقول في محكم كتابه: «إنّ الله اصطفى آدم ونوحاً وآل إبراهيم وآل عمران على العالمين، ذريةً بعضها من بعض والله سميع عليم». فأنا بقية من آدم وخيرة من نوح، ومصطفى من إبراهيم، وصفوة من محمد صلى الله عليه وآله. ألا ومن حاجني في كتاب الله فأنا أولى بكتاب الله، ألا ومن حاجني في سنة رسول الله وسيرته فأنا أولى الناس بسنة رسول الله وسيرته. فأنشده الله من سمع كلامي اليوم لمّا أبلغه الشاهد منكم الغائب، وأسألكم بحقّ الله وحقّ رسوله وحقّي، فإنّ لي عليكم حقّ القربى برسول الله، لمّا أعتمونا ومنعتموننا ممّن يظلمنا فقد أخفنا وظلمنا وطرّدنا من ديارنا وأبنائنا،

وبغي علينا ودفعنا عن حقنا، وآثر علينا أهل الباطل. فالله الله فينا، لا نخذلونا وانصرونا، ينصركم الله! فيجمع الله له أصحابه ثلاث مائة وثلاثة عشر رجلاً، فيجمعهم الله له على غير ميعادٍ قزع كقزع الخريف، وهي يا جابر، الآية التي ذكرها الله: «أين ما تكونوا يأت بكم الله جميعاً إن الله على كل شيءٍ قدير». فيبايعونه بين الركن والمقام، ومعه عهد من رسول الله ﷺ قد توارثه الأنبياء عن الآباء. والقائم، يا جابر، رجل من ولد الحسين بن عليٍّ عليه السلام، يصلح الله له أمره في ليلةٍ، فما أشكل على الناس من ذلك، يا جابر، ولا يشكلن عليهم ولادته من رسول الله ﷺ ووراثته العلماء، عالماً بعد عالم، فإن أشكل عليهم هذا كله، فإن الصوت من السماء لا يشكل عليهم إذا نودي باسمه واسم أبيه واسم أمه.

Al-Mufid reported that ‘Amr ibn Abī al-Miqdām narrated from Jābir al-Ju’fī who said, “Abū Ja’far (a) said to me, ‘O Jābir, cling to the earth and move not your hand or leg until you see the signs that I shall tell you about, if you encounter them. The first is discord among the progeny of so-and-so (meaning the Banū ‘Abbās), but I do not foresee your witnessing this, yet you must inform others about this after me; and [the next sign is] a caller crying out from the heavens, and the sound of victory will come to you from the direction of Damascus. One of the villages of Syria by the name of al-Jābiyah will cave in [and collapse into the earth]. A group from the Eastern Damascene Mosque will be vanquished and a rebel group will rise up from the direction of the Turks, which will be followed by the tumult of the Romans. The Turks will proceed until they arrive at the island while the Romans will disembark at al-Ramlah. In that year, O Jābir, there will be a lot of fighting in every place in the West. The first western land that will be destroyed will be Syria. Then the people will face each other under three

banners: the banner of Aṣḥab, the banner of Abqā' and the banner of Sufyānī. The Sufyānī will face Abqā' in battle and kill him and his followers, then he will kill Aṣḥab and then there will be nothing blocking his way, so he will proceed with his army to Iraq, passing by Qirqīsā (which is located near the Euphrates) where they will fight a hundred thousand men from the [army of the] oppressors. The Sufyānī will [then] send a contingent of seventy thousand soldiers to Kūfa where they will massacre, loot and pillage. As they are engaged in this, banners will approach from the direction of Khurāsān, moving swiftly, and among them will be some of the companions of the Qā'im (a). A man from the [non-Arab] clients of Kūfa will come out [to fight] but the commander of Sufyānī's army will kill him between Ḥīrah and Kūfa. The Sufyānī will [then] send an army to Madīna, but the Mahdī will hasten to Makka. When the commander of Sufyānī's army learns that the Mahdī has left Madīna, he will send a contingent to track him, but they will not reach him until he arrives in Makka, fearful and vigilant, following the precedent of Mūsā ibn 'Imrān (a). The commander of Sufyānī's army will encamp at Baydā', whereat a crier from the heavens shall cry out: "O Baydā' exterminate these people," so the land of Baydā' will swallow them up, leaving none of them but three individuals, who are from the tribe of [Banī] Kalb. God will invert their faces and the verse that refers to [people like] them is: *O you who were given the Book! Believe in what We have sent down confirming what is with you, before We blot out the faces and turn them backwards, or curse them as We cursed the People of the Sabbath, and Allah's command is bound to be fulfilled* (Q4:47). On that day, the Qā'im will be in Makka, leaning on the Sacred House, and calling out, "O people! We seek the succour of Allah and of those who will answer our call among the believers. Indeed, we are the household of your Prophet, and are the closest people to Allah and Muḥammad (ṣ). So whoever disputes me regarding Ādam, then [know that] I am the closest of all people to Ādam, and whoever disputes me regarding Nūḥ, then [know that] I am the closest of all

people to Nūḥ, and whoever disputes me regarding Ibrāhīm, then [know that] I am the closest of all people to Ibrāhīm (a), and whoever disputes me regarding Muḥammad (ṣ), then [know that] I am the closest of all people to Muḥammad (ṣ). Whoever disputes me regarding the Prophets, then [know that] I am the closest of people to the Prophets. Does Allah not say in His book: *Indeed Allah chose Ādam and Nūḥ, and the progeny of Ibrāhīm and the progeny of ‘Imrān above all the nations; some of them are descendants of the others, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing* (Q3:33-34). Then I am the remnant of Ādam and the legacy of Nūḥ. I am the chosen one from [the progeny of] Ibrāhīm, and the best from [the progeny of] Muḥammad (ṣ). Indeed, whoever disputes me regarding the book of Allah, then I am the closest to the book of Allah. Whoever disputes me regarding the Sunnah of the Prophet of Allah and his character, then I am the closest of all people to the Sunnah of the Prophet and his character. I thus call those who hear my words this day, by Allah, and those who are absent to whom my words are conveyed by those present; [and] I ask you by the right of Allah and His Prophet, and by my right – for indeed I have a right upon you, being a close relative of the Prophet of Allah – that you come to our aid and protect us from those who would oppress us, for we have been wronged, oppressed and expelled from our abode along with our children. We have been persecuted and our rights have been seized, while the followers of falsehood have been preferred over us. So by Allah, be cautious of our rights; do not abandon us and help us, Allah will [in turn] help you!” Thus Allah will gather his followers for him – [they will consist of] three hundred and thirteen individuals whom Allah will assemble for him without any [previous] appointment. They will gather like the cumulus clouds of autumn, and this, O Jābir, is depicted in the verse wherein Allah says: *Wherever you may be, Allah will bring you all together; indeed Allah has power over all things* (Q2:148). They will pledge the oath of allegiance to him next to the Ka’bah while he holds in his hand the covenant of the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) that was

passed down generation to generation. And the Qā'im, O Jābir, is a man from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (a). Allah will pave the way for his coming in a single night, and it will not be confusing for the people, O Jābir. His lineage from the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) and his inheritance from the [godly] scholars, one after the other will not confuse them. And if all this were to be confusing for them, then the voice from the heavens will clarify it for them, as his name and the names of his parents will be called out."⁹⁸

Appraisal:

The Sufyānī is a prominent character in Muslim apocalyptic literature. There are a number of traditions that speak about the Sufyānī and portray him in various, at times contradictory, lights. These differences can be chalked up to the fact that both Sunnī and Shī'ī traditions mention him and since the two schools of thought have differing views of Abū Sufyān (and the companions of the Prophet in general), it is understandable how they would consider his descendant to behave, in accordance to their respective expectations of him, based on his forefather's status in their eyes. Some Sunnī traditions later found their way into the Shī'ī ḥadīth corpus and that is why we find the occasional tradition that paints the Sufyānī as a "not so terrible" individual.⁹⁹ However, due to the vast majority of traditions that depict him as one of the most prominent evil end times figures, the general consensus among Shī'ī scholars is that Sufyānī will lead the forces of evil.

Naturally, the mythic nature of the Sufyānī prophecy led many a story-teller to embellish tales regarding him, and this is why there are contradictory reports about his name, his lineage, and the time and place of his emergence. Nevertheless, the sheer number of reports about this individual precludes the notion of complete fabrication and the few

⁹⁸ Al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisās*, pp. 255–57.

⁹⁹ Ṣādiqī, *Tahlīle Tārīkhīye Nishānehāye Zuhūr*, p. 169.

reliable traditions that have reached us give us a reasonably clear idea of who the Sufyānī will be. Hence, we find that scholars have generally taken four different positions regarding traditions related to the Sufyānī. On the two extremes are those who reject all the Sufyānī traditions outright and those who accept them all without question. Others have tried to explain the seemingly contradictory traditions by proposing the idea of many “Sufyānīs” as a generic term for any evil person from the progeny of Abū Sufyān. Of course, the Sufyānī who represents the antagonist in the end times battle is the worst of them all (just like Satan and his minion of ‘satans’).¹⁰⁰ The fourth position, which is the most reasonable one,¹⁰¹ is where each tradition is scrutinized and those that don’t conform to the general teachings of the Qurʾān and other reliable traditions are marked as weak and unreliable while those that do are accepted.¹⁰²

From the traditions we have quoted, we note that the issue of Sufyānī’s emergence is something that vexed believers even during the early days. In the first tradition, one of the companions of the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir (a), expresses his wish that the day never come when the Sufyānī shows himself. In response, the Imam tells him that the rise of Sufyānī is foreordained and will surely happen. This tradition is considered sound due to the numerous other traditions that support it and emphasize the same thing, i.e. that the advent of Sufyānī is something that has been decreed and will surely come to pass. The more important point that can be gleaned from this tradition is that the idea of the Sufyānī was not something that cropped up in later years. Rather, people were aware of it even during the time of the Imams. In the

¹⁰⁰ Ismāʿīlī, *Barresīye Nishānehāye Zuhūr*, p. 276.

¹⁰¹ Simply because none of the other positions can be substantiated with adequate evidence.

¹⁰² Fiqhīzadeh and Šādiqī, “*Tahlīle Intiqādiye Didgābhāye Mawjūd Darbāreye Khurūje Sufyānī*,” p. 138.

second tradition, whose chain is considered weak due to one narrator¹⁰³ (but also has a narrator from the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'*¹⁰⁴ who are known not to narrate except from those who are considered reliable), we see a vivid description of the Sufyānī. This description is offered by the sixth Imam who narrates from his father, who narrated from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), thereby showing once more that people already knew and were indeed interested to learn more about this arch-nemesis of the end times from the early days of Islam.

The third tradition, which has a sound chain of narrators and is thus considered *ṣaḥīḥ*,¹⁰⁵ speaks of the five signs that will herald the rise of the Mahdī. When the narrator asks the Imam about the status of any uprising before the mentioned signs, he is told in no uncertain terms that he must not join any such uprising, even if it is led by someone from the progeny of the Prophet. This tradition is usually at the centre of debates on quietism versus political activism in Shī'ī Islam. What concerns us here, however, is that one of the signs mentioned is the rise of Sufyānī. The fourth tradition has a weak chain of narrators¹⁰⁶ but contains what are historically substantiated truths regarding Abū Sufyān and his family's enmity with the household of the Prophet (ṣ).

The final tradition in this section is one of the lengthy traditions that contain too many details to be considered wholly authentic. Such traditions are usually likened to stories and fables which, though based on some facts, are mostly fabricated.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that even if a tradition contains fabrication, it does not necessarily

¹⁰³ Namely, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Kūfī (Cf. al-Khū'ī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 17, p. 319).

¹⁰⁴ Namely, Muḥammad ibn Abī 'Umayr (Cf. al-Khū'ī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1, p. 58).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Al-Khū'ī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*.

¹⁰⁶ This is due to the fact that the name of one narrator is missing from the chain and the reliability of al-Ḥakam ibn Sālim is not established (Cf. Al-Khū'ī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 7, p. 179).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 141.

mean that the entire tradition is fabricated. Rather, what happens in most cases is that the narrators and those who come after them sometimes embellish and add some of their own details onto a sound tradition to make it more interesting for their listeners, or of other reasons.¹⁰⁸ One important point we can learn from this and the second tradition is that the Sufyānī does not symbolically represent the leader of all forces of evil in the world as some have assumed, but is an actual individual who will appear at a specific time and place in the future.

Conclusion

The ḥadīth corpus clearly mentions the final apocalyptic encounter and has entire sections on *fitna* and *malāḥim* traditions that deal solely with the subject of tribulations, suffering, and bloodshed that will come during the end times. In some narrations found in Sunnī sources, the enemies of the righteous believers are branded as “Romans” and scholars have debated their identity for centuries. Of all the opinions given, the most reasonable one is that the term ‘Roman’ in these traditions refers to the tyrannical [western] superpower of the day. This is also attested to by the mention of their army being the largest in the world at that time. According to one narration, the Muslims will initially sign a peace treaty with the Romans but when they renege on their agreement and betray the Muslims, the apocalyptic battle will take place. Despite having almost a million soldiers, the Romans will lose to the Muslims, who will then proceed to march on Constantinople.

The conquest of Constantinople is an integral part of the final campaign against the forces of evil according to Sunnī ḥadīth. Through divine aid, the believers will take the city before the final battle. With regards to the battle itself, it can be evinced from the traditions of both schools of thought that it will consist of a number of phases and

¹⁰⁸ A note of gratitude is due to Prof. Abdul-Hadi Mas’udi of Dār al-Ḥadīth for this insight.

campaigns. Certain locations also feature prominently in these end times traditions. Syria is mentioned in many Sunnī traditions and a cursory reading of Islamic history shows that from the early days, Syria was at the centre of many calamities that befell the Muslim community. In some narrations the Prophet (ﷺ) is said to have warned that Syria will suffer greatly before the rise of the awaited Mahdī.

The state of the Muslims, and indeed humanity at large, just before the rise of the Mahdī will be grim to say the least. Depression, hopelessness and despondency will be the order of the day. People will see no reason to continue living and will even express admiration for those who have passed on. Injustice will prevail the world over, and those who do not possess conviction will doubt in the coming of a divine saviour. The main source of evil and tyranny for the Muslims will spring forth from the Arabian desert of Najd. It is during these trying times that the Mahdī will finally make his appearance by the command of God, and will fill the world with justice and equity just as it was filled with tyranny and oppression.

The numerous Shīʿī traditions that refer to the Mahdī as ‘Bearer of the Sword’ (*ṣāhib al-sayf*) constitute some of the strongest evidence that bloodshed and battle is an inextricable part of the mission of the final saviour of humankind. Furthermore, due to the very nature of his mission, the battle will be apocalyptic and will encompass the entire world. For those who are under the false impression that his mere arrival will miraculously set all affairs in order, these traditions categorically state otherwise. This is the natural order prescribed by God, as we see in the Qurʾān, so even if the Mahdī performs some miraculous acts, he will by no means take away the free will and volition of humanity. People will have to decide what side to take, and then face the consequences of their own decisions.

From some of the traditions, we note that the question of whether the awaited saviour will rise with an army or not was being posed even at the time of the Imams themselves. Therefore, it is not a new question.

However, since people are generally averse to bloodshed, there have always been a few who feel that the transition to utopia must be peaceful. For scholars who hold this view, there is no way of reconciling their opinion with the traditions that describe the Mahdī as the Bearer of the Sword, and hence they are left with only one alternative – to dismiss these traditions altogether. However, dismissing a large number of traditions, some of which have sound chains of transmission, requires strong evidence.

Some traditions tell us about how the Mahdī will deal with the hypocrites among the ranks of his followers. They also speak of certain groups, such as the Butriyya in Kūfa, who will reject the Imam when he rises. We are told that these individuals will be dealt with harshly if they do not repent. This will be done with the aim of quashing dissent and uprooting strife. It is only then that the Mahdī will proceed to march against the open enemy. Of the end times figures who feature prominently in the traditions, Sufyānī's name is most notable. This is an individual about whom Muslims have differing views. The Shī'ī view is that he will be the commander of the forces of evil in the final battle, while over history, some Sunnīs developed a positive image of this descendant of Abū Sufyān. In either case, traditions about the Sufyānī also describe a large-scale battle that will take place when he comes.

In the end, taking all the different narrations into account, there is no room for doubt that the final battle between the forces of good and evil is something that has been prophesied in the *ahādīth*. And while some of the details may differ, the general idea of a bloody encounter during the final days of this world as we know it, which will lead to the establishment of a peaceful order, is well established.

5

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Life after death is as mysterious as it is frightening. In this chapter, we present a brief comparative study of the beliefs of the three Abrahamic faiths about death and what comes after it. There are many similarities between these religious traditions but there are quite a few differences as well. In general however, we find that Islam offers details that are not found in the earlier religious traditions, especially within the *ahādīth*. The dearth of information about the afterlife in the Jewish and Christian teachings has led many scholars to come up with hypotheses and speculations about what to expect after death. Islam, on the other hand, gives us all the details about what will transpire, and this is the greatest difference between the three religious traditions when it comes to the subject of death and the afterlife.

Death is an undeniable and inescapable reality. But what happens to human beings when they die falls in the realm of the unknown and unfathomable. The teachings of all the Abrahamic faiths speak of life after death. They mention the promise of God to judge human beings on a final Judgment Day. Subsequently, each person will be rewarded or punished according to God's justice. The righteous have been promised eternal life after death, in a heavenly paradise. On the other hand, those who do evil will be punished in Hell. In our comparison of the beliefs of these three monotheistic faiths, we will see how similar or dissimilar their teachings are about death and the afterlife. It should be noted, however, that this study is not meant to be exhaustive by any

means. Rather, it consists of an overview of the identical and unique beliefs of each tradition. It should further be noted that we will, for the most part, focus on the mainstream views of each of the traditions.

The Experience of Death

In the Jewish tradition, death is considered an integral part of the experience of life, leading from the antechamber of this life into the next. The moment of transition for the soul from its physical body to its journey towards the next world is considered to be a time of great sacredness, for if man is created in the image of God, then the form that once contained that soul is now relieved of its task, and the godly soul begins its return to its divine source.¹ Before death comes, it is considered to be of great merit to recite the *viddui*, the confessional, with the dying. If it is possible for the dying person to recite the *viddui* on his own, he should do so. If not, then one close to him should recite the confessional on his behalf, seeking forgiveness for his sins and asking for healing, even at this critical time, but accepting the divine decree whatever it may be.²

Just before death and immediately thereafter, the body should be placed with feet facing the door³ and with a candle placed at the head of the deceased. This time is also one for family and friends to offer prayers, asking forgiveness from the deceased for any wrongs they may have caused him during his life. In the presence of the deceased, only the highest degree of respect may be exhibited. It is forbidden to eat,

¹ Note the similarity of this with Q2:156 (*Indeed we belong to Allah and indeed we return to Him*).

² This is similar to the Islamic practice of making the person on his death bed pronounce the *shahādah* and recite verses of the Qurʾān.

³ Notice the similarity with the Islamic injunction to turn the person such that his feet face the Qibla.

drink, or smoke in their presence, and only positive thoughts and recollections may be shared concerning them.⁴ The Jewish tradition requires that all Jews must be buried in a plain, white shroud made of muslin, cotton, or linen, for at death all stand equal before God. It is also taught that at a time when a person stands before his Maker, he should do so in simplicity and dignity.⁵

In the Jewish tradition, death is understood as the separation of the eternal, spiritual soul from the material body, the two having been joined together at the time of conception. While the physical body returns to the material earth from which it originated, the eternal soul begins its journey of transition from this world to the next, in a process consisting of elevation, refinement, and transformation. In fact, all of the Jewish customs regarding death and dying, as outlined above, serve to assist the soul in its metaphysical adventure in the World to Come. For example, at the time of the *yarzeit*, the anniversary of the death, Jews not only remember the departed, but also seek to elevate the soul of the deceased to a higher level through the performance of good deeds, such as giving charity and learning the Torah. The specific statement is made to the family, “May the soul of the departed experience an elevation.”⁶

As for the pangs of death, we find that the Talmud describes death as something quite painless: “Rava said to Rav Nachman, ‘Show yourself to me in a dream after you die.’ He showed himself to Rava. Rava asked him, ‘Was death painful?’ Rav Nachman replied, ‘It was as painless as lifting a hair from a cup of milk’. But were the Holy One, blessed be He, to say to me, ‘You may return to that world where you were before,’ I would not wish to do it, as the fear of death is too

⁴ In Islam too, we are commanded to speak only good about the deceased and to show respect in the graveyard.

⁵ The simple white shroud is what Muslims call ‘*kafan*’.

⁶ Cf. Abner Weiss, *Death and Bereavement: A Halakhic Guide*, 1991.

great.”⁷ It has also been compared to sleeping in one’s shoes: “Anyone who wants to get a taste of death should put on shoes and sleep in them.”⁸

From the perspective of the Christian faith, “Death is the end of man’s earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny.”⁹ The manner of a person’s life in this world, at the centre of which is a commitment to faith in Christ, can lead him or her to a death that acts as a gateway to eternal life in God. Thus, physical death and what follows it is inextricably linked to the character and faith of the individual.

Christians, like Muslims, regard the remembrance of death and preparation for it as something very important. One of the classics of early modern Christian spirituality is *The Preparation for Death* (*Apparecchio alla Morte*) by Alfonsus Maria de’ Liguori, published in 1758. Liguori’s rhetoric on the state of the soul of a sinner at the time of death has tremendous force and fully reflects the rich Augustinian heritage of theology, psychology, and proselytization. Liguori gives us a portrait of a despicable person who has never tried to seek virtue and has not only been weak many times, but even malicious; this is a person who did everything to avoid goodness and to justify evil acts. It is the habitual sinner, therefore, who is depicted and not the frail soul, perhaps aware of the gifts of grace and eager for good, but unable to carry out all his responsibilities perfectly.

Liguori’s description of the dying person’s encounter with his memories may be imagined to have contributed to the reluctance a family sometimes showed in inviting a priest to come to help the dying

⁷ Talmud, *Moed Katan* 28a.

⁸ *Ibid*, *Yoma* 78b.

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), paragraph 1013.

person, because he says that everything will seem like a “thorn” to him at that time, even the crucifix. So, to diminish his presumed pain, the family even hides the fatal diagnosis from the dying person, who is left feeling even more abandoned and terrified of what he may already have learned by intuition. Liguori adds that the anguish a sinner experiences is not felt by the just (though many saints experienced other kinds of anguish in the period before death).¹⁰ Of course, this does not conform to the ‘pain of death’ that Jesus himself is said to have suffered: *Jesus suffered the pain of death, but God made him free. He raised him from death. There was no way for death to hold him.*¹¹

Though many Christian scholars have emphasized the importance of respecting the dead, there is no explicit verse in the Bible that suggests that only good things should be spoken about those who have passed away. In fact, the Bible says: *For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.*¹²

Despite the claim that Christ’s body was put in a shroud and then placed in a tomb, as was the practice in those days (something similar is seen in the story of Lazarus in the Bible), Christians today bury their dead in coffins and caskets. It is also not a requirement for them to shroud their dead.

In Islam, there are explicit references in the Holy Qur’ān which state that human beings are from God and will return to Him.¹³ In addition, aside from the verses that speak about death, we have numerous

¹⁰ See: Alfonsus Maria de’ Liguori, *Apparecchio alla Morte* (Verona, Italy: Libreria Salesiana Editrice, 1912), 51-80.

¹¹ Acts 2:24.

¹² Ecclesiastes 9:5-6.

¹³ For example Q2:156.

narrations that encourage us to remember death as much as possible. For example, the following tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) tells us the benefits of remembering death:

ذكر الموت يميت الشهوات في النفس، ويقلع منابت الغفلة، ويقوّي القلب بمواعد الله، ويرقّ الطبع، ويكسر أعلام الهوى، ويطفى نار الحرص، ويحقرّ الدنيا.

Remembering death kills off the lustful desires of the soul, uproots the weeds of negligence, strengthens the heart through [the recollection of] the promises of God, fills one with compassion, breaks the banners of vain desire, extinguishes the flame of greed, and makes this world seem insignificant.¹⁴

As for the question of how painful death is, there are a number of traditions which state that death is a painful experience, such as the following one from Imam ‘Alī (a):

إنّ للموت لغمراتٍ هي أفظع من أن تستغرق بصفةٍ، أو تعتدل على عقول أهل الدنيا.

Indeed death has pangs that are more difficult than words can describe or that minds of people can comprehend.¹⁵

It should be noted however, that some traditions state that death is much easier for a believer than for a non-believer.

Muslim jurists are in unanimous agreement that the dying person should recite the *shahādah* or the testimony of faith, and his body

¹⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 6, p. 133.

¹⁵ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 221.

should be positioned such that his feet face the Qibla. Furthermore, Muslims bury their dead in plain shrouds and have been instructed not to speak ill of the dead.

Life after Death

Judaism has always maintained a belief in an afterlife, but the forms which this belief has assumed and the modes in which it has been expressed have varied greatly and differed from period to period. Jewish texts speak of a complex process of post-death interaction between the body and the soul. According to these sources, while death results from the separation of the soul from the body, the soul nonetheless remains close to the body for a time, even after the separation. Not only does the soul remain in the vicinity of the body immediately after death, it also travels back and forth between the grave and its former home, aware of all that takes place there. In fact, it is believed that for seven days the soul goes back and forth—from his house to his grave and from his grave to his house—mourning for the body. This is corroborated by what the scriptures say: “His flesh shall suffer pain for him, and his soul shall mourn for it.”¹⁶ Furthermore, the soul grieves when he sees the sadness in his house.

There is clear evidence in the Judeo-Christian scriptures of belief in life after death. The Old Testament indicates in several places that the righteous will be reunited with their loved ones after death, while the wicked will be excluded from this reunion. One of the stories mentioned in the Torah, in the book of Samuel, reads:

Samuel, the prophet, had died and all of Israel lamented for him. During this time, King Saul had banished all the witches,

¹⁶ Job XIV, 22.

mediums, and spiritualists from the land of Israel. Soon after, however, the Philistines gathered their army to fight against Saul and Israel, so Saul prepared to repel their invasion, but when he saw the huge army of the Philistines, he was terrified, and his heart trembled greatly. Dismayed, Saul went to the high priest and inquired of the Lord, what fate lay in store for him, but the Lord did not answer, neither by dreams, or by Urim or by the prophets. God had already forsaken Saul, and the time had come for his punishment.

Desperate, and anxious, Saul did the unthinkable. He said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at Endor." So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, taking two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. He said, "Please conduct a séance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you." Then the woman said to him, "Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. Then she spoke to Saul saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!"

The king (Saul) said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?" The woman said, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth." So he asked her, "What was his form?" She said, "As an

old man coming up, and he was covered with a mantle.” And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down. (I Samuel 28:3-14).

Aside from this story, there is little in the way of details about the afterlife mentioned in the Torah or the Bible. Unlike the Islamic traditions which give vivid details about what souls undergo in the middle-realm (*barzakh*) or how questioning takes place in the grave, etc. the Judeo-Christian sources are surprisingly lacking of any such accounts.

One of the many traditions that refer to the questioning in the grave is from Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (a) and reads:

يجيء الملكان - منكر ونكير - إلى الميت حين يدفن، أصواتهما كالرعد القاصف،
وأبصارهما كالبرق الخاطف... فيسألان الميت: من ربك؟ وما دينك؟ قال: فإذا كان
مؤمناً، قال: الله ربّي، وديني الإسلام...

The two angels Munkar and Nakīr come to the dead person when he is buried. Their voices are like thunder and their eyes are like lightening... they ask the dead person: who is your Lord? And what is your religion? If the person was a believer he will answer: Allah is my Lord and my religion is Islam...¹⁷

One important question that scholars have debated is whether or not one will get to meet and be re-united with his loved ones who had passed away before him, when he dies. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this is something that has been accepted and is widely believed to be the case. Muslim scholars have also discussed this matter but due to lack of

¹⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 236.

any explicit evidence, there is no unanimous agreement that one will necessarily meet his loved ones when he dies, though there are some traditions to this effect as well as anecdotal evidence in the form of dreams, etc. Of course, there is no disagreement that such meetings and reunions will take place some after the resurrection, on the Day of Judgment and in the Hereafter.

Resurrection

There are numerous references in the Torah and the Bible that speak of noteworthy individuals being “gathered to their people.”¹⁸ See, for example, Genesis 25:8 (Abraham), 25:17 (Ishmael), 35:29 (Isaac), 49:33 (Jacob), Deuteronomy 32:50 (Moses and Aaron), II Kings 22:20 (King Josiah), etc. This gathering is described as a separate event from the physical death of the body or the burial and hence it implicitly refers to the resurrection of human beings after death. Additionally, the Hebrew Bible speaks of certain sins that are punishable by the sinner being “cut off from his people.”¹⁹ This punishment is referred to as *Kareit* which literally means ‘cutting off’ but is usually translated as “spiritual excision,” and it means that the soul loses its position in the Hereafter.

There is also some discussion about the resurrection in Jewish scriptures. For example, the book of Daniel, written around the second century B.C., clearly states that “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the Earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence.”²⁰ Furthermore, the second blessing of the

¹⁸ This is similar to the Qur’anic verses that speak of each community being resurrected with their Prophet (like Q4:41).

¹⁹ See, for example, Genesis 17:14 and Exodus 31:14.

²⁰ Daniel 12:2.

Shemoneh Esrei prayer, which is recited three times daily, contains several references to the Jewish concept of *tehiyat hametim* (resurrection of the dead). It should be noted, however, that the Jewish reform movement, which apparently rejects this belief, has rewritten this blessing and removed the phrase referring to resurrection accordingly.²¹

When the messiah comes to initiate the perfect world of peace and prosperity, the righteous dead will be brought back to life and given the opportunity to experience the perfected world that their righteousness helped to create.²² The wicked dead will not be resurrected. The Jewish messiah is a leader anointed by God, physically descended from the Davidic line, who will rule the united tribes of Israel²³ and herald the Messianic Age of global peace also known as the World to Come.²⁴

There are some mystical Jewish schools of thought that believe resurrection is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process. The souls of the righteous are reborn to continue the task of *tikkun olam* or mending of the world. Some sources indicate that reincarnation is a routine process, while others indicate that it only occurs in unusual circumstances, where the soul left unfinished business behind. Belief in reincarnation is also one way to explain the traditional Jewish notion that every Jewish soul in history was present at Sinai and agreed to the covenant with God. Another explanation for this is that the soul exists before the body, so these unborn souls were present in some form at Sinai. From time to time in Jewish history, there had been an insistent belief that their prophets were reborn. Reincarnation was part of the Jewish doctrines, being taught under the rubric of ‘resurrection’. In the Talmud, *gilgul neshamot* (reincarnation) is constantly mentioned. According to this view, people who commit extraordinary sins are given

²¹ Wikipedia: Jewish Eschatology (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_eschatology).

²² Something akin to the Shīʿī belief in *raʿjʿab*.

²³ Exodus 30:22-25.

²⁴ See: <https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Messiah.html>.

an opportunity to return to life in order to set things right. More particularly, they are reincarnated in circumstances similar to those of their previous incarnation. Thus, Moses and Jethro, for example, were supposed to be the *gilgulim* (reincarnations) of Cain and Abel.²⁵

Christians believe that all human beings will rise from the dead to face final judgment. The resurrection of Christ is, for them, an important precursor to the resurrection of all believers and their immortality. According to the New Testament, not only has Jesus been raised but he has also become the agent of the resurrection of all human beings. With his ascension to heaven, Jesus gained the title “Risen Lord,” and assumed the role of judge over all of humanity in the Last Judgment, after the general resurrection of the dead that will come at the end of time.²⁶

Christian authors argued against the Jewish beliefs that they will inhabit the earth after the resurrection; they will be rewarded with temporal goods; they will live this way eternally with the Messiah, who is to arrive for the first time in history and bring the Jews back to the Promised Land; they will begin to worship God once again in the Temple, which will be rebuilt by the Messiah; they will resume the same offices they executed when they were alive; and the gentiles will be subjugated. These beliefs are problematic because according to medieval Christian writers, Jews are never to return to the Promised Land since they have “betrayed their God and killed his son.”²⁷

In Islam, there is nothing vague about the belief in resurrection. In fact, the Qur’ān recounts how different Prophets tried to convince the people of their time that God would eventually raise them after they

²⁵ See: <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/origen05.html>.

²⁶ “The Resurrection of Jesus and Human Beings in Medieval Christian and Jewish Theology and Polemical Literature,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, University of St. Thomas, vol. 4 (2009), p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

had died, and they would have to give account for their actions. The arguments and doubts of the unbelievers have been mentioned and answered in numerous verses (e.g. Q36:78). There are even cases where Prophets themselves asked God to show them how He would resurrect the dead after their bodies had disintegrated, and God demonstrates it to them by bringing some animals back to life in front of their eyes.²⁸

In the *ahādīth*, we have further references to the resurrection of the dead. In one narration Luqmān, the wise, told his son:

يا بني كما تنام كذلك تموت، وكما تستيقظ كذلك تبعث.

My son, just as you sleep, you will [one day] die; and just as you wake up, you will one day be resurrected.²⁹

Therefore we find that in Islam, there is no room for doubt or any difference of opinion regarding the reality of resurrection after death. The only question that is discussed among scholars, and especially the Muslim philosophers, is whether the resurrection will be physical or spiritual, and whether the body we will have is the same one we had on earth or only its likeness. Addressing these questions is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter.

Accounting and Judgment

In Jewish teachings, when a man dies his soul leaves his body, but for the first twelve months it retains a temporary relationship to it, coming and going until the body has disintegrated.³⁰ Thus the prophet Samuel

²⁸ See the story of Abraham and the birds in Q2:260; Uzayr and the donkey in Q2:259.

²⁹ Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 13, p. 421.

³⁰ Bernerd S. Jackson (Ed.), *The Jewish Law*, vol. 12, p. 101.

could be raised from the dead within the first year of his demise. This year remains a purgatorial period for the soul, or according to another view only for the wicked soul, after which the righteous go to Paradise (*Gan Eden*) and the wicked to Hell (*Geihinnom*).

The Torah emphasizes immediate, concrete, physical rewards and punishments rather than abstract future ones. See, for example, Leviticus 26:3-9: “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.”³¹

The Talmud states that all of Israel has a share in the World to Come (*Olam Ha-Ba*); however, not all “shares” are equal. A particularly righteous person will have a greater share in the *Olam Ha-Ba* than the average person. In addition, a person can lose his share through wicked actions.³² There are many statements in the Talmud that a particular *mitzvah* will guarantee one a place in the *Olam Ha-Ba*, or that a particular sin will cause a person to lose his share in the *Olam Ha-Ba*, but these are generally regarded as hyperbolic expressions of approval

³¹ A similar message can be seen in the Qur’ān in Q7:96 and other such verses. However, Islam puts more emphasis on rewards in the Hereafter than on worldly rewards.

³² Shmuel Waldman, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, pp. 99-100.

or disapproval.

One of the questions that is often asked is: Will gentiles (non-Jews) have a place in *Olam Ha-Ba*? Although there are a few statements to the contrary in the Talmud, the common view in Judaism is that the righteous of all nations have a share in the *Olam Ha-Ba*. It has been noted that opposition to this was not based on the notion that being a Jew is a prerequisite to get into *Olam Ha-Ba*, but was rather grounded in the idea that non-Jews are not righteous people. This has been justified by considering the behaviour of the non-Jewish peoples at the time that the Talmud was written.³³

Out of the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism is the only one that does not believe in a day of judgment in the traditional sense. In Judaism, the Day of Judgment happens every year on *Rosh Hashanah* (a day which is also known as *Yom HaDin*, Judgment Day), when God sits in His heavenly court and judges all the people of the world. He decides what will happen to them in the coming year. Whether they will live or die, be poor or rich, sick or healthy, and so on.³⁴

Christianity generally teaches that everyone will be held to account on Judgment Day. Jesus is reported to have declared that nothing escapes the Eye of God and one will be questioned even for words that are uttered carelessly.³⁵ Many Christians incorrectly believe that they will not be made answerable for their actions because they have been “saved”. Yet scholars state that this just means one will be spared the wrath of God and divine condemnation, it does not mean that there is no accountability or divine scrutiny.³⁶

There are many verses in the Bible that speak about Judgment Day.

³³ See: www.jewfaq.org/olamhaba.htm.

³⁴ Yaffa Ganz, *Rosh Hashanah*, p. 7.

³⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Discovering the God Who Is: His Character and Being. His Power and Personality*, p. 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 76.

Some verses explicitly state that people will be rewarded or punished because of their deeds.³⁷ The Catholics believe that one can avoid punishment and divine wrath by confessing his or her sins in this world. That is why they emphasize the importance of going to confession and admitting their misdeeds to priests, so that they can thereby be cleansed of their wrongdoings before leaving this world. However, it was partly due to the misuse of private information that some priests learned about members of their congregation that, in the 16th century, Martin Luther created the protestant movement from which evolved the Protestant sect of Christianity.³⁸

Details about the Day of Judgment and how one will give account for his deeds are found more in Islam than in any other religious tradition. In Islamic eschatology, specifics about the signs of the Day of Reckoning (*ashrāṭ al-sā'ah*) are discussed in detail and some scholars have listed up to fifty signs from the Qur'an and ḥadīth.³⁹ About the day itself, there are many verses that speak of how long it will be (Q70:4), how the accounting will be done, and how the people will behave towards one another on that day (Q80:34-40). One verse states:

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لِهَذَا
 الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا
 يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ۝

The Book will be set up. Then you will see the guilty apprehensive of what is in it. They will say, 'Woe to us! What a book is this! It omits nothing,

³⁷ See Matthew 16:27 for example.

³⁸ Donald K. McKim, *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, p. 79.

³⁹ Suhaib Hasan, *50 Signs of the Day of Judgment*,

<http://www.islamicfinder.org/articles/article.php?id=75&lang=english>

big or small, without enumerating it.' They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone. (Q18:49)

This verse describes how shocked people will be when they are shown their book of deeds on the Day of Judgment, especially when they see how detailed it is and not even the smallest action has been left out.

There are also hundreds of narrations that refer to the Day of Judgment. One narration from Imam al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (a) states:

لا يأمن يوم القيامة إلا من خاف الله في الدنيا.

None will be secure on the Day of Judgment except he who fears God in this world.⁴⁰

Thus we find that out of the three Abrahamic faiths, there is no dearth of information on the Day of Reckoning in Islamic teachings.

Paradise

The place of spiritual reward for the righteous is often referred to in Hebrew as *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden). This is not the same place where Adam and Eve resided; it is a location of spiritual perfection.⁴¹ Specific descriptions of it vary widely from one source to another. One source says that the peace that one feels when one experiences *Shabbat* properly is merely one-sixtieth of the pleasure of the afterlife. Other sources compare the bliss of the afterlife to the joy of sexual congress or the warmth of a sunny day. Ultimately, though, the living can no more

⁴⁰ Ibn Sharhāshūb, *Manāqib Āl 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a)*, vol. 4, p. 69.

⁴¹ This is the same view held by the great philosopher-exegete 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his *Tafsīr al-Mizān*.

understand the nature of this place than the blind can understand colour.⁴²

The *Midrash Agada* gives a detailed description of Paradise. Dimensions of the chambers and other similar details are given, and the particulars are vividly stated in various forms of legendary narratives. These accounts are supposed to have been communicated by the very few individuals who, it is claimed, visited Paradise while alive. The *Haggadah* credits nine mortals with entrance into Heaven while alive: Enoch, Abraham's servant Eliezer, Serah the daughter of Asher, Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, Hiram King of Tyre, Elijah, Messiah, Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, and Jabez b. Judah.⁴³ One of these accounts is credited to Enoch; it reads as follows:

“The *Gan Eden* at the east measures 800,000 years (at ten miles per day or 3,650 miles per year). There are five chambers for various classes of the righteous. The first is built of cedar, with a ceiling of transparent crystal. This is the habitation of non-Jews who become true and devoted converts to Judaism... The second is built of cedar, with a ceiling of fine silver. This is the habitation of the penitents... The third chamber is built of silver and gold, ornamented with pearls. It is very spacious, and contains the best of heaven and of earth, with spices, fragrance, and sweet odours. In the centre of this chamber stands the Tree of Life, 500 years high. Under its shadow rest Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the tribes, those of the Egyptian exodus and those who died in the wilderness, headed by Moses and Aaron... The Tree of Life is like a ladder on which the souls of the righteous may ascend and descend... The souls on entering Paradise are

⁴² Excerpt from: <http://www.jewfaq.org/olamhaba.htm>.

⁴³ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 516.

bathed in the 248 rivulets of balsam and attar. The fourth chamber is made of olive-wood and is inhabited by those who have suffered for the sake of their religion. Olives typify bitterness in taste and brilliancy in light [olive-oil], symbolizing persecution and its reward. The fifth chamber is built of precious stones, gold, and silver, surrounded by myrrh and aloes. There are couches of gold and silver and fine drapery. In the centre is a canopy made of the cedars of Lebanon, in the style of the Tabernacle, with posts and vessels of silver; and a settee of Lebanon wood with pillars of silver and a seat of gold, the covering thereof of purple.”⁴⁴

During early Christianity, there existed various discussions within which terms such as ‘Paradise’, ‘Kingdom of Heaven’, ‘Bosom of Abraham’, and ‘Place of Refreshment’ were used to refer to the abode of eternal bliss. In Christian scripture, ‘Paradise’ could as easily refer to a celestial interim location as it could to the terrestrial Garden of Eden, and as frequently merge with heaven as it could be distinguished from it. Several of these senses of paradise survived into the early Middle Ages to enter new contexts and develop fresh applications.⁴⁵ Interestingly though, there is little in the way of details and descriptions about Paradise that Christianity has to offer.

Another dimension that Christianity adds to the concept of Paradise is the claim that people can share in heaven even while they are still on earth. After his death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ assumed the place at the right hand of God the Father. It is believed that because Jesus, a being both human and divine, occupies

⁴⁴ See: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11900-paradise>.

⁴⁵ Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 5.

this focal position in heaven, heaven is conceivable and accessible to Christians. Their relationship with Christ becomes the way to heaven where God sits. In Christian terms, solidarity and love of others makes it possible to experience heaven while still on earth.⁴⁶

The Glorious Qurʾān describes Paradise in numerous verses. Some of its descriptions are very detailed and give a clear picture of what life in the dwelling of eternal bliss will be like. One such verse is in Sūrah Muḥammad, verse 15:

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَّاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ
يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشُّرَبِيينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ

A description of the paradise promised to the Godwary: therein are streams of unstaling water and streams of milk unchanging in flavour, and streams of wine delicious to the drinkers, and streams of purified honey; there will be every kind of fruit in it for them, and forgiveness from their Lord... (Q47:15)

Aside from verses like these, there are many narrations in the ḥadīth corpus that speak about Paradise in detail. One famous narration is that of the ascension of the Prophet (ṣ), or the *Miʿrāj*, which can be found both in the Sunnī and Shīʿī sources. Additionally, there are many traditions that describe the unending and unceasing bliss and joy that believers experience in Paradise. For example, one tradition attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) states:

لذاتها لا تملّ، ومجتمعها لا يتفرّق، وسكانها قد جاوروا الرحمن، وقام بين أيديهم

⁴⁶ *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience*, p. 556.

الغلمان، بصحافٍ من الذهب فيها الفاكهة والريحان.

...Its pleasures do not make one weary, its gatherings do not disperse,
its inhabitants have become the neighbours of the All-Merciful,
servant boys stand amongst them with golden trays in which are fruits
and sweet basil.⁴⁷

Unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam includes a second condition for entry into Paradise, namely the performance of good deeds. It is not enough to believe and to proclaim faith in the tenets of Islam. One also needs to be a practicing Muslim who complies with all the injunctions and commandments that have been revealed through the Noble Prophet (ﷺ).

Hell

In Judaic literature, the word used to refer to Hell is *Gehinnom*.⁴⁸ The term *Gehinnom* is derived from a place outside ancient Jerusalem known as the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, one of the two principal valleys surrounding the Old City. Jews believe that the period of time spent in *Gehinnom* never exceeds twelve months, after which the sinful Jew ascends to take his place in *Olam Ha-Ba*. Only the utterly wicked do not ascend at the end of this period. Sources differ on what happens to these individuals at the end of those twelve months: some say that the wicked soul is utterly destroyed and ceases to exist while others say

⁴⁷ Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amāli*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ *Gehinnom* is mentioned in the writings of the Prophet Jeremiah: And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of... Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart (7:31).

that the soul continues to exist in a state of endless remorse.⁴⁹

Early Judaism had no concept of Hell, and it is alleged that the whole idea of an afterlife was introduced during the Hellenic period, apparently from neighbouring religions.⁵⁰ It occurs, for example in Book of Daniel thus: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”⁵¹ Judaism does not have a specific doctrine about the afterlife, but it does have a tradition of a place termed *Gehenna* (the place of punishment). *Gehenna* is not believed to be Hell, but is considered a sort of purgatory where one is judged based his deeds, or rather, where one becomes completely cognizant of his own shortcomings. The mystical Kabbalah tradition explains it by giving the analogy of a ‘waiting room’ for the souls. Jewish mythology states that *Gehenna*, was one of the seven things created before the Creation, but for a long time it was nothing more than a great void. Then, at the time that God separated Himself from Adam and ascended on high, God lit the fires of *Gehenna*, and made them alternate with periods where everything is covered by ice.⁵²

According to Jewish teachings, Hell is not entirely physical; rather, it can be compared to a very intense feeling of shame. People are ashamed of their misdeeds and this constitutes suffering which makes up for the bad deeds. This is not meant to refer to some point in the future, but to the very present moment. Being out of alignment with God’s will is itself a punishment according to the Torah.⁵³

The focus of Christianity is on eternal life, not punishment after

⁴⁹ This false belief has been referred to in the Qur’ān in Q2:80.

⁵⁰ William Sutherland, *God is Love*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Daniel 12:2.

⁵² Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, p. 232.

⁵³ Excerpt from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell#Judaism>. However, there seems to be no reference in the Torah for this statement.

death. Christians hold that by his divine sacrifice, Christ made it possible for humanity to imitate his resurrection through the reunion of the soul with a body made spiritual, forming a renewed person who will enjoy eternal bliss in the kingdom of God.⁵⁴ As such, the authors of the Christian Bible considered three possibilities: The first possibility is ‘mere’ death. Those who fall short could simply remain in their graves, decompose, and pass into nothingness. That would be natural or simple death, or what the New Testament calls destruction. Those left out of the resurrection would not know eternal life or inherit the kingdom of God, but they would not be aware of their loss either.

A second view holds that simple death does not suffice: justice demands retribution. Those who reject the Christian message will also be resurrected, but then they will be sent to a fate separate from, and worse than, that of the blessed. The damned will suffer ‘wrath’ or ‘evil’, either temporarily or unendingly in eternal damnation. Other Christians proposed a third possibility: universal salvation - for surely God will eventually draw all to Himself, even if it is after punishment.⁵⁵

In the Bible, Hell has been described in different ways, ranging from a place of outer darkness⁵⁶ to a place of sorrows,⁵⁷ a place of everlasting destruction,⁵⁸ a place where men are tormented with fire and brimstone,⁵⁹ a place where fire is not quenched,⁶⁰ a bottomless pit,⁶¹ a place of no rest,⁶² a lake of fire,⁶³ and a place of hopeless anguish and

⁵⁴ John 3:16; I Corinthians 15:44.

⁵⁵ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*, pp. 206-207.

⁵⁶ Matthew 22:13.

⁵⁷ 2 Samuel 22:6.

⁵⁸ II Thessalonians 1:9.

⁵⁹ Revelation 21:8.

⁶⁰ Mark 9:44.

⁶¹ Revelation 9:2.

⁶² Ibid, 14:11.

⁶³ Ibid, 20:14.

torment.⁶⁴

There are many literary portrayals of Purgatory and Hell from a Christian perspective. A famous example is Dante Alighieri's epic, *The Divine Comedy*. In this work, the poet describes his imaginary journey through the *inferno* (Hell) and *purgatorio* (Purgatory). In Dante's imagination, half of the earth is inhabited while the other half is sea. Hell is inside the globe and originated when God cast the angel Lucifer from Heaven. Purgatory is a mountain in the middle of the sea. The dead can eventually reach Heaven via the mountain of purification, which corresponds with purgatory. This imaginary world exemplifies the way people attempt to portray the form that life after death may assume.⁶⁵

In Islam, Hell has been clearly mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an along with some vivid descriptions of its torments. The verses refer to Hell in different ways and using different names. These include: *Jahannam*, *Jahīm*, *al-Nār*, etc.⁶⁶ In the *ahādīth*, we find some very detailed descriptions of the kinds of punishments and torments the evildoers will suffer in Hell. One narration that has been attributed to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) states:

أربعة يؤذون أهل النار على ما بهم من الأذى: يسقون من الحميم في الجحيم، ينادون بالويل والثبور، يقول أهل النار بعضهم لبعض: ما بال هؤلاء الأربعة قد آذونا على ما بنا من الأذى؟ فرجل معلق في تابوت من جمر، ورجل يجزّ أمعاءه، ورجل يسيل فوه قيحاً ودماً، ورجل يأكل لحمه. فقيل لصاحب التابوت ما بال الأبعد قد آذانا على ما بنا من الأذى؟ فيقول:

⁶⁴ Luke 16:24.

⁶⁵ *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience*, p. 556.

⁶⁶ Q2:206, Q87:14, Q2:24 and Q2:126 respectively.

إنَّ الأبعد قد مات وفي عنقه أموال الناس لم يجد لها في نفسه أداءً ولا وفاءً. ثمَّ يقال للذي يجرُّ أمعاءه: ما بال الأبعد قد آذانا على ما بنا من الأذى؟ فيقول: إنَّ الأبعد كان لا يبالي أين أصاب البول من جسده. ثمَّ يقال للذي يسيل فوه قيحاً ودماً: ما بال الأبعد قد آذانا على ما بنا من الأذى؟ فيقول: إنَّ الأبعد كان يحاكي فينظر إلى كلِّ كلمةٍ خبيثةٍ فيسندها ويحاكي بها. ثمَّ يقال للذي كان يأكل لحمه: ما بال الأبعد قد آذانا على ما بنا من الأذى؟ فيقول: إنَّ الأبعد كان يأكل لحوم الناس بالغيبة ويمشي بالنميمة.

Four people increase the torment of the already tormented inhabitants of Hell, as they are made to drink boiling water in the blazing fire, and hear cries of woe and destruction. The people of Hell will ask each other: "What is the matter with these four – they torment us while we are already tormented?" One is a man suspended above a casket of burning coal, the other is a man whose entrails are dragged out, the third is a man whose mouth is overflowing with pus and blood, and the fourth is a man who is eating his own flesh. Then it will be asked of the person suspended on the casket of coals, "What is the matter with this accursed individual who torments us while we are already tormented?" He will reply, "This accursed one died while he owed the people money and he purposely refused to repay what was due." Then it will be asked of the one whose entrails are being dragged, "What is the matter with this accursed individual who torments us while we are already tormented?" He will reply, "This accursed one never used to care much about [impurities like] urine and where it falls on his body." Then it will be asked of the one whose mouth is overflowing with pus and

blood, “What is the matter with this accursed individual who torments us while we are already tormented?” He will reply, “This accursed one used to speak and look for the most ugly [and obscene] words and then use them in his speech and relate them.” Then it will be asked of the one whose is eating his own flesh, “What is the matter with this accursed individual who torments us while we are already tormented?” He will reply, “This accursed one would eat the flesh of the people through backbiting and would go about slandering them.”⁶⁷

There are numerous similar narrations in both Shīfī and Sunnī sources. As such, it is evident that Islam has the most to offer in terms of descriptions of Hell.

Summary

The following chart represents a summary of the most salient features of each Abrahamic faith in relation to belief in the Afterlife:

	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Belief that death means a return to God	✓	✓	✓
Emphasis on remembering and preparing for death		✓	✓
Recitation of testimony of faith on death bed	✓		✓
Turning the dying person in a specific direction	✓		✓

⁶⁷ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 8, p. 281.

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Speaking only good about the dead	✓		✓
Burial in a plain white shroud	✓		✓
Death is painful (especially for the sinful)		✓	✓
A link between the body and soul after death	✓		✓
Being re-united with loved ones after death	✓	✓	
Belief in resurrection after death	✓	✓	✓
Belief in ' <i>raj'ah</i> ' of the righteous in this world	✓		✓
Belief in a Day of Judgment		✓	✓
Detailed description of Paradise in scripture	✓		✓
Belief is sufficient for entry into Paradise	✓	✓	
Remorse is one of the torments of Hell	✓		✓
Detailed descriptions of Hell		✓	✓

Conclusion

After examining the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam about life after death, we see that these three monotheistic traditions have many common tenets pertaining to death and the afterlife. Since their scriptures are all from the same divine source, the differences between them can be attributed to later influences and subsequent changes that were made to the early scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Theories and hypotheses about the afterlife in these traditions abound, but every scholar who has presented theories about life after death has done so

based purely on speculation, for indeed there is very little in the primary Judeo-Christian sources about the subject.

In Islam, on the other hand, numerous details are found, not only in the traditions of the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and his progeny (a), but also in the Glorious Qurʾān. In fact, after looking at what the other traditions have to offer by way of particulars about what a human being undergoes in the grave, when he is resurrected, on Judgment Day, and in Paradise or Hell, it is quite evident that Islam offers more details about all of these subjects in than any of the other religious traditions. This is the fundamental difference between Islamic teachings about the afterlife and those of the other religions.

Learning about the afterlife from scripture and from the traditions of divinely appointed messengers and guides is the only way to access knowledge about the unseen realm, as nobody who dies is able to return to the world and inform its inhabitants about what he or she experienced. And even if, perchance, this were to happen, there is no way of knowing whether what every individual experiences will be the same or not. The only way, therefore, that we can learn about life after death is by referring to religious teachings. Islam is the richest in these teachings and gives us a very clear picture about what to expect when we die.

6

THE SERMON OF AL-SAYYIDAH AL-ZAHRĀ' (A) COMMONLY KNOWN AS AL-KHUṬBAH AL-FADAKIYYAH

Fadak was a fertile farm of date-palms outside Madīna. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) gifted it to his daughter Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (a)¹ but after he passed away, it was taken as the general property of the Muslims. Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' went to see the caliph and delivered a sermon in which she demanded what was rightfully hers.² This momentous sermon came to be known as the Sermon of Fadak (*al-khuṭbah al-fadakiyyah*). It is also known in some sources as *khuṭbah al-lummah* (lit. the sermon in the company) since al-Sayyidah al-Zahrā' came to deliver it in the company of women.³ In this chapter, we shall first examine the sources and narrators of this sermon and then proceed to translate the entire sermon.

When Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quḥāfah (the first caliph) took the land of Fadak claiming that it belonged to the Muslims, al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah (a) went to the Prophet's masjid to face Abū Bakr and ask for her right. At that time, the mosque was full of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār. Fāṭimah entered with a group of women surrounding her. A special place was

¹ Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī reported that when the verse "Give to close relatives their due..." (Q17:26) was revealed, the Prophet (ṣ) called Fāṭimah and gave her Fadak. (See: al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafṣīr al-Ma'thūr*, vol. 4, p. 177).

² Oration and delivering sermons was an age-old practice among the Arabs that was used to convey important messages to the people. (See: Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-'Arab qabl al-Islām*, vol. 16, p. 405).

³ This is the title given to the sermon by a number of commentators such as Ibn 'Abdūn (d. 423 A.H.) who was one of the shaykhs of al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī (See: al-Najāshī, *Fibris Asmā' Muṣannifi al-Shī'ah*, p. 224), as well as Sayyid 'Abdullāh Shubbar (d. 1224 A.H.) with his work *Sharḥ Khuṭbah al-Lummah*.

kept for her and she stood behind a curtain as she addressed Abū Bakr and all those who were present. When she had finished the first part of her sermon, Abū Bakr responded to what she had said. She then confuted his response using evidence from the Qurʾān. Her sermon addresses various issues such as the right of the caliphate, the philosophy of worship, the state of Arabs before Islam, and the importance of the Qurʾān.

Sources

It can be evinced from biographical accounts that this sermon was recorded in the earliest sources. Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, better known as Abū Mikhnaf al-Azdī (d. 154 A.H.), penned a monograph titled *Khuṭbat al-Zahrāʾ* خطبة الزهراء which is no longer extant.⁴ The famous fourth century historian-cum-ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Faraj Isfahānī, also wrote a book titled *Kalāmu Fāṭimah fī Fadak* which, similarly, has not reached us.⁵ The teacher of al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī, Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Bazzāz (d. 423 A.H.) is likewise said to have written a book called *Tafsīr Khuṭbat Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ*.⁶

Aside from these early works, we find that many scholars recorded this sermon in their books, either in its entirety or partially. The following is a list of all the extant works, which were compiled before the end of the 7th century A.H., wherein the sermon of this holy lady has been mentioned:

- 1) *Balāghāt al-Nisāʾ* by Aḥmad ibn Ṭayfūr: Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir, better known as Ibn Ṭayfūr (d. 280 A.H.), is reported to have authored about fifty works. His magnum opus was *Tārīkh Baghdād* and another famous work by him is *al-*

⁴ Tehrānī, *al-Dharīʿah*, vol. 7, p. 203.

⁵ Ibid. vo. 18, p. 109.

⁶ Al-Najāshī, *Fihris Asmāʾ Muṣannifi al-Shīʿah*, p. 87.

Manthūr wal-Manzūm.⁷ The latter work was penned in fourteen volumes out of which only the eleventh and twelfth volume have reached us. Part of the eleventh volume is currently available under the title: *Balāghāt al-Nisā'*. This monograph contains the speeches of some influential women. Ibn Ṭayfūr narrates the sermon of al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah (a) after the speeches of 'Ā'isha, wife of the Prophet (ṣ).⁸ This is one of the earliest written sources where the sermon of the Prophet's daughter has been recorded with its chain of transmission.

- 2) *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt* by al-Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥillī: Sa'd ibn 'Abdillāh al-Ash'arī al-Qummī (d. 300 A.H.), one of the well-respected Shī'ah scholars of his time, wrote a book called *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*.⁹ This book contained numerous traditions related to Shī'i beliefs and was extant until the eight century A.H. Al-Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥillī later related some traditions from it, to which he appended other traditions in a work titled *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*. In this book, the author mentions the themes of the Sermon of Fadak without relating the actual sermon itself.¹⁰
- 3) *Al-Saqīfah wa Fadak* by Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jawharī: Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 323 A.H.) was a fourth century Sunnī ḥadīth scholar. His work *al-Saqīfah wa Fadak*, as the name suggests, recounts these two important historic events during the early period of Islam. This book is not extant. However, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has related some portions of it in his commentary on *Nahj al-Balāgha*. The book with the title *al-Saqīfah wa Fadak* that is currently available is actually a

⁷ Al-Zirkilī, *al-A'lām: Qāmūs Tarājim li Ashhur al-Rijāl wal-Nisā'*, vol. 1, p. 141.

⁸ Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Balāghāt al-Nisā'*, p. 23.

⁹ Not to be confused with al-Ṣaffār's *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt fī Faḍā'il Āl Muḥammad*.

¹⁰ Al-Ḥillī, *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 456.

compilation of what has been related by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. Al-Jawharī narrated parts of al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah's sermon with its chains of transmission.¹¹

- 4) *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīn* by **Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī**: 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, better known as Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356 A.H.), authored many tomes, the most famous among which is the encyclopaedic work *al-Aghānī*.¹² One of his other important works is *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīn* (or *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*). In it he recounts the history of the progeny of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. He mentions the existence of this sermon when he surveys the life of Zaynab al-Kubrā (a) and notes that Ibn 'Abbās narrated al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah's sermon from her saying, "Our *'aqīlah*, Zaynab bint 'Alī (a), narrated to me..."¹³
- 5) *Sharḥ al-Akbbār fī Fadā'il al-A'immat al-Aḥbār* by **Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad**: Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad, better known as Qāḍī Nu'mān al-Maghribī (d. 363 A.H.), was a Shī'ī scholar. He wrote this book with the aim of compiling the merits and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (a).¹⁴ In it he narrates part of the sermon of al-Sayyidah al-Zahrā' (a) without its chain of transmission.¹⁵
- 6) *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* by **Shaykh al-Ṣadūq**: Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, commonly known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 A.H.), was one of the luminaries of the Shī'ah world. His work *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* is considered one of the four main sources of Shī'ī ḥadīth. In this book, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates part of the

¹¹ Al-Jawharī, *al-Saqīfah wa Fadak*, p. 98.

¹² Al-Zirkilī, *al-A'lām*, vol. 4, p. 276.

¹³ Al-Isfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 95.

¹⁴ Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad, *Sharḥ al-Akbbār*, vol. 1, p. 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* vol. 3, p. 34.

Sermon of Fadak from al-Sayyidah Zaynab, after which he says: "The sermon is lengthy; we have taken from it that which we require [for our discussion]."¹⁶

- 7) *Ilal al-Sharāi'* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq: Being a prolific writer, al-Ṣadūq wrote and compiled numerous works. In this book, he tries to examine the wisdom behind religious injunctions and narrates the same part of the sermon that he narrated in *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* but with two different chains of transmission.¹⁷
- 8) *Al-Manāqib* by Aḥmad ibn Mūsā ibn Mardawayh (a. 410 A.H.): This book is not currently extant. However, As'ad ibn Shafarwih (d. 635 A.H.) related this sermon from it in his book *al-Fā'iḳ* (which is also non-extant) and Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, in turn, narrated it in his work *al-Ṭarā'if*.¹⁸ Though the original book by Ibn Mardawayh no longer exists, there is a version of it which has been recompiled from *al-Ṭarā'if* that is currently available.
- 9) *Nathr al-Durar* by Maṣṣūr ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī: The author of this work was a fifth century (A.H.) Shī'i scholar from Rayy and had been, for some time, the vizier to Majd al-Dawlah.¹⁹ He compiled this work in seven volumes and though he had named it *Nathr al-Durar*, it was published and is well known as *Nathr al-Durr*. His other works include *Nuzhat al-Adīb* and *al-Tārikh*. This work contains a large part of al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah's sermon, but without any chain of narrators.²⁰

¹⁶ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, vol. 3, pp. 567-568.

¹⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, *Ilal al-Sharāi'*, vol. 1, p. 248.

¹⁸ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarā'if*, p. 263.

¹⁹ Al-Zirkilī, *al-A'lām*, vol. 7, p. 289.

²⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Nathr al-Durr*, vol. 4, pp. 5-7.

- 10) *Al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah* by Sayyid al-Murtaḍā: ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī, better known as al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, was one of the luminaries of the Shī‘ah world. He wrote prolifically on numerous subjects such as jurisprudence, ḥadīth and history. As the name suggests, *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah* is a book that contains traditions related to the subject of *imāmah*. In this work, al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā relates part of the Sermon of Fadak from his teacher with three different chains of transmission.²¹
- 11) *Dalā‘il al-Imāmah* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī: This author is known as al-Ṭabarī al-Ṣaghīr and was a fifth century scholar.²² The most detailed narration of the Sermon of Fadak has been recorded in this work and hence it is commonly referred to by the late and contemporary scholars. Al-Ṭabarī has listed eight different chains of transmission for this sermon.²³
- 12) *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn (a)* by Muwaffaq ibn Aḥmad al-Makkī (d. 568 A.H.), better known as al-Khaṭīb al-Khwārizmī: In this work, he narrates part of the sermon from ‘Ā’isha.²⁴
- 13) *Al-Iḥtijāj ‘alā Ahl al-Lijāj* by Abū Maṣū‘ al-Ṭabrasī: Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭabrasī (d. 588 A.H.) was a Shī‘ī scholar of the sixth century. His book *al-Iḥtijāj* contains the debates of the Prophet (ṣ), the Imams (a), their companions, and some Muslim scholars against their opponents. In this work, al-Ṭabrasī narrates ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan’s exposition of the Sermon of Fadak.²⁵

²¹ Al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah*, vol. 4, p. 71.

²² Not to be confused with the famous early Sunnī historian Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī or with the Shī‘ah scholar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, author of *al-Mustarshad fī al-Imāmah*.

²³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā‘il al-Imāmah*, p. 111.

²⁴ Al-Makkī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, p. 121.

²⁵ Al-Ṭabrasī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, pp. 97-107.

- 14) *Manāl al-Ṭālib fī Sharḥ Ṭiwāl al-Gharā'ib* by Mubārak ibn Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 606 A.H.): This scholar, better known as Ibn Athīr, narrates the sermon of al-Sayyidah al-Zahrā' (a) in detail, explaining all its difficult words and phrases, from al-Sayyidah Zaynab al-Kubrā, daughter of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a).²⁶
- 15) *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ min al-Ummah fī Dhikr Khaṣā'is al-A'immaḥ* by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī: Abū Muẓaffar Yūsuf ibn 'Abdillāh, commonly known as Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, was a Ḥanafī scholar who died in 654 A.H. In this book, he discusses the merits and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (a). He narrates part of the Sermon of Fadak from al-Sha'bī without mentioning the chain of transmission.²⁷
- 16) *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656 A.H.): This is the most important commentary of *Nahj al-Balāgha* by a non-Shī'ah scholar. It also contains significant historical information. In it, the author relates the Sermon of Fadak from al-Jawharī's *al-Saqīfah wa Fadak*.²⁸
- 17) *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* by 'Alī ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī (d. 679 A.H.): In this work, a small part of the sermon has been mentioned without its chain of transmission.²⁹
- 18) *Kashf al-Ghummaḥ fī Ma'rifat al-A'immaḥ* by al-Irbilī: Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Īsā ibn Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Irbilī (d. 692 A.H.) was a Shī'ah scholar. In this work, he relates the sermon from al-Jawharī's *al-Saqīfah wa Fadak*.³⁰

²⁶ Al-Jazarī, *Manāl al-Ṭālib*, pp. 501-507.

²⁷ Al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ*, p. 317.

²⁸ Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, vol. 16, p. 264.

²⁹ Al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, vol. 5, p. 105.

³⁰ Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghummaḥ*, vol. 1, p. 473.

Some of the above are primary sources and others are secondary. Regardless, it is interesting to see that many non-Shī'ī sources have related this sermon. The oldest extant source of this sermon is Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr's *Balāghāt al-Nisā'*. In addition to these sources, many other early works mention the existence of this sermon, albeit in passing. These include:

- I. *Kitāb al-'Ayn* by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 175 A.H.)³¹
- II. *Murūj al-Dhahab* by 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī (d. 283 A.H.)³²
- III. *Tahdhīb al-Lughā* by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī (d. 370 A.H.)³³
- IV. *Al-Fā'iq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* by Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 A.H.)³⁴
- V. *Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wal-Athar* by Ibn Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 606 A.H.)³⁵

Narrators

First Level (*ṭabaqah*)

- 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 A.H.)
- 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr (d. 58 A.H.)
- Al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) (d. 61 A.H.)
- Zaynab bint 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) (d. 62 A.H.)

Second Level

³¹ Al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, vol. 8, p. 323.

³² Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 304.

³³ Al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-Lughā*, vol. 15, p. 288.

³⁴ Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fā'iq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 3, p. 212.

³⁵ Ibn Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 4, p. 273.

- Al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 97 A.H.)
- 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d. 95 A.H.)
- 'Ikrimah ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Mūsā ibn 'Abbās (d. 104 A.H.)
- 'Urwah ibn Zubayr ibn 'Awām (d. 93 A.H.)
- Zaynab bint al-Ḥusayn, the wife of Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan

Third Level

- 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Kathīr al-Hāshimī (d. 120 A.H.)
- 'Aṭīyyah ibn Sa'd ibn Junādah al-'Awfī (d. 111 A.H.)
- Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī (d. 128 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir (a) (d. 114 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubaydillāh al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H.)
- Ṣāliḥ ibn Kaysān (d. 140 A.H.)
- Zayd ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shahīd (d. 121 A.H.)

Fourth Level

- Abān ibn Taghlib (d. 141 A.H.)
- 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan (d. 145 A.H.)
- 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-'Alawī (d. 145 A.H.)
- Al-Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥayy (d. 168 A.H.)
- Al-Sharqī ibn al-Quṭāmī (d. 158 A.H.)
- 'Amr ibn Shimr ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī (d. after 160 A.H.)
- 'Awānah ibn al-Ḥakam ibn 'Ayāḍ (d. 158 A.H.)
- Ḥarb ibn Maymūn al-Anṣārī (d. ~ 160 A.H.)
- Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (a) (d. 148 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār (d. 151 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146 A.H.)

Fifth Level

- Abān ibn 'Uthmān al-Aḥmar (d. 182 A.H.)

- ‘Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf
- Al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Ulwān al-Kalbī (d. 2nd Century A.H.)
- Al-Ḥusayn ibn Zayd ibn ‘Alī (d. 190 A.H.)
- ‘Alī ibn Ḥassān ibn Kathīr al-Hāshimī
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān al-Ju‘fi (d. 2nd Century A.H.)
- Mūsā ibn ‘Īsā ibn Muḥammad al-‘Abbās al-Hāshimī (d. 183 A.H.)
- Nā‘il ibn Najīḥ al-Başrī
- ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mūsā al-‘Amrī (d. 175 A.H.)

Sixth Level

- ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 206 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Naşr al-Bazanţī (d. 221 A.H.)
- Al-‘Abbās ibn Bakkār al-Ḍabbī (d. 222 A.H.)
- Hishām ibn Muḥammad (d. 206 A.H.)
- Ismā‘il ibn Mihrān (d. 220 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Abī ‘Umayr (d. 217 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Qaşabānī (d. 221 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Umārah
- Muḥammad ibn Ziyād al-Ziyādī (d. 3rd Century A.H.)
- ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Muḥammad (d. 228 A.H.)
- ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mūsā al-‘Absī (d. 221 A.H.)

Seventh Level

- ‘Abd al-Jalīl al-Bāqillānī
- Al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Khashshāb (d. 260 A.H.)
- Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad (d. 260 A.H.)
- Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umārah
- Mufaḍḍal ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ash‘arī

- Muḥammad ibn Aslam (d. 270 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī
- ʿUthmān ibn ʿImrān al-ʿUjayfī
- Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Zayd (d. 237 A.H.)
- Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Zayd (d. 270 A.H.)

Eighth Level

- ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān
- Aḥmad ibn Abī ʿAbdillāh al-Barqī (d. 274 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir, better known as Ibn Ṭayfūr (d. 280 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Zayyāt
- Aḥmad ibn ʿUbayd ibn Nāsiḥ (d. 273 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Mufaḍḍal ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ashʿarī
- Muḥammad ibn Qāsīm al-Yamānī (d. 282 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Baṣrī (d. 298 A.H.)
- Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 288 A.H.)

Ninth Level

- Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jawharī (d. 323 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Quḍāʿah al-Ṣafwānī (d. 4th Century A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Makkī (d. 322 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yazīd (d. 307 A.H.)
- ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Saʿd Ābādī
- Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Kātib (d. 322 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn al-Mutawakkil (d. after 310 A.H.)

Tenth Level

- ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Yaḥyā al-Jalūdī (d. 332 A.H.)

- ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭayfūr (d. 352 A.H.)
- ‘Abdullāh ibn Ishāq (d. 329 A.H.)
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd al-Hamadānī, better known as Ibn ‘Uqdah (d. 332 A.H.)
- ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn better known as Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356 A.H.)
- ‘Alī ibn Hārūn ibn ‘Alī ibn Yahyā (d. 352 A.H.)
- Ḥātim ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Qazwīnī (d. 305 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣafwānī (d. 352 A.H.)

Eleventh Level

- ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 A.H.)
- Hārūn ibn Mūsā ibn Aḥmad al-Shaybānī al-Tala‘ukbarī (d. 385 A.H.)
- Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad (Umm al-Faḍl)
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Shaybānī (d. 387 A.H.)
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Imrān ibn Mūsā, better known as al-Kātib al-Baghdādī (d. 384 A.H.)

With over 25 chains of transmission and 90 narrators,³⁶ there is little room to doubt the historicity of al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah’s sermon in which she presented her case for the rightful ownership of Fadak. Only the specific contents of the sermon, in terms of wording and expression, may be debated. Different versions exist, but the differences are minor and do not in any way impugn the sermon itself.

³⁶ In his encyclopaedic work on *rijāl*, al-Sayyid al-Khū‘ī discusses the soundness of the chain of this sermon via al-Ṣadūq and mentions some other evidence that shows that it is indeed authentic. (See: al-Khū‘ī, *Muḥjam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 4, pp. 102-3).

The Sermon

Glory be to Allah for His great blessings, and gratitude to Him for that which He has inspired, and praise be to Him for what He has brought to pass. From the all-encompassing blessings that He grants to the ever-expansive grace that He bestows and all the bounties that He continuously confers. Its magnitude is greater than can be enumerated, its extent is beyond measure and its limit is beyond comprehension. He has invited the people to express their gratitude in order to seek its increase and continuity, called upon them to praise Him by augmenting it, and further bid them to ask for more of its like [in the Hereafter].

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, alone, having no partners - a statement the inner meaning of which has been defined as sincerity, its means have been instilled in the hearts and its meaning gleams in the minds. He cannot be perceived by sight, described by words or depicted by imaginations. He originated everything from nothing that existed before, and created everything

الحمد لله على ما أنعم، وله
الشكر على ما ألهم، والثناء
بما قدّم، من عموم نعم
ابتدأها، وسبوغ آلاء
أسداها، وتمام مننٍ أولها،
جمّ عن الإحصاء عددها،
ونأى عن الجزاء أمدها،
وتفاوت عن الإدراك
أبدها، وندبهم لاستزادتها
بالشكر لاتصالها، واستحمد
إلى الخلائق بإجزالها،
وثنى بالندب إلى أمثالها.

وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده
لا شريك له، كلمة جعل
الإخلاص تأويلها، وضمّن
القلوب موصولها، وأنار في
التفكر معقولها، الممتنع من
الأبصار رؤيته، ومن الألسن
صفته، ومن الأوهام كفيته،

without following any previous model. He fashioned everything with His power and made it all with His will, without any need for bringing it into being or any possible benefit for Him that could come from forming it; only the affirmation of His wisdom, the assertion of His obedience, the manifestation of His power, the servility of His subjects and the exaltation of His call. Then He placed reward in obedience to Him and punishment in disobedience to Him, in order to turn His servants away from His chastisement and urge them towards His Paradise.

And I bear witness that my father, Muḥammad, is His servant and Messenger. He chose him before sending him [with the Message], named him before picking him [for prophethood] and selected him before appointing him [as a Messenger] - at a time when the creation was hidden in the unknown, covered by the curtain of uncertainty and close to the edge of non-existence - as Allah, the Most High, has knowledge about the final outcome of every matter, complete

ابتدع الأشياء لا من شيءٍ كان قبلها، وأنشأها بلا احتذاءٍ أمثلةٍ امتثلها، كوّنها بقدرته وذراها بمشيئته، من غير حاجةٍ منه إلى تكوينها، ولا فائدةٍ له في تصويرها، إلا تثبيتاً لحكمته، وتنبههاً على طاعته، وإظهاراً لقدرته، تعبداً لبريئته وإعزازاً لدعوته، ثم جعل الثواب على طاعته، ووضع العقاب على معصيته، زيادةً لعباده من نعمته، وحياشةً لهم إلى جنّته.

وأشهد أنّ أبي محمّداً عبده ورسوله، اختاره قبل أن أرسله، وسمّاه قبل أن اجتباها، واصطفاه قبل أن ابتعثه، إذ الخلائق بالغيب مكنونة، وبستر الأهاويل مصونة، وبنهاية العدم مقرونة، علماً من الله تعالى بمآئل الأمور، وإحاطةً بحوادث الدهور، ومعرفةً

awareness of events that [will] transpire, and cognizance of the end of all affairs. Allah sent him in order to complete His mission, establish His decreed order and execute His ordained mercy. He found the people divided in their faiths, secluded around their [sacred] fires, worshipping their idols and denying Allah, despite having [intrinsic] knowledge [about Him]. Hence, through my father Muḥammad (ṣ), Allah illuminated their darkness, removed the ambivalence from their hearts, and cleared the obscurity of their sight. He rose among the people with guidance, saved them from perversion, removed their [spiritual] blindness, led them to the right faith, and called them towards the straight path. Then Allah took him [back] with kindness and election, affinity and preference.

بمواقع الأمور. ابتعثه الله إتماماً
 لأمره، وعزيمةً على إمضاء
 حكمه، وإنفاذاً لمقادير
 رحمته، فرأى الأمم فرقاً في
 أديانها، عكفاً على نيرانها،
 عابدةً لأوثانها، منكرةً لله مع
 عرفانها، فأنار الله بأبي محمّد
 ﷺ ظلمها، وكشف عن
 القلوب بهمها، وجلى عن
 الأبصار غممها، وقام في الناس
 بالهداية، فأنقذهم من الغواية،
 وبصّرهم من العماية، وهداهم
 إلى الدين القويم، ودعاهم
 إلى الطريق المستقيم. ثم قبضه
 الله إليه قبض رافةٍ واختيارٍ،
 ورغبةٍ وإيثارٍ.

Thus Muḥammad (ṣ) is now in ease and comfort, [free] from the hardships of this world, surrounded by devoted angels and the pleasure of the Forgiving Lord, in the company of the Almighty King. May Allah bless my father, His Prophet, the

فمحمّد ﷺ من تعب هذه
 الدار في راحةٍ، قد حفت
 بالملائكة الأبرار، ورضوان
 الربّ الغفار، ومجاورة
 الملك الجبار، صلى الله

custodian of His revelation, His chosen servant, the one whom He selected from all His creatures and picked [Himself]. Peace, blessings and mercy of Allah be upon him.

على أبي نبيّه وأمينه،
وخيرته من الخلق وصفيّه،
والسلام عليه ورحمة الله
وبركاته.

Then she turned to the people who were present in the gathering and said:

You are the servants of Allah, the recipients of His commandments and prohibitions, the bearers of His religion and revelation, the trustees of Allah over your souls, and the propagators of His message to all the people. His rightful proxy is present among you, and the legacy that he (the Prophet) bequeathed and left behind with you, giving it authority over you - the Articulate Book of Allah, the Truthful Qur'an, the Radiant Light, the Effulgent Illumination - with insights that are clear and mysteries that are evident. Its apparent message is distinct and those who follow it are envied. Those who adhere to it are led to Allah's pleasure and those who heed it are saved. Through it the enlightened proofs of Allah, His explicative verdicts, His forewarned prohibitions, His unambiguous statements, His sufficient evidence,

أنتم عباد الله نصب أمره ونهيه،
وحملة دينه ووحيه، وأمناء الله
على أنفسكم، وبلغاؤه إلى
الأمم، زعيم حقّ له فيكم،
وعهد قدّمه إليكم، وبقية
استخلفها عليكم، كتاب الله
الناطق، والقرآن الصادق،
والنور الساطع، والضياء اللامع،
بيّنة بصائره، منكشفة سرائره،
منجلية ظواهره، مغتبطة به
أشباعه، قائداً إلى الرضوان
أتباعه، مؤدّاً إلى النجاة
استماعه، به تنال حجج الله
المنوّرة، وعزائم المفسّرة،
ومحارمه المحدّرة، وبيّناته
الجالية، وبراهينه الكافية،

His mandated virtues, His bestowed leniency, and His ordained laws, are attained.

Allah made faith as a purification for you from polytheism, prayer a means of freeing yourselves from arrogance, the poor-rate a means of cleansing the soul and increasing sustenance, fasting a means of strengthening sincerity, pilgrimage a means of elevating the religion, justice a means of keeping the hearts in harmony, obedience to us (the Ahl al-Bayt) a means of maintaining order in the community, our leadership as a security from disunity, holy struggle as a glory for Islam, patience as an aid in making one deserving of recompense, enjoining good as a reformation for the masses, honouring parents a means of protection from [divine] wrath, keeping ties with family a means of increasing your numbers, sanctioned retaliation a means of preventing bloodshed, fulfilling promises a means of earning forgiveness, honesty in weighing and measurement a means of avoiding diminution, forbidding the drinking of wine a means of becoming free of

وفضائله المندوبة، وخصه الموهوبة، وشرائعه المكتوبة.

فجعل الله الإيمان تطهيراً لكم من الشرك، والصلاة تنزيهاً لكم عن الكبر، والزكاة تزكيةً للنفوس ونماءً في الرزق، والصيام تثبيتاً للإخلاص، والحجّ تشييداً للدين، والعدل تنسيقاً للقلوب، وطاعتنا نظاماً للملّة، وإمامتنا أماناً للفرقة، والجهاد عزّاً للإسلام، والصبر معونةً على استيجاب الأجر، والأمر بالمعروف مصلحةً للعامة، وبرّ الوالدين وقايةً من السخط، وصلة الأرحام منماةً للعدد، والقصاص حقناً للدماء، والوفاء بالنذر تعريضاً للمغفرة، وتوفية المكييل والموازن تغييراً للبخس، والنهي عن شرب الخمر تنزيهاً عن الرجس، واجتناب القذف

filth, eschewing calumny as a screen against imprecation, and shunning theft a means of maintaining virtue. Allah prohibited polytheism in order to make His Lordship exclusive, *so observe your duty to Allah with the dutifulness due to Him, and do not die except as Muslims.* (Q3:102) Obey Allah in that which He has commanded and forbidden, *for indeed only those who possess knowledge fear Allah.* (Q35:28)

حجاباً عن اللعنة، وترك السرقة إيجاباً للعفة، وحرّم الله الشرك إخلاصاً له بالربوبية؛ «فاتقوا الله حقّ تقاته ولا تموتنّ إلا وأنتم مسلمون». وأطيعوا الله فيما أمركم به ونهاكم عنه، فإنّه «إنما يخشى الله من عباده العلماء».

Then she continued:

O People, know that I am Fāṭimah and my father is Muḥammad (ṣ). I say again to you, and I do not say what I am saying with asperity³⁷ not do I do what I am doing with excessiveness. *There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves; grievous to him is your distress; he is full of concern for you, and compassionate and merciful to the believers.* (Q9:128) So if you refer to his lineage and know him, you will realize that he is my father and not the father of anyone else amongst your women. He is the bother of my cousin [and husband], and not of

أيها الناس، اعلموا أنّي فاطمة وأبي محمّد ﷺ، أقول عوداً وبدواً ولا أقول ما أقول غلطاً، ولا أفعل ما أفعل شططاً. «لقد جاءكم رسول من أنفسكم عزيز عليه ما عنتم حريص عليكم بالمؤمنين رؤوف رحيم». فإن تعزوه وتعرفوه تجدوه أبي دون نساءكم، وأخا ابن عمي دون رجالكم،

³⁷ Or: I do not say what I am saying in error... (Tr.)

any of your men. How excellent it is to be related to him (§). He propagated the message, warned the people openly, and turned against the ways of the polytheists, striking their backs and seizing their throats.³⁸ He called [them] to the way of his Lord *with wisdom and good advice*. (Q16:125) He broke the idols and struck the heads, until they were defeated and forced to flee. Then night gave way to day and the pure truth shone forth. The leader of the faith spoke and the camel-frothing of the devils were silenced. The servants of hypocrisy perished and the knots of disbelief and schism were undone.

You uttered the words of faith in the presence of the bright-faced and empty-of-stomach, while you were [previously] on *the brink of a fiery pit*. (Q3:103) A mere draught for the drinker and opportunity for the desirous [were you]. A flickering flame and a treading ground for others [were you]. You would drink from polluted water and eat dried

ولنعم المعزّي إليه ﷺ، فبلغ الرسالة صادعاً بالندارة، مائلاً عن مدرجة المشركين، ضارباً ثبجهم، آخذاً بأكظامهم، داعياً إلى سبيل ربّه «بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة»، يحدّ الأصنام وينكث الهام، حتّى انهزم الجمع وولّوا الدبر، حتّى تفرّى الليل عن صبحه، وأسفر الحقّ عن محضه، ونطق زعيم الدين، وخرست شقاشق الشياطين، وطاح وشيظ النفاق، وانحلّت عقد الكفر والشقاق.

وفهت بكلمة الإخلاص في نفرٍ من البيض الخماص، وكنتم «على شفا حفرةٍ من النار» مذقة الشارب ونهزة الطامع، وقبسة العجلان وموطئ الأقدام، تشربون الطرق وتقتاتون القدّ، أذلّةً خاسئين تخافون أن

³⁸ This is a metaphor and refers to his being unafraid of their numbers and conveying the message in their presence openly and without any compromise. (Tr.)

animal skins and leaves. Abased and spurned, you feared being dispossessed by those around you.

يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِكُمْ.

Then Allah, the Almighty, rescued you through Muḥammad (ṣ), after all these calamities and after suffering at the hands of barbarians, the wolfish Arabs, and the rebellious People of the Book. *Whenever they ignited the flame of war, Allah extinguished it.* (Q5:64) Whenever the horn of Satan³⁹ appeared or the polytheists' maw opened [in defiance], he would dispatch his brother [Alī (a)] into its midst and he would not return until he had trampled on its ear with the soles of his feet and put out its blaze with his sword.

فَأَنْقَذَكُمُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى بِمُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ بَعْدَ اللَّيْتِ وَاللَّيْتِ، وَبَعْدَ أَنْ مَنِيَ بِهِمُ الرِّجَالُ وَذُؤْيَانُ الْعَرَبِ وَمُرْدَةُ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ، «كَلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ» أَوْ نَجَمَ قَرْنُ الشَّيْطَانِ أَوْ فَغَرَّتْ فَاعِرَةٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ، قَذَفَ أَخَاهُ فِي لَهَوَاتِهَا، فَلَا يَنْكُفِي حَتَّى يَطَأَ صِمَاخَهَا بِأَخْمَصِهِ، وَيَخْمَدُ لَهَبَهَا بِسَيْفِهِ.

He strove for the sake of Allah and struggled in the way of Allah. He was close to the Prophet of Allah, a leader among the friends of Allah, always prepared and diligent, sincere, earnest and hardworking - never fearing the reproach of any reproacher. Meanwhile, you were living lives of ease and comfort;

مَكْدُودًا فِي ذَاتِ اللَّهِ، مُجْتَهِدًا فِي أَمْرِ اللَّهِ، قَرِيبًا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، سَيِّدًا فِي أَوْلِيَاءِ اللَّهِ، مُشْمَرًا نَاصِحًا، مُجَدِّدًا كَادِحًا، لَا تَأْخُذُهُ فِي اللَّهِ لَوْمَةٌ لَائِمٌ، وَأَنْتُمْ فِي رِفَاهِيَةٍ مِنَ الْعَيْشِ، وَادْعُونَ

³⁹ The horn(s) of Satan refer to Satan's people and his followers (see: al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, vol. 18, p. 446).

relaxed, unperturbed and secure, awaiting the reversal of our fortunes, keenly waiting for news [of our failures], retreating during conflict and fleeing from battle.

So when Allah chose to take His Prophet to the abode of His Prophets and the dwelling of His sincere servants, the thorny tree of hypocrisy appeared amongst you and the robe of religion became ragged. The misguided, who were previously silent, began to speak, the unknown few arose, and the liars came forward, braying [like camels] as they strutted, wagging their tails in your courtyards. Satan raised his head from his hiding place and called out to you. He found you responsive to his call and attentive to his deception. Then he enticed you and found you easy to arouse; he exasperated you and found you easy to anger. So you branded camels that were not yours and proceeded to other than your own watering holes. This, while the era [of the Prophet] had only just ended, the gash was still wide and the wound still fresh. The Prophet had yet to be buried when you made haste, claiming that

فاكهون، آمنون تتربصون بنا
الدوائر، وتتوكلون الأخبار،
وتنكصون عند النزال، وتفرون
من القتال.

فلما اختار الله لنيته دار أنبيائه
ومأوى أصفائه، ظهر فيكم
حسكة النفاق، وسمل جلباب
الدين، ونطق كاظم الغاوين،
ونبغ حامل الأقلين، وهدر فيق
المبطلين، فخطر في عرصاتكم
وأطلع الشيطان رأسه من مغرزه
هاتفاً بكم، فألفاكم لدعوته
مستجيبين وللعزة فيه ملاحظين،
ثم استنهضكم فوجدكم خفافاً،
وأحمشكم فألفاكم غضاباً،
فوسمتم غير إبلكم ووردتم
غير مشربكم، هذا والعهد
قريب والكلم رحيب، والجرح
لما يندمل، والرسول لما يقبر،
ابتداراً زعمتم خوف الفتنة،
«ألا في الفتنة سقطوا وإن جهنم

you were afraid of dissension; *Lo, they have fallen into dissension! And indeed Hell surrounds the unbelievers.* (Q9:49) Far be it from you! What is wrong with you? And where are you heading to while the Book of Allah is in your midst? Its affairs are distinct, its rulings brilliant, its signs radiant, its prohibitions evident and its commands are clear. Yet you have cast it behind your backs. Do you wish to turn away from it out of aversion? Or do you wish to judge by another [book]? *Evil would be the exchange for the wrongdoers!* (Q18:50) *And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, then it will not be accepted from him and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.* (Q3:85)

لمحيطة بالكافرين». فميهات منكم! وكيف بكم؟ وأنى تؤفكون وكتاب الله بين أظهركم؟ أموره ظاهرة، وأحكامه زاهرة، وأعلامه باهرة، وزواجره لائحة، وأوامره واضحة، وقد خلقتوه وراء ظهوركم، أرغبةً عنه تريدون؟ أم بغيره تحكمون؟ «بئس للظالمين بدلاً» «ومن يبتغ غير الإسلام ديناً فلن يقبل منه وهو في الآخرة من الخاسرين».

Then you only waited for as long as it took the feral [camel] to calm down and accept a rider taking control of its reins before reigniting its flames and kindling its embers.⁴⁰ You have responded to the cries of the misguiding Satan and have attempted to extinguish the lights of

ثم لم تلبثوا إلا ريث أن تسكن نفرتها ويسلس قيادها، ثم أخذتم تورون وقدمتها وتهيجون جمرتها، وتستجيبون لهتاف الشيطان الغوي، وإطفاء

⁴⁰ In the first two phrases, al-Sayyidah al-Zahrā' زهراء uses the analogy of a camel and in the following two phrases she uses the analogy of fire to refer to the caliphate (see: al-Majlisī, *al-Zahrā' wa Khuṭbatu Fadak*, p. 99).

the splendid religion and suppress the teachings of the pure Prophet. You secretly drank the milk while pretending to sip the froth⁴¹ and stalked his family and children, hiding in the trees and trenches,⁴² yet we endure patiently with you through what feels like the stabbing of daggers and the piercing of [our] sides with spearheads. And now you claim that we have no inheritance! *Do they seek the judgment of [the age of] ignorance? And who is a better judge than Allah for the people who have certainty?* (Q5:50) Do you know not? Indeed it is as obvious as the midday sun that I am his daughter! O Muslims, will I be deprived of my inheritance?!

O Son of Abū Quḥāfah, is it in the Book of Allah that you may inherit from your father yet I cannot inherit from mine? *You have certainly come up with a strange thing!* (from Q19:27) Have you purposely

أنوار الدين الجليّ، وإهمال سنن النبيّ الصفيّ، تشربون حسواً في ارتغاءٍ، وتمشون لأهله وولده في الخمرة والضراء، ونصبر منكم على مثل حرّ المدى، ووخز السنان في الحشا، وأنتم الآن تزعمون أن لا إرث لنا! «أفحكم الجاهليّة ييغون ومن أحسن من الله حكماً لقومٍ يوقنون؟» أفلا تعلمون؟ بلى قد تجلّى لكم كالشمس الضاحية أنّي ابنته! أيّها المسلمون أغلب على إرثي؟!

يا ابن أبي قحافة، أفي كتاب الله ترث أباك ولا أرتث أبي؟ لقد جئت شيئاً فريئاً! أفعلى عمدٍ تركتم كتاب الله ونبذتموه

⁴¹ This is an Arabic proverb that alludes to a person's hypocrisy, for he pretends that he wants to sip the froth that forms over the milk, but then drinks the milk as well (see: al-Qazwīnī, *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' - min al-Mahd ilā al-Laḥd*, p. 367).

⁴² This is another Arabic proverb used to refer to one's deception and fraud (see: al-Majlisī, *al-Zahrā' wa Khuṭbatu Fadak*, p. 100).

abandoned the Book of Allah and cast it behind your backs? When it says: *And Sulaymān inherited from Dāwūd* (Q27:16) and when relating the story of Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā, where he (Zakariyyā) said: *So grant me from Yourself an heir who will inherit from me and inherit from the family of Yaʿqūb*, (Q19:5-6) and it further states: *...but blood relatives are more entitled [to inherit] from one another in the Book of Allah*, (Q8:75) and: *Allah enjoins you concerning your children: for the male shall be the like of the share of two females*, (Q4:11) and: *...if he leaves behind any property, he should make a bequest for his parents and relatives in kindness, [that is] an obligation for the Godwary*. (Q2:180) Yet you claim that I have no entitlement and inherit nothing from my father?!

Has Allah revealed a verse specifically for you from which He excluded my father? Or do you say that people of two separate faiths cannot inherit from one another? Am I and my father not upon the same faith? Or is it that you have greater knowledge of the particular and general injunctions of the Qurʾān than my father and cousin?

وراء ظهركم إذ يقول:
«وورث سليمان داود»، وقال
فيما اقتص من خبر يحيى بن
زكريا إذ قال: «فهب لي من
لدنك وليا يرثني ويرث من آل
يعقوب»، وقال: «وأولوا
الأرحام بعضهم أولى ببعض
في كتاب الله»، وقال:
«يوصيكم الله في أولادكم
للذكر مثل حظ الأنثيين»،
وقال: «إن ترك خيراً الوصية
للوالدين والأقربين بالمعروف
حَقًّا على المتقين»؛ وزعمتم أن
لا حظوة لي ولا أرث من
أبي؟!

أفخصكم الله بآيةٍ أخرج أبي
منها؟ أم هل تقولون إن أهل
مِلَّتَيْن لا يتوارثان؟ أو لست أنا
وأبي من أهل مِلَّةٍ واحدةٍ؟ أم
أنتم أعلم بخصوص القرآن
وعوموميه من أبي وابن عمي؟

So take hold of its reins, muzzled and saddled, for it will surely meet you on the day you are assembled; and Allah is the best judge and Muḥammad the best leader. The [final] rendezvous is on the Day of Resurrection, and when it comes, the falsifiers will be the losers and your remorse will be of no benefit. *For every tidings there is an appointed term. (Q6:67) Soon you will know whom a disgraceful punishment will overtake and on whom a lasting punishment will descend. (Q11:39)*

فدونكها مخطومةً مرحولةً
تلقاءك يوم حشرِك، فنعم الحكم
الله والزعيم محمد، والموعِد
القيامة، وعند الساعة يخسر
المبطلون، ولا يَنْفَعكم إذ
تندمون، «ولكلِّ نبيٍّ مستقرٌّ»
«وسوف تعلمون من يأتيه
عذاب يخزيه ويحلّ عليه
عذاب مقيم».

Then, addressing the Anṣār, she said:

O company of nobles, supporters of the faith and defenders of Islam, what is [the cause of] this negligence in defending my rights and laxity before the injustice being done to me? Did my father, the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), not say: “A man is honoured through his offspring”? How quickly have you changed, and how hastily have you have betrayed [us], while you possess the ability to assist me and the strength to support me in what I seek and pursue.

يا معشر النقيية وأعضاء الملة
وحضنة الإسلام، ما هذه
الغميزة في حقّي والسنة عن
ظلامتي؟ أما كان رسول الله
ﷺ أبي يقول: المرء يحفظ
في ولده؟ سرعان ما أحدثتم
وعجلان ذاهلة، ولكم طاقة
بما أحاول وقوة على ما أطلب
وأزاول.

Do you say: “Muḥammad (ﷺ) has

أتقولون مات محمد ﷺ؟

died”? This is indeed a grave matter whose damage is extensive, its breach is vast and its weavings have been rent apart. The world has become dark by his absence; the sun and moon have been eclipsed and the stars scattered because of his loss; hopes have been dashed, mountains have crumbled, sanctities have been violated and all that is sacred has been disregarded upon his death. This is, by Allah, a great tribulation and a dire calamity; no tribulation can be compared to it and no adversity is as grievous. The Book of Allah, glory be to Him, announced it in your courtyards, in the evenings and mornings, calling and crying out, recited and chanted, that the Prophets of Allah and His Messengers who came before were not able to overcome the definitive verdict and the inescapable decree [of death]. *And Muhammad is but a messenger, other messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is slain, will you turn back on your heels? Anyone who turns back on his heels will not harm Allah in the least, and soon Allah will reward the grateful.* (Q3:144)

فخطب جليل استوسع وهنه،
واستنهر فتقه، وانفتق رتقه،
وأظلمت الأرض لغيبته،
وكسفت الشمس والقمر
وانتشرت النجوم لمصيبته،
وأكدت الآمال وخشعت
الجبال وأضيع الحريم وأزيلت
الحرمة عند مماته؛ فتلك والله
النازلة الكبرى والمصيبة
العظمى، لا مثلها نازلة ولا بائقة
عاجلة، أعلن بها كتاب الله جلّ
ثناؤه في أفئيتكم وفي ممساكم
ومصبحكم، هتافاً وصراخاً
وتلاوةً وإحاناً، ولقبله ما حلّ
بأنبياء الله ورسله، حكم فصل
وقضاء حتم «وما محمد إلا
رسول قد خلت من قبله الرسل
أفإن مات أو قتل انقلبتم على
أعقابكم ومن ينقلب على
عقبه فلن يضّر الله شيئاً
وسيجزي الله الشاكرين».

Far be it, O Children of Qaylah!⁴³ Will I be deprived of my patrimony while you watch and listen to me? And [while you] are seated and gathered here? You are involved in the claim and are aware of it, and you are numerous and well equipped; you possess means and strength, and own weapons and shields. The case has reached you yet you do not respond? You hear the cry yet you do not assist me? Yet you are known for your bravery and have a reputation for being good and righteous; you are an elite group and the best of those who were selected. You fought the [pagan] Arabs and bore pains and hardships. You clashed with the nations and battled the champions. We have not ceased, or is it you who have ceased? You always complied; we ordered and you obeyed. Until, through us, Islam was established and the milk of prosperity began to flow, the breach of polytheism was subdued, the ebullition of falsehood subsided, the fires of disbelief were stifled, the call to rebellion was silenced, and the religious order was founded.

إيهاً بني قيلة! أأهضم تراث أبي وأنتم بمرأى منّي ومسمع، ومنتدّى ومجمع؟ تلبسكم الدعوة وتشملكم الخبرة، وأنتم ذوو العدد والعدّة، والأداة والقوّة، وعندكم السلاح والجنّة. توافيكم الدعوة فلا تجيبون؟ وتأتيكم الصرخة فلا تغيبون؟ وأنتم موصوفون بالكفاح معروفون بالخير والصلاح، والنخبة التي انتخبت والخيرة التي اختيرت، قاتلتم العرب وتحملتم الكدّ والتعب، وناطحتم الأمم وكافحتم البهم، لا نبرح أو تبرحون؟ نأمركم فتأتمرون؛ حتّى إذا دارت بنا رحى الإسلام، ودرّ حلب الأييام، وخضعت ثغرة الشرك، وسكنت فورة الإفك، وخدمت نيران الكفر، وهدأت

⁴³ This is a reference to the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj, whose matriarch was a lady known as Qaylah bint Kāhil. (Tr.)

دعوة الهرج، واستوسق نظام الدين.

So why have you become confused after your clear stance? Why have you become secretive after your proclamation? Why have you retreated after being at the forefront? And why have you turned [back] to polytheism after believing [in Allah]? *Will you not make war on a people who broke their pledges and resolved to expel the Messenger, while they attacked you first? Do you fear them? But Allah is worthier of being feared by you, should you be faithful.* (Q9:13) Lo, I see you now inclined to a life of ease, having distanced yourselves from the one who is more worthy of giving and withholding.⁴⁴ You have withdrawn into comfort and have escaped from hardship to abundance. You have thus spit out what you had retained and vomited out what you had swallowed. *If you are ungrateful, you and those on earth all together, most surely Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised.* (Q14:8)

I have said what I had to say, being

فأنتى حرتم بعد البيان، وأسررتهم بعد الإعلان، ونكصتم بعد الإقدام، وأشركتم بعد الإيمان، «ألا تقاتلون قوماً نكثوا أيمانهم من بعد عهدهم وهمّوا بإخراج الرسول وهم بدؤكم أول مرّة أتخشونهم فالله أحقّ أن تخشوه إن كنتم مؤمنين». ألا وقد أرى أن قد أخذتم إلى الخفض، وأبعدتم من هو أحقّ بالبسط والقبض، وخلوتم بالدعة، ونجوتهم من الضيق بالسعة، فمجمجتهم ما وعيتم ودسعتهم الذي تسوّغتم، «فإن تكفروا أنتم ومن في الأرض جميعاً فإنّ الله لغنيّ حميد».

ألا وقد قلت ما قلت هذا على

⁴⁴ The one “who is more worthy of giving and withholding” is Amīr al-Mu’minīn ﷺ (Ibid. p. 121).

fully aware of your intention to forsake me, and of the betrayal that has sprung in your hearts. But this was the unbosoming of the soul, the outburst of anger, the inability to further endure, the expression of the heart, and the advancing of proof. So take its reins and saddle it, with its sore back and suppurating hooves, ever disgraceful, branded with the wrath of Allah and eternal dishonour, leading to *the fire, set ablaze by Allah, that roars over the hearts*, (Q104:6-7) for what you are doing is witnessed by Allah, *and those who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back*. (Q26:227) I am the daughter of *a warner unto you, before a severe chastisement*. (Q34:46) So act, we too shall act, *and wait, we too shall wait*. (Q11:122)

معرفةٍ منِّي بالجدلة التي
خامرتكم، والغدرة التي
استشعرتها قلوبكم، ولكنتها
فيضة النفس ونفثة الغيظ،
وخور القناة وبئة الصدر
وتقدمة الحجّة، فدونكموها
فاحتبوها، دبرة الظهر نقبة
الخف، باقية العار، موسومةً
بغضب الجبار وشنار الأبد،
موصولةً بـ«نار الله الموقدة التي
تطلع على الأفئدة»، فبعين الله ما
تفعلون «وسيعلم الذين ظلموا
أيّ منقلبٍ ينقلبون»، وأنا ابنة
«نذير لكم بين يدي عذابٍ
شديدٍ»، فاعملوا إنّنا عاملون
«وانظروا إنّنا منتظرون».

After having heard this, Abū Bakr said:

O daughter of the Messenger of Allah! Your father was indeed affectionate, generous, gracious and merciful to the believers, and the disbelievers shall face painful chastisement and severe retribution. If we look at his [family]

يا بنت رسول الله! لقد كان
أبوك بالمؤمنين عطوفاً كريماً،
رؤوفاً رحيماً، وعلى الكافرين
عذاباً أليماً، وعقاباً عظيماً، إن

relationships, we find that he was your father to the exclusion of other women, and the brother of your husband to the exclusion of all [his] other close friends. He preferred him over every intimate one and he, on his part, assisted him in every important matter. None love you save the felicitous and none despise you save the wretched. You are the pure progeny of the Messenger of Allah, the best of the chosen ones, our guides towards virtue and our path to Paradise. And you, O best of all women and daughter of the best of Prophets, are true in your words and foremost in the prodigiousness of your intellect. You will not be denied your right nor will your truth be contested.

By Allah, I have never opposed the opinion of the Messenger of Allah, and have never done anything but by his permission. The herald does not lie to his people; I take Allah as my witness, and He suffices as a witness, that I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: “We, the company of Prophets, neither bequeath gold nor silver, nor houses nor land; we only bequeath the Book, wisdom,

عزونا وجدناه أباك دون النساء، وأخاك إلك دون الأخلاء، آثره على كل حميم، وساعده في كل أمرٍ جسيم، لا يحبكم إلا سعيد، ولا يبغضكم إلا شقي، فأنتم عترة رسول الله الطيبون الخيرة المنتجبون، على الخير أدلتنا، وإلى الجنة مسالكنا، وأنت يا خيرة النساء وابنة خير الأنبياء، صادقة في قولك، سابقة في وفور عقلك، غير مردودةٍ عن حقك، ولا مصدودةٍ عن صدقك.

والله ما عدوت رأي رسول الله، ولا عملت إلا بإذنه؛ والرائد لا يكذب أهله. وإني أشهد الله، وكفى به شهيداً، أنني سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: نحن معاشر الأنبياء لا نورث ذهباً ولا فضةً، ولا داراً ولا عقاراً،

knowledge and prophethood, and whatever we possess of [revenue generating] property, it is for the ruler who comes after us to dispense with according to his own judgment.” And we have already kept what you are asking for, to procure horses and weapons that the Muslims may use in battle, to fight against the unbelievers and quash the insurgency of rebels. This was done by the general consensus of all the Muslims; I did not make this decision alone and I never enforced my opinion on anyone.

This is my state and my wealth, it is at your disposal and I place it before you. Nothing will be withheld from you and nothing will be kept from you. You are the noblewoman of your father's nation and a pure [maternal] tree for your children. Your merits cannot be disputed and your honourable lineage and roots cannot be disparaged. Your command with respect to what I possess shall be enforced. Do you think I should act against the will of your father (s) in this matter?

She replied:

وإنما نورث الكتاب والحكمة،
والعلم والنبوة، وما كان لنا من
طعمة فلولي الأمر بعدنا أن
يحكم فيه بحكمه، وقد جعلنا
ما حاولته في الكراع والسلاح
يقاتل بها المسلمون
ويجاهدون الكفار، ويجالدون
المردة الفجار، وذلك بإجماع
من المسلمين لم أنفرد به
وحدى، ولم أستبد بما كان
الرأي عندي.

وهذه حالي ومالي، هي لك
وبين يديك. لا تزوى عنك ولا
ندخر دونك، وإنك وأنت
سيدة أمة أيبك، والشجرة
الطيبة لبنيك، لا ندفع مالك من
فضلك، ولا يوضع في فرعك
وأصلك؛ حكمك نافذ فيما
ملك يداي، فهل ترين أن
أخالف في ذاك أباك ﷺ؟

Praise be to Allah! My father, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), never turned away from the Book of Allah, nor did he oppose its injunctions. Rather, he followed its directives and abided by its lofty teachings. Do you add on to the treachery by ascribing falsehood to him? And this [plot] after his death is similar to the pernicious plots that were staged against him during his lifetime. Here is the Book of Allah, a just adjudicator and decisive articulator, [clearly] saying: *[An heir] who may inherit from me and inherit from the House of Ya'qūb*, (Q19:6) and: *Sulaymān inherited from Dāwūd...* (Q27:16) And the Almighty clarified how the shares are to be allotted, and legislated the laws of [filial] obligation and inheritance, prescribing the proper share of males and females, thereby removing the excuse of the falsifiers and eliminating suspicions and doubts in those left behind. No, *but your souls have made the matter seem decorous for you; yet patience is beautiful, and Allah is the one whose help is sought against what you allege.* (Q12:18)

سبحان الله! ما كان أبي رسول الله ﷺ عن كتاب الله صادفاً، ولا لأحكامه مخالفاً، بل كان يتبع أثره ويقفو سوره. أفتجمعون إلى الغدر اعتلاً؟ عليه بالزور؟ وهذا بعد وفاته شبيه بما بغى له من الغوائل في حياته. هذا كتاب الله حكماً عدلاً وناطقاً فصلاً يقول: «يرثني ويرث من آل يعقوب» ويقول: «وورث سليمان داود». وبين عز وجل فيما وزع من الأفساط، وشرع من الفرائض والميراث، وأباح من حظ الذكران والإناث، ما أزاح به علة المبطلين وأزال التظني والشبهات في الغابرين؛ كلاً «بل سؤلت لكم أنفسكم أمراً فصبر جميل والله المستعان على ما تصفون».

Abū Bakr replied:

Allah spoke the truth and so did his Prophet. And his daughter has also spoken the truth. You are indeed a source of wisdom, a fountainhead of guidance and mercy, a pillar of faith and a wellspring of proof. I do not repudiate your apposite speech, nor do I reject what you say. These Muslims in front of us are the ones who compelled me to accept what I have accepted and it is by their unanimity that I took what I did; neither by coercion, nor out of obstinacy or self-importance, and they are [all] witnesses to this.

صدق الله ورسوله، وصدقت
ابنته، أنت معدن الحكمة
وموطن الهدى والرحمة،
وركن الدين وعين الحجّة، لا
أبعد صوابك ولا أنكر خطابك،
هؤلاء المسلمون بيني وبينك
قلّدوني ما تقلّدت، وباتفاقٍ
منهم أخذت ما أخذت، غير
مكابِرٍ ولا مستبَدٍّ ولا مستأثرٍ،
وهم بذلك شهود.

Fāṭimah (a) then turned to the people and said:

O company of people who hasten towards false speech, [and] who are complacent with the ugly action that will bring ruin! *Do they not reflect on the Qur'ān or are there locks on the hearts?* (Q47:24) No, rather your hearts have become rusted by the evil that you have done. Thus your hearing and sight have been taken away and you have gravely misinterpreted it (the Qur'ān). How wrongly you have referred to it, and how evil is your construal from it! By

معاشر الناس المسرعة إلى قيل
الباطل، المغضية على الفعل
القبيح الخاسر! «أفلا يتدبرون
القرآن أم على قلوبٍ أقفالها؟»
كَلَّا بل ران على قلوبكم ما
أسأتُم من أعمالكم، فأخذ
بسمعكم وأبصاركم، ولبئس ما
تأولتم، وساء ما به أشرتُم، وشرّ
ما منه اعتضتُم! لتجدنَّ والله

Allah, you will surely find its burden heavy and its consequence dire, when the veil is lifted and the great adversity that follows becomes evident to you, and there will appear to you from your Lord what you never reckoned, *it is then that those who stood by falsehood will be the losers.* (Q40:78)

محملة ثقیلاً وغبه وبيلاً إذا
كشف لكم الغطاء، وبان ما
ورائه الضراء، وبدا لكم من
ربكم ما لم تكونوا تحتسبون
«وخسر هنالك المبطلون».

Finally, she turned to face the grave of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and recited the following couplets:

لو كنت شاهدا لم تكثر الخطب	قد كان بعدك أنباء وهنيئة
واختل قومك فاشهدهم وقد نكبوا	إننا فقدناك فقد الأرض وابلها
عند الإله على الأذنين مقترب	وكل أهل له قربي ومنزلة
لما مضيت وحالت دونك التراب	أبدت رجال لنا نجوى صدورهم
لما فقدت وكل الأرض مغتصب	تجهمتنا رجال واستخف بنا
عليك ينزل من ذي العزة الكتب	وكنت بدرأ ونوراً يستضاء به
فقد فقدت وكل الخير محتجب	وكان جبرئيل بالآيات يؤنسنا
لما مضيت وحالت دونك الكتب	فليت قبلك كان الموت صادفنا

*After you, reports [of your passing] and chaos followed
Had you been present, tribulations would not abound*

*We miss you just as parched land misses its rain
And your nation is confused, see how they have turned around*

*Every family has relatives but the position
before God, is for those with the greatest proximity [to you]*

*People manifested against us what was hidden in their hearts
As soon as you departed and the barrier of dust separated us from you*

*They frowned at us and insulted us
when you were gone, and all the land was usurped*

*You were a full moon and an illuminating light
from the Almighty, upon you was the book revealed*

*Jibra'īl would comfort us with the verses he brought
But now you are not here and all goodness has disappeared*

*O how I wish death would have come to us before you
When you passed and were, by the dune, from us covered*

Conclusion

The sermon delivered by the Prophet's daughter, Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (a), soon after his death, clearly shows that she was displeased with the prevailing state of affairs. In her sermon, she alludes to usurpation of the caliphate in more than one instance and describes it as a "camel with a sore back." Though she speaks of it as her inheritance,⁴⁵ historical accounts as well as traditions show that the land of Fadak was actually gifted to her by the Prophet (ṣ) during his lifetime.

One of the interesting sections of this sermon is the discussion on the philosophy of ritual acts of worship. Al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah beautifully explains why we have been commanded to pray, fast, go for pilgrimage, etc. There is a lot to be said about the profundity of her statements and scholars have written volumes expounding her words. Her mentioning the precepts of Islam in a sermon such as this shows that even when she was distressed, she took the opportunity to impart

⁴⁵ It is possible that she only did this to respond to the claim made by Abū Bakr that she cannot inherit anything from the Prophet (ṣ).

some of the knowledge she had gained from her father.

The boldness with which Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (a) speaks to the caliph shows that she was brave and fearless. On the other hand, the manner in which Abū Bakr responded to her indicates that she was a lady who was greatly admired and respected by the Muslim community. Furthermore, her copious use of Qur'ānic verses, upon which she bases her arguments, speaks to her mastery over the contents of the divine book.

Many questions crop up when one examines this historic sermon, such as: (i) Why was Fadak taken away in the first place? (ii) Why did the Muslims not come to her aid when she called for their support? (iii) Why did she allude to the caliphate as being usurped? (iv) If Abū Bakr held her in such high regard and considered her a 'noblewoman of the Prophet's *ummah*', why did he not acquiesce to her demands and return Fadak to her?⁴⁶ (v) Why did she demand Fadak as her inheritance if it was, as history attests, a gift? (vi) What role did 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a) play in attempting to get Fadak returned to his wife? These questions are beyond the scope of this chapter, but the answers to these questions may be found in available works of *ḥadīth* and Islamic history.

⁴⁶ Interestingly, this question was posed by the famous commentator of *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, to one of the teachers in Baghdād, 'Alī ibn al-Fāriqī. The latter smiled and said, "If they would have acquiesced and handed Fadak back to Fāṭimah on that day, she would have come the following day to demand the caliphate for her husband." (See: Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, vol. 16, p. 283).

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF JUYNBOLL'S VIEWS ON *ISNĀD*

Gautier H. A. Juynboll was an important figure in Western-Orientalist ḥadīth studies. His work gained prominence and he was considered one of the foremost scholars in his field. Juynboll was a Schachtian¹ and as such, he generally denied the 'proof-value' and authenticity of ḥadīth. He posited opinions about a variety of issues pertaining to ḥadīth, ranging from the development of *isnāds*, *tawātur*, the 'common-link' theory, etc. Though he only dealt with the Sunnī ḥadīth corpus, we expect that some of his methods may also be applied to Shī'ī ḥadīth. In this chapter, we offer a critique of some of Juynboll's views, specifically on *isnād*.

The Birth and Development of *Isnāds*

Theories about the exact chronology of the birth of the *isnād* are varied and can be summarized as follows:

1. Most Muslim scholars, from the medieval times to date, consider the first civil war which started with the murder of 'Uthmān in 35 A.H., to be the starting point for the use of *isnāds* as a means of verifying the authenticity of statements that were being attributed to higher authorities;
2. Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) held that the third civil war, which began with the killing of the Umayyad caliph Walīd ibn Yazīd in 126 A.H., was the starting point for the use and eventual

¹ A term used to refer to all those who follow Joseph Schacht's line of thinking with regard to ḥadīth (such as Juynboll, Cook, etc.).

regulation of the *isnād*;

3. Juynboll (d. 2010) proposed a third chronology that falls between the two earlier chronologies and identifies the second civil war as the starting point for the *isnād*. This war began in 63 A.H. and lasted until 73 A.H., with ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr proclaiming a counter-caliphate in Makka, thereby challenging the authority of the Umayyads in Damascus.²

Thus Juynboll places the earliest emergence of the *isnād* at more than half a century after the death of the Prophet, only a few decades after the date given by Muslim scholars and more than half a century earlier than what was proposed by Schacht.

The main evidence presented by Juynboll to support this chronology is the statement attributed to Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 110 A.H.) wherein he says that it was not commonplace to inquire after the *isnād*, but when the *fitna* occurred, people began asking for the name of the informants of narrators, and if they were *ahl al-sunna*, their traditions were accepted, but if they were *ahl al-bid‘ah* their traditions were rejected. Juynboll contends that the word “*fitna*” in Ibn Sīrīn’s report refers to the conflict between the Umayyads and Ibn al-Zubayr and not the uprising against ‘Uthmān.

In order to prove his contention, he traces the word “*fitna*” in connection with the killing of ‘Uthmān in various reports which appear in early sources and states:

...not a single one originated in the time as suggested by the sources, but have all come into existence at dates relatively close to the death dates of the compilers of these sources, whereas the context of civil war ensuing from the killing of ‘Uthmān for the word *fitna* originated not earlier than the latter half of the second century of the Hijra, after the Abbasids had come to

² Juynboll, “Date of the Great *Fitna*”, p. 159.

power.³

After his study of the sources he concludes that in the history of Islam, the first political event that is most often called the *fitna* is the revolt of 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr against the Umayyad caliphs. The other disturbances, earlier as well as later, only came to be called *fitna* at a subsequent date.⁴

There is a counterargument to this chronology which was presented by Josef van Ess. He published an epistle ascribed to al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah (d. after 95 A.H.) in which the word *fitna* occurs in connection with the killing of 'Uthmān. He deduces that this may undermine Juynboll's proposal of the later date. Though Juynboll has attempted to rebut these arguments elsewhere, his method of evaluation for each report is inconsistent. Some reports are dismissed by him as simple forged prophecies while others he dismisses claiming the word *fitna*, which appears in them, is not in the context of the civil war ensuing from the killing of 'Uthmān.

Even though Juynboll expressed grave doubts concerning the value of the *isnād*, he adduces arguments based on *isnād* in relation to certain reports. At any rate, his reasons for dismissing the earlier reports are not convincing. On the other hand, in dealing with the occurrences of the word *fitna* that appear in relation to the revolt of Ibn al-Zubayr,⁵ and which lead him to the conclusion that it was the first event of its kind generally referred to as *fitna*, Juynboll does not apply the same criticisms he does to the reports referring the term to 'Uthmān's assassination. Moreover, all the reports that he considers as being in relation to Ibn al-Zubayr's *fitna* also first appear in the same Abbasid sources.⁶

Though Juynboll argues that the killing of 'Uthmān took place before or just after Ibn Sīrīn's birth, there is no reason why it cannot be

³ Ibid, p. 152.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Al-Jārallah, *The Origins of Hadith*, p. 216.

⁶ Ibid, p. 219.

assumed that Ibn Sīrīn was referring to an event that had occurred just before or after his birth. Additionally, there are reports on his authority in which he refers to the strife ensuing from the killing of ‘Uthmān by the simple term ‘*al-fitna*’. On the other hand, there is a report in the *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq in which he calls the rebellion of Ibn al-Zubayr ‘*fitnatu Ibn al-Zubayr*’.⁷

Juynboll also asserts that the term ‘*ahl al-bid‘ah*’ itself strengthens the case for the *fitna* referring to Ibn al-Zubayr’s revolt since there were no deviant groups of innovators at the time of ‘Uthmān’s assassination, or soon after. However, we find that there were indeed distinct groups of people who shared deviant innovative ideas in this period. One such group that reared its head at the time of the caliphate of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), was the Khawārij. The Khawārij not only deserted ‘Alī but also began to formulate their own heresies at that time. Furthermore, in his work *al-Quṣṣāṣ wal-Mudhakkirīn*, Ibn al-Jawzī quotes a report in which the *fitna* ensuing from the killing of ‘Uthmān is mentioned just before Ibn Sīrīn talks of the heresies of the Khawārij.⁸ So we find, contrary to Juynboll’s assertion, there was no innovation (*bid‘ah*) that ensued from the revolt of Ibn al-Zubayr, yet there are numerous accounts of deviant groups who introduced innovations after the killing of ‘Uthmān.

In his study on the development of *isnāds*, Juynboll devised a method of visually representing the evolution of *isnāds* where the chains of transmitters of a particular tradition, preferably one which is well-known (*mashhūr*), are copied from the collections in which that tradition occurs and represented diagrammatically so as to produce an overall view of the different paths (*turuq*) of its transmission. This procedure results in a sketch he terms a “bundle”, and shows that for practically every well-known tradition, the path of transmission from the Prophet all the way to the various collections does not, in his view,

⁷ See: ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 11, pp. 366-367.

⁸ See: Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Quṣṣāṣ wal-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 176.

come through a sizeable number of Companions, and from each of those Companions to a sizeable number of Successors, and from each of those Successors to a sizeable number of other, younger transmitters, as would have been expected.⁹ On the contrary, he says that the first person with a number of pupils to whom all the *isnād* strands of a particular tradition lead is hardly ever a Companion, very rarely an early Successor, but virtually always a late Successor or someone belonging to a generation after that of the Successors.

Among the youngest Companions of the Prophet who are said to have transmitted huge numbers of traditions, the most famous is Anas ibn Mālik who is reported to have been fifteen years of age at the time when his mother presented him to the Prophet to be his servant, shortly after his Hijra to Madīna from Makka. Anas died in 91 A.H. or 93 A.H., well after the date that Juynboll proposed for the birth of the *isnād*. Juynboll claims that from the entire corpus of canonical traditions whose *isnāds* are headed by Anas, only two traditions could possibly be ascribed to Anas himself, while the hundreds of others were likely from transmitters from subsequent generations. This implies that Companions who are named in the chains are themselves not responsible for their being included in *isnāds*; rather, it is the 'common-link' who is responsible for the *isnād* strand and the inclusion therein of the name of the Companion.

He further asserts that solitary reports consisting of single narrators are akin to coincidences, and even the cumulation of a large number of coincidences do not produce workable historical data. Therefore, the ascription of a tradition to the Prophet via an *isnād* consisting of a single person who transmitted it to another single person, who passed it on to yet another person, who related it yet to another single person, is, in his

⁹ This expectation is highly irrational. The more natural form of transmission early historical reports and traditions take is that which we see in the current *isnāds* given the rudimentary means of recording and writing that were prevalent in early times. Expecting anything more than this is unrealistic.

view, historically fragile at best. A single *isnād* strand that conveys the Prophet's saying which was heard by his many Companions, who then chose to pass it on to only one of the younger contemporaries who, in turn, chose to relate it to only one younger contemporary, after which it was finally passed on to someone who told a number of other people is, in Juynboll's words, "difficult to swallow".¹⁰

Discussion on *Tawātur*

Juynboll defines *tawātur* as "a broad authentication which indicates that a historical report or a Prophetic tradition is supported by such a large number of *isnād* strands, each beginning with a different Companion or other ancient authority, that its authenticity or truthfulness is thereby assumed to be guaranteed."¹¹ He then goes on to explain the reasoning behind it as being the improbability that a sizeable number of people who transmitted the same text could, by sheer coincidence or collusion, all relate falsehood.

The term *tawātur*, Juynboll points out, began being applied on a wide scale from the seventh century A.H. and the first full-fledged ḥadīth theoreticians such as al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360 A.H.) and al-Hākim al-Nayshāpūrī (d. 405 A.H.) never made use of the term in their works. From the time of Ibn Ṣalāh al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643 A.H.), the concept was studied in more detail and its definition was refined. At this point, *tawātur* was subdivided into *tawātur lafzī* i.e. the verbatim *mutawātir* transmission of a text, and *tawātur ma'nawī* i.e. transmission of the gist or salient features of a given text. The latter form of *tawātur* was said to vastly outnumber the former type.

In his book *Muslim Tradition*, Juynboll devotes one chapter to the

¹⁰ Juynboll often uses phrases such as "hard to swallow" when dealing with what he imagines to be nothing more than coincidences. See *Muslim Tradition*, p. 138 for example.

¹¹ Juynboll, "(Re)Appraisal of Some Technical Terms in Hadith Sciences", p. 326.

study of *tawātur* and concludes that:

An Oriental scholar who, otherwise, appears just as sceptical as Goldziher, where the ascription of the majority of Muslim traditions to the oldest authorities of their *isnāds* are concerned, still seems to set store by a tradition being *mutawātir* as a possible guarantee for the historicity of its ascription to the Prophet. It is also because of this putative unimpeachability of *tawātur* – one can almost speak of an aura of holiness – that until today no one seems to have gone to the trouble of investigating *mutawātir* traditions in particular. My own attempt at unravelling the multitude of different *isnāds* of a 'genuine' *mutawātir* tradition resulted in the unforeseen, but in the final analysis inevitable, conclusion that *tawātur* as such is no guarantee for the historicity of a ḥadīth's ascription to the Prophet.¹²

Interestingly, by his own admission, Juynboll states that the only evidence he used to base his conclusion is *argumenta e silentio* but goes on to add that this was because he was unable to ascertain any other 'stronger' arguments.¹³

He makes his case, essentially, by claiming that since it is well-known that Muslim ḥadīth compilers mostly collect everything that the previous generation had recorded and then simply add their own data, and since the 'rule' is to incorporate 'all' the material of one's predecessors in one's compilation, the absence of certain material in certain collections may be considered evidence that this was in fact a later addition. This, for Juynboll, is especially true for famous dicta and slogans which later came to be classified as *mutawātir* because for the number of their *isnāds*.

¹² Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadīth*, p. 98.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Therefore, when a tradition which is *mutawātir* is found in certain canonical collections, its absence in earlier collections raises questions that need to be answered. In other words, the more famous the ḥadīth, the more significant its absence from earlier sources, where it would have been expected to be included. So if a *mutawātir* tradition is not found in an earlier collection, it would seem, from Juynboll's argument, one can deduce that its historicity is actually unsound.

In order to prove his hypothesis, Juynboll quotes two examples of traditions that have been classified as *mutawātir* but are, in his view, suspect.¹⁴ The first tradition is against the practice of *niyāḥa* i.e. lamenting the dead, and the second tradition is one where the Prophet is said to have declared, "Whoever [deliberately] puts false statements into my mouth must prepare for himself a seat in Hell." The latter is also referred to as the *man kadhaba* tradition.¹⁵

Many scholars, in later times, embarked on collecting as many *isnāds* supporting the *man kadhaba* tradition as could be unearthed. The first person to have apparently made such a collection was the ḥadīth expert 'Alī ibn 'Abdillāh al-Madanī,¹⁶ who is said to have listed twenty Companions who had narrated it. Subsequent collections list even more *ṭuruq* for this tradition, with al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360 A.H.) listing more than sixty, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 A.H.) more than ninety and al-Nawawī (d. 676 A.H.) mentioning two hundred *ṭuruq*.

The problem, however, is that scholars who collected these *ṭuruq* asserted that even though the majority were weak or fabricated, the report nonetheless remained qualified as *mutawātir*. Further, one of the conditions stipulated by Ibn Ḥajar for *tawātur*, namely the transmission

¹⁴ In his more recent article, written 18 years after his book *Muslim Tradition* was published, he cites many more examples of traditions that have been classified as *mutawātir* and then goes on to examine each one of the examples in meticulous detail (see: Juynboll, "(Re)Appraisal of Some Technical Terms," pp. 326-241).

¹⁵ *Man kadhaba 'alayya muta'ammidan fal-yatabawwa' maq'adahū mina'l-nār* (Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 10).

¹⁶ Juynboll, "(Re)Appraisal...", p. 328.

by a sizeable group of narrators on the authority of another sizeable group of narrators from the beginning of the transmission until its end in every generation, is found to be consistently lacking.

Juynboll attempts to trace the occurrence of this tradition in particular ḥadīth collections. The first source he examines is *Sunan al-Nasāʾi*. He notes that it is astonishing that this ḥadīth is not found in al-Nasāʾi's collection, especially since two of his shaykhs have transmitted narrations from many of those who narrated the *man kadhaba* tradition. In addition, he notes that at least thirty years before al-Nasāʾi died, there circulated an *isnād* headed by his teacher Qutayba ibn Saʿīd, supporting the *man kadhaba* tradition, which Nasāʾi never narrated, possibly because he did not trust it had come from his teacher.¹⁷

In response to Juynboll's arguments about this tradition, Sulayman Al-Jarallah presents numerous alternative *isnāds* that have been reported in various collections for this tradition. He then responds to the doubts raised by Juynboll about these *isnāds* and rejects some of the latter's *e silentio* proofs using his own research into the biographical accounts of some key narrators.¹⁸

Regarding the practice of *niyāḥa*, Juynboll notes that the Qur'ān is itself silent about this practice. He adds that the earliest occurrence of this term that he found was after the Battle of Uḥud. The historian Ibn Hishām quotes from Ibn Ishāq how groups of women bewailed the martyrdom of Ḥamzah, the uncle of the Prophet, and uses the phrase "*fa sami'a al-bukā' wa an-nawā'ih.*"¹⁹ In studying the *isnāds* of this tradition, Juynboll concludes that they are mostly weak and consist of *mursal*, *munqati'*, etc. traditions. Additionally, he claims that none of the chains can be deemed Ḥijāzī (i.e. from either Makka or Madīna) and all the traditions with the term *niyāḥa* or its derivatives are

¹⁷ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 110.

¹⁸ Al-Jarallah, *The Origins of Hadith*, pp. 304-325.

¹⁹ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 99.

supported only by Iraqi and Syrian or Egyptian *isnāds*.²⁰

The oldest tradition in which the term appears can be found in *Musnad Abī Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī* (d. 203 A.H.). Ḥadīth no. 1221 of this text reads:

Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī [reported] from Shu‘ba (ibn al-Ḥajjāj), from Abū Ishāq (al-Sabī‘ī), from ‘Āmir ibn Sa‘d al-Bajalī, who said, “I saw Thābit ibn Wadī‘a and Qarāza ibn Ka‘b al-Anṣārī attend a wedding where there was singing. When I asked them about that they said, ‘He (referring to the Prophet) permitted singing during weddings and also weeping (*bukā’*) over the dead, but without lamentation (*niyāḥa*).”

Juynboll’s contention is that if, for the sake of argument, the *niyāḥa* traditions are considered *mutawātir*, it would be reasonable to conclude that the Prophet had already forbidden the practice in Madīna; yet it was only first witnessed in Kūfa several decades after his death and has not been mentioned in any traditions with Madīnan or Makkan *isnāds*.²¹

In response, it should be noted that Juynboll’s conclusion that the *niyāḥa* tradition which is deemed *mutawātir*, with the most common reference to it being the maxim: ‘the deceased will be punished by the lamenting of his relatives over him,’²² was a later Iraqi fabrication, since the term *niyāḥa* and its root verb نَوَى is found only in Iraqi *isnāds* and other *isnāds* use the term *bukā’* instead,²³ is not sound for three reasons.

Firstly, it is only one Prophetic saying out of those that have been mentioned by Juynboll which is considered by some ḥadīth scholars to

²⁰ Ibid, p. 102.

²¹ Ibid, p. 103.

²² *Innal-mayyita yu‘adhdhabu bin-niyāḥati ‘alayhi fi qabrih* (see: *Sunan al-Bayhaqī*, vol. 2, p. 422).

²³ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 107, footnote 52.

be *mutawātir*,²⁴ and they mention the particular narration with the term *bukā'* (not *niyāḥa*). Additionally, this ḥadīth appears with *isnāds* from both regions, Hijāz and Iraq.²⁵

Secondly, in his investigation, Juynboll differentiates between *niyāḥa* and *bukā'*. He thus sets aside the ḥadīths with Madīnan *isnāds* in which *bukā'* occurs, even when they describe the same events as those in which the term *niyāḥa* appears. Though there are a few reports in which a distinction between *niyāḥa* and *bukā'* exists, this does not mean that *niyāḥa* is not a form of *bukā'*. In *Muḥjam Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, part of Ibn Fāris' definition of *niyāḥa* reads:

NWH: ...*al-Munāḥāt*: the coming together of women for the purpose of crying and wailing (*bukā'*).²⁶

Thirdly, Juynboll does not state the basis on which he defines the origin of the *isnāds* in this study. In his investigation, he describes some *isnāds*, such as the one in which Ibn Abī Shaybah appears, as 'purely Madīnan'.²⁷ However, we find that in this *isnād* the shaykh of Ibn Abi Shaybah is Kūfan and the next two transmitters are from Madīna.

After presenting his analysis of the two examples of *mutawātir* traditions, Juynboll makes the following statement:

Of all canonical or non-canonical traditions, labelled *mutawātir* or otherwise, to be found in Muslim ḥadīth literature, not a single one has a proto-wording supported by *isnād* strands which, when analytically surveyed together, show up the requisite number of authorities – three, four, five or more – in every tier, i.e. on every separate level of transmission, from the

²⁴ Such as al-Nawawī and, more recently, Subḥī Ṣāliḥ among others. It should be noted that these scholars consider the narration to have *tawātur ma'nawī* because of its numerous textual variations.

²⁵ See for example, the *isnāds* of this ḥadīth in *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* 1:26, 36, 38, 39, 45, 47, 50...

²⁶ Ibn Fāris, *Muḥjam Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, vol. 5, p. 367.

²⁷ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 105.

very beginning to the very end.²⁸

In his later works, Juynboll examines other traditions that have been classified as *mutawātir* but concludes that when scrutinized closely, most cases of purported *tawātur* are nothing more than conglomerates of a number of mostly well-known (*mashhūr*) and closely related, dissimilar traditions. And with regard to *tawātur lafẓī*, he considers it a historiographical criterion which appears never to have any demonstrable applicability. In the rare cases where a tradition can be declared as having *tawātur lafẓī*, even if it is bereft of the necessary criteria for genuine *tawātur*, the plausible assumption in his view is that it was something that is mentioned in the Qur’ān and became a slogan on everybody’s lips.²⁹

In conclusion, Juynboll says that the term *tawātur* developed in a haphazard fashion and its final definition was never free of ambiguity. It was only at the time of Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 A.H.) that a point of clarity was reached. After a review of traditions that are deemed *mutawātir*, he concludes that *tawātur lafẓī* was a never-realized theory while *tawātur ma’nawī* only occurred in a limited number of cases, and that too without ever meeting the unadulterated *tawātur* criteria. In short, the entire *tawātur* phenomenon is, for Juynboll, a dead letter.

Seeing that the two main examples given by Juynboll to prove his thesis against *tawātur* are lacking, it is evident that this concept has been wrongly understood and portrayed by the Dutch scholar. Though we may agree with his statement regarding the absence or rarity of actual *tawātur lafẓī* in the present ḥadīth collections, his aim of completely dismissing the idea of *tawātur* and arguing its insufficiency as evidence

²⁸ Juynboll, “(Re)Appraisal...”, pp. 329-330.

²⁹ Interestingly, the only example given by Juynboll of a possible *mutawātir lafẓī* tradition is one in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “I have been ordered to fight against the [unbelieving] people until they say: ‘There is no god but Allah.’” He accepts this as being *mutawātir* because it is supported by “numerous Qur’ān verses [sic]” in which believers were openly encouraged to engage in Holy War against the infidels.

of authenticity is thwarted by a simple analysis of the evidence given for this claim.

The Common-Link Theory

The Common-Link Theory was the cornerstone of Schacht's method of ḥadīth criticism. It was a theory that he developed later, whereas in his initial writings, he attributed his view of mass fabrication of ḥadīth to historical factors and foreign influences.³⁰ Subsequently he formulated the idea that every chain of transmitters had one individual who was responsible for bringing that narration into circulation. This individual was the 'common-link'. Among the many arguments that he put forward against the ḥadīth, the most important one for our purpose is that claims of a solitary tradition transmitted by a single individual (*khabar al-wāḥid*) cannot be accepted as "well-authenticated".³¹

In his book *Muslim Tradition*, Juynboll embraces Schacht's Common-Link Theory and writes:

Now, it must be conceded first of all that, in my opinion, the common-link theory is a brilliant one.³²

It should be noted that the concept of a common-link in the chains of transmission is not something new to traditional Muslim ḥadīth scholarship, as evinced by many classical works on ḥadīth terminology. The term used by Muslim scholars to describe this concept is *tafarrud*, while the common-link himself is called the *madār al-isnād* (lit. the central transmitter of the chain).³³ Thus the existence of a common-link was not something discovered by Schacht.

However, there is a stark difference between Schachtians and the

³⁰ Schacht, "Islamic Law", p. 345.

³¹ Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 50.

³² Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 207.

³³ Alhomoudi, *On the Common-Link Theory*, p. 69.

Muslim ḥadīth scholars with regard to the role of the common-link. The ḥadīth scholars admit that the common-link was a root cause of some fabricated traditions which were narrated by dishonest transmitters but insist that these traditions have since been expunged.³⁴ Thus, the problem of the unscrupulous common-link has been resolved long ago by Muslims themselves. Additionally, while they acknowledged the presence of a common-link in the *isnāds*, the ḥadīth scholars differentiated between the reliable and unreliable narrators. Juynboll and Schacht, on the other hand, even accuse the most reliable narrators, who turn up as common-links, of fabrication. They claim that the common-link permeated all ḥadīths and was rooted in the practice of the legal scholars (*fuqahā'*) who purposely circulated traditions that were needed to resolve legal issues. Therefore, in their estimation, all ḥadīths are traceable to a common-link and as such, *ipso facto*, fraudulent.

All in all, the Orientalist scholars' distrust for *isnād* as a means of guaranteeing authenticity of traditions is based on four main arguments: the first is *e silentio* which states that the best way to prove a tradition did not exist at a certain time is to show that it was not referred to or used as a legal argument in a discussion that would have made reference to it imperative, if it had existed.³⁵ The second argument is the backward growth of the *isnād*, according to which doctrines are frequently projected backwards and [falsely] attributed to higher authorities.³⁶ The third is the "family-*isnād*" where traditions are transmitted amongst members of a single family, e.g. from father to son and grandson. According to Schacht, these kinds of *isnāds* were only a device for securing the appearance of the traditions and are not a primary indication of their authenticity.³⁷ And according to Juynboll,

³⁴ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁵ Schacht, *Origins*, p. 140.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 156.

³⁷ Schacht, "A Revaluation of Islamic Tradition", p. 147.

the proliferation of much of the *munkar* material was achieved by means of family-*isnāds*.³⁸ One of the earliest examples of such *isnāds* is found among the traditions ascribed to 'Abdullāh ibn Burayda (d. 115).³⁹

The fourth argument is the Common-Link Theory. According to this theory, in most traditions, there exists a single transmitter and promoter of the narration who provides an *isnād* going back to an early authority such as a Companion or the Prophet himself, and this higher part of the *isnād* (which Schacht and Juynboll consider fictitious) would often acquire later additional branches by the creation of improvements in the chains of transmission. In any case, the main promoter would remain the lowest common link in the several strands of the *isnād*. The existence of a significant common-link in all or most *isnāds* of a given tradition is, for Schacht and Juynboll, a strong indication in favour of its having originated at the time of the common-link.⁴⁰

Schachtians believe that in cases where there is no apparent or identifiable common-link in variant *isnāds*, it is only as a result of the "spread of *isnāds*". This refers to the creation of additional chains of transmitters and authorities for the same tradition.⁴¹ Although clear dissimilarities can be seen between Schacht's original Common-Link Theory and Juynboll's adaptation of it, such as the fact that the latter deems greater 'historicity' if more people narrate a certain ḥadīth from a scholar at any given moment in time,⁴² it is evident that Juynboll was partly responsible for the spread of this theory among Western scholars. In his book *Muslim Tradition*, he argues that the Common-Link Theory did not receive "the attention, elaboration or, simply, the

³⁸ The arguments against their claims regarding family-*isnāds* and backward projection to earlier authorities are similar to those offered in response to the common-link theory. Hence, we have not dealt with these two claims independently.

³⁹ Juynboll, "Munkar," EI 2nd ed., p. 576.

⁴⁰ Schacht, *Origins*, pp. 171-172.

⁴¹ Cook, "Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions," p. 24.

⁴² Juynboll, "Some Isnād-Analytical Methods...", p. 352.

emphasis” that it truly seems to deserve.⁴³ Towards the end of his book, Juynboll elucidates his view of the Common-Link Theory which is somewhat different from Schacht’s original hypothesis.

Since Juynboll considers Schacht’s evidence for the Common-Link Theory to be insufficient, he has tried to present further proof for the same. To this end, he presents the case of the ḥadīth of ‘*tubna madīna*’⁴⁴ which is to be found in both al-Khaṭīb’s *Tārīkh Baghdād* and Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Kitāb al-Mawḍū‘āt*. Juynboll claims that Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161 A.H.), who held the highest rank among the traditionists in terms of reliability, was the common-link and fabricator of this ḥadīth, and then concludes that even the most reliable of transmitters can be common-links in *isnāds*. This would mean, quite simply, that the authenticity of all traditions in the entire corpus of ḥadīth is doubtable.⁴⁵

Juynboll’s argument rests on three major premises. The first is based on socio-historical proof, the second deals with the analysis of the *isnād* of the *tubna madīna* tradition, and the third leans on other traditions as supporting evidence. In the first major premise, which rests upon socio-historical evidence concerning Sufyān’s life, his relations with the Abbasid regime and his legacy, Juynboll’s main contention is that Sufyān was known for his anti-Abbasid feelings, which may very well have been moulded into the form of one or more traditions. He also regards it as quite possible that many of Sufyān’s own statements, through no effort of his own, were eventually provided with *isnāds* going back to the Prophet.

The second premise is based on the preliminary conclusion which Juynboll draws from his analysis, that Sufyān must be held accountable for fabricating the *tubna madīna* tradition. He further implies from this

⁴³ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 207.

⁴⁴ This is the narration that states: *Tubna madīna bayna Dijlah wa Duḡayl wa Qartabal wa al-Sarat, tajī’ ilayhā khazā’īnu al-amṣār wa jabābiratuhā...* (See: *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 14, p. 279).

⁴⁵ Alhomoudi, *On the Common-Link Theory*, p. 69.

“fact” that Sufyān might also have fabricated other ḥadīths as well. Finally, for his third premise he presents other traditions like the legal maxim concerning the minimum amount of dowry for marriage wherein it is reported that the Prophet (ṣ) said, “No dowry [should be] less than ten Dirhams”, and then proceeds to identify the common-link in the *isnād*.⁴⁶

Let us now examine the three premises upon which Juynboll's arguments in support of the Common-Link Theory, based on this specific case study, are founded. The first premise is where Juynboll examines the socio-political circumstances surrounding Sufyān al-Thawrī's life, and his relationship with the Abbasid regime of the time. He contends that Sufyān was known for his anti-Abbasid feelings, and it is likely that this led him to fabricate the *tubna madīna* tradition. He also suggests that it is quite possible that many of Sufyān's statements were later given fabricated *isnāds* going back to the Prophet.

However, a closer examination of Sufyān's life and position towards the Abbasids reveals that he was 35 years old when the Abbasid dynasty came into existence (132 A.H.), and 40 when al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158 A.H.), who established the caliphate in Baghdad, came to power. There is not a single record of even one incident of conflict between Sufyān and any of the Abbasid caliphs who ruled before or after al-Manṣūr, such as al-Saffāḥ (d. 132 A.H.), al-Mahdī (r. 158-168 A.H.) or others. Nevertheless, his abilities as a mature scholar did attract the attention al-Manṣūr, leading to his unwelcome appointment to the post of chief justice (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*). When Sufyān refused the position, he earned the caliph's wrath and was forced to go into hiding for the rest of al-Manṣūr's reign.⁴⁷

However, during the entire period that Sufyān was in hiding, he continued to recognize al-Manṣūr's government and never incited a revolt against him or any other Abbasid caliph. At the same time, al-

⁴⁶ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 214.

⁴⁷ See: Muḥammad Qal'aji, *Mawsū'at Fiqh Sufyān al-Thawrī*, pp. 17-18.

Manṣūr does not appear to have pursued Sufyān seriously, as it would have been simple enough to capture him in virtually any city of the Empire after his escape from Baghdad. For instance, al-Dhahabī mentions in his *Siyyar* that when Sufyān was in Makka, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, the local Abbasid-appointed governor of the city, advised Sufyān to hide, otherwise he would be seized and sent to al-Manṣūr in Baghdad. If he had thought that Sufyān posed a danger to al-Manṣūr's regime, he would not have hesitated to send him under guard to Baghdad.⁴⁸

Other Abbasid rulers and governors in cities other than Makka showed a similar complacency with respect to Sufyān. In fact, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzi mentions in his *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl* that Sufyān used to perform prayers with all the Abbasid caliphs, which is further indication that he was not entirely opposed to the government.⁴⁹ An incomplete picture, therefore, has been presented by Juynboll of the relationship between Sufyān and the Abbasid regime, and used to substantiate the faulty idea that anti-authoritarian sentiment was expressed by him in one or more fabricated ḥadīths.

Another important consideration in the biography of Sufyān is his credibility as a transmitter, which Juynboll has impugned. In sharp contrast, all the traditional Muslim scholars and *muḥaddiths* considered Sufyān to be unquestionably reliable in terms of his rank as a transmitter of ḥadīth.⁵⁰ Al-Rāzi quotes certain scholars who believed Sufyān was even more reliable than Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 A.H.), the compiler of *al-Muwattaʿa*.⁵¹ Furthermore, it was the unanimous opinion of the Muslim traditionists that Sufyān was extremely careful about those from whom he chose to transmit ḥadīth. Juynboll does not take into consideration the fact that Sufyān is deemed to be of the highest

⁴⁸ Alhomoudi, *On the Common-Link Theory*, p. 72.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ This is true for those who follow the Sunnī school of thought. As for the Shīʿī scholars, they mostly consider Sufyān to have strayed from the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (a).

rank, in terms of reliability, as a transmitter. Logically, therefore, all other transmitters who are considered to be less reliable and to have less authority are more likely to have also fabricated the ḥadīths they narrated, thus placing the entire ḥadīth corpus in question.

Regarding his second premise, Sufyān had nothing to do with spreading the *isnād* of this ḥadīth to all those untrustworthy transmitters. It must have been another transmitter who fabricated the ḥadīth and falsely attributed it to Sufyān. Thus it is wrong to say that Sufyān is the common-link in the *isnād* of this ḥadīth, and hence its fabricator, as all the evidence suggests otherwise. Fahad Alhomoudi has presented a complete analysis of the *isnād* of this ḥadīth in his doctoral thesis on the Common-Link Theory and has clearly shown that Juynboll's analysis of the chain of transmitters is lacking and flawed. Additionally, the *tubna madīna* tradition has been unanimously classified by the traditionists as being a weak ḥadīth.⁵¹

As for the other narrations used by Juynboll to establish his evidence for the Common-Link Theory (which makes up the basis of his third premise), we find him inconsistent as he refers to what would, by his own criteria, be classified as weak traditions, to prove his case. He also attempts to show that despite being aware of the presence of common-links in the chains of transmission, Muslim ḥadīth scholars did not regard it as red flag. However, what clearly differentiates Juynboll's approach from that of the early *muhaddithīn* is that while the latter only accused unreliable transmitters, Juynboll accuses even trustworthy transmitters of fabrication.

Because he was a strong proponent of the Common-Link Theory, Juynboll found himself puzzled by certain types of ḥadīth. For instance, he could not explain the *isnāds* of traditions related to the issue of *siqāya* (watering/irrigation). After collecting and studying these *isnāds* based on his theory of how single strands are later spread by a common-link, he concludes that "the *siqāya* reports are supported by such a number

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 69.

of different *isnāds* that it is impossible to point to a transmitter who might be considered as the common-link.”⁵² In fact, based on true traditionist understanding, the common-link of these *isnāds* is the Prophet himself. This, however, Juynboll could not see, for attributing the ḥadīths to the Prophet would give them full authenticity, an authenticity that entirely contradicts the Common-Link Theory.

The second case of confusion is encountered when Juynboll discussed the ḥadīth related to the meaning of “*uswah ḥasana*.” He admits his inability to apply the Common-Link Theory to this ḥadīth:

An analysis of the available *isnāds*, including those of other variants, does not, however, enable us to determine a common-link, who might have been solely responsible for bringing this report into circulation.⁵³

Juynboll finds the *isnād* of this ḥadīth confusing, because he assumes that the common-link should appear at about the fourth level of transmission, being the one responsible for fabricating and disseminating the ḥadīth. But, in this case there is more than one person who could potentially fill this role. Juynboll would not have been confused if he acknowledged the traditionists’ method of analysing *isnāds*, which allows one to discern that all of these potential common-links refer to a higher authority, namely a Companion or the Prophet himself.

Therefore we find that the methods used by Juynboll, and even the evidence he has presented to prove the Common-Link Theory, leave much to be desired and in fact only serve to weaken the theory put forward by Schacht, as detailed analysis has shown. It should be noted, however, that other scholars such as Cook and Motzki have put forward their own ideas regarding this theory but a discussion on their views is outside the scope of this article.

⁵² Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Hadith*, p. 100.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 108.

Conclusion

Western Orientalist scholars have hypothesized and written about ḥadīth for many years. Unlike the narrations that exist in the sources of other religions, the presence of chains of transmission in the Islamic traditions renders them more reliable in comparison. It is for this reason that the *isnād* has come under scrutiny by those scholars who seek to undermine the authenticity of ḥadīth. One such scholar was Gautier Juynboll.

As we have noted in our study, Juynboll has tried to come up with some unique views about the *isnād*, starting from when the whole process of *isnād* began. He attempts to show that chains of transmission were first used more than fifty years after the demise of the Prophet (ﷺ) and bases his conclusion on the single statement of Ibn Sīrīn that *isnād* only came to be employed after the period of *fitna*. He then argues that the term *fitna* must refer to the uprising of Ibn Zubayr since the term can only reliably be traced back to this period. However, a study of early sources shows that he is clearly mistaken as the term *fitna* was indeed used to refer to the earlier event of ‘Uthmān’s assassination.

On the subject of *tawātur*, Juynboll questions the very premise of *tawātur* as a guarantee of the historicity of traditions. His argument against *tawātur* is two-pronged: he first tries to show that traditions which have been classified as *mutawātir* by Muslim scholars do not meet the criteria of *tawātur* outlined by the same scholars and secondly, he asserts that many of the chains of so-called *mutawātir* reports were later fabrications. To prove the latter, he uses the argument from silence (*e silencio*) as he admits that he could find no other evidence. While it is true that verbatim *mutawātir* reports are rare, there are clearly a number of traditions that are *mutawātir* in their meaning (*tawātur maʿnawī*) as scholars have decisively shown.

The Common-Link Theory that was first propounded by Joseph Schacht was expounded upon and further developed by Juynboll. According to this theory, every ḥadīth has a common-link who was

responsible for popularizing it, and it was this same individual who was also its fabricator. The common-link or someone after him further attributed the tradition to higher authorities by making up a chain of transmission leading back to the Prophet (ﷺ) or a Companion. Hence, in Juynboll's view, none of the traditions can actually be traced back reliably to the Prophet (ﷺ). However, there were a number of traditions for which Juynboll could not find a common-link and had no explanation other than their correct ascription to the Prophet (ﷺ). As such, his evidence for the Common-Link Theory was lacking.

One of the main problems with Junboll's work is that he does not take the Shī'ī ḥadīth into account. For instance, if he had studied the Shī'ī traditions, he would probably have found the clear instruction by Imam 'Alī (a) that people should name their informants when relating traditions.⁵⁴ As such, his chronology of the use of *isnāds* would have been much earlier. Likewise, the presence of *mutawātir* traditions in the Shī'ī corpus of ḥadīth might have changed his overall view of the futility of *tawātur*. And studying the chains of transmission that lead back to the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), who are deemed infallible by the Shī'ahs would, in all likelihood, completely change his position on the Common-Link Theory. In the end, his overlooking of Shī'ī ḥadīth has only reduced the value of his studies on *isnād*.

⁵⁴ See: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 274.

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