



'ABD ALLAH
IBN SABA

Myth EXPLODED

TOYIB OLAWUYI

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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محمد نبينا
بنوره هاديننا
من مكة حبيبي نوره
سطع في المدينة

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my beloved master, ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, the noble companion of the Messenger of Allāh and Amīr al-Mūminīn, *‘alaihimā al-salām*, may Allāh be pleased with him and his blessed parents.

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PREFACE

Every Shī'ī who seeks to debate a Sunnī must insist on certain ten principles:

1. Both parties must swear before Allāh to pursue, defend and follow the truth alone.
2. Both parties must agree on a specific topic, and also set the boundaries of the discussion.
3. Each party must declare beforehand what exactly must be proved by the other party in order to win the debate.
4. Each side must swear before Allāh to strictly stay on the topic of the debate, and not deviate, digress or venture into any other throughout the discussion.
5. Each party must swear before Allāh to present only authentically transmitted reports from both the Sunnī books and the Shī'ī books.
6. The Sunnī party *must* always present reports with reliable chains from the Shī'ī books only in order to convince the Shi'ī on any point. In the same manner, the Shī'ī must always present reports with reliable chains from the Sunnī books in order to convince the Sunni on any point.
7. Authenticity of the reports is determined primarily through the chains of narration. Each party must either present the opinions of the relevant leading *rijāl* experts on each *riwāyah* or do a thorough *rijāl* breakdown of its narrators using the strictest appropriate *rijāl* standards. If either party has an objection to the authentication by the *'ulamā* of any particular report, he must present convincing evidence to prove their error.
8. The opinions of scholars on issues are not valid as proof unless reliably transmitted evidence can be provided to back them up.
9. It is he who claims that something exists, or that it is true, that *must* provide the cogent evidence for it. The party denying it has no obligation to provide proof of his denial. However, where the claimer has provided his proof, the onus shifts to the denier. The denier must either accept the evidence supplied, or provide solid academically sound and orthodox reasons to reject it.
10. There shall never be any vulgar abuse of the other party or anyone respected by his sect or *madhhab*. The debate shall be entirely decorous, and the choice of words shall be respectful.

Unfortunately, not many Sunnīs or Shī'īs have the necessary skills or temperaments to accept all the conditions stated above. Therefore, we

almost always see very poor pseudo-debates, especially on online forums. We often see each side quoting *da’if* reports from even his own sources, as well as from those of the opposing party, to drive home his weak points! In most cases, no original research is ever done on the topic by either side. Rather, each of them merely copy-pastes heavily from websites and parrots statements by others. In the end, nothing useful is achieved from the debate. On a lot of occasions, the discussion turns into a cursing contest; and the party with the vilest tongue declares victory. It is our absolute conviction that whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing best. It is more advisable for pseudo-debaters to take time to train themselves in the necessary skills – academic and emotional – needed for a real debate before (re-)taking the podiums. The damage and evil caused by the pseudo-debates outweigh any benefits that might come from them.

Let us take the question of “Ibn Sabā” as a case study for the ten rules above. Our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah always make the following claims about him:

1. He was a descendant of Sabā, and belonged to one of the Sabāi tribes.
2. He was a black Arab with a black slave mother.
3. He was a Jew from Sana in Yemen.
4. He accepted Islām during the *khilāfah* of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān.
5. He stirred up the public, especially the Egyptians, against ‘Uthmān and caused the latter’s bloody overthrow.
6. He was the first to claim that ‘Alī, *‘alaihi al-salām*, was the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh, *ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘ālihi*.
7. He was the first to proclaim belief in *al-raġ’ah* – that is, that the return to this world after death by certain dead people.
8. He was the first to publicly criticize or revile Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.
9. He was popularly called *Ibn al-Sandā* – son of the black mother.
10. Imām ‘Alī was frustrated with him, and abused him by calling him “the black container” and also banished him to al-Madāin.
11. Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib saw it as legitimate to execute him for reviling Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, and would have done so had people not talked him out of the decision.
12. ‘Alī burnt him (i.e. Ibn Sabā) and his followers alive for calling him (i.e. ‘Alī) Allāh.

Since it is the Sunnī in any debate who makes these claims, the onus is on him to provide reliably transmitted evidence for each and every point. The Shī‘ī – who denies them – has no initial obligation or responsibility to bring

any evidence to refute them¹. Normally, the question is: who exactly is the Sunnī trying to convince on these matters? If he only seeks to convince his Sunnī brothers, then he must present reliable *riwāyāt* from the *Sunnī* books to back up all the points². However, if his aim is only to convince the

¹ We must emphasize at this point that we, the Shī'ah Imāmīyyah, do NOT deny the existence of 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā. Those of us who do that are in error, and their opinion does not bind our *madhhab*. It is only the Qur'ān and our authentic *aḥādīth* that do that. There indeed was once a man with that name, as our *ṣaḥīḥ* reports establish. However, the only statement that is true about him – from all that the Ahl al-Sunnah claim – is that he considered Amīr al-Mūminīn to be a god. Everything else is false, as nothing else is established in any reliable Sunnī or Shī'ī *riwāyāt*. Absolutely nothing else at all! As such, all the political roles that the Ahl al-Sunnah have given to Ibn Sabā, and all the other doctrines and beliefs that they have attributed to him, are only distortions of the true history. Meanwhile, our belief in the existence of the man, and his consideration of Imām 'Alī as a god, are based strictly and solely upon our own authentic Shī'ī *aḥādīth*. As for Sunnīs, they do not have a single reliable report in all their books to establish even the *existence* of Ibn Sabā, much less all the fairytales that they have attached to him!

² We have seen efforts by some Sunnī brothers to prove all the Sunnī claims about 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā by mentioning the existence and doctrines of a group called al-Sabā'iyyah. In their opinion, if they can prove that a sect which attributed itself to Ibn Sabā existed, then they have already proved the existence of the man himself. Moreover, if they are able to establish the doctrines of this sect, then they have established the original doctrines of the man. This is however a very poor methodology, which is based upon clear logical fallacies.

The fact that a group of people attribute themselves to an individual or an entity does NOT necessarily prove that he/she/it existed. Qur'ān 7:71 and 53:19-23 give vivid examples. Al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt were three Arab idols which existed only in "names". They had no real existence. A lot of the other idols are like that. However, it is possible to find people who attribute themselves to such imaginary idols, and who even spread weird legends about the idols' "achievements" and "teachings"! Besides that, it is quite possible to find people who have attributed themselves to a real being, but who do NOT truly or accurately represent him at all. Examples of these kinds of adherents abound in our midst. For instance, there are Christians who attribute themselves to the Christ, Prophet 'Īsā b. Maryam, *'alaihimā al-salām*. Would it be accurate to determine the existence and true doctrines of the Christ through the existence and doctrines of Christians? On a more specific note, is it correct to claim that the Christ believed in his own divinity, or that he was the Son of God, simply because Christians make these claims? Of course, that would be very wrong!

In the same manner, it is wrong to try to prove the existence and doctrines of 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā through the claims and doctrines of al-Sabā'iyyah, who attributed themselves to him. Rather, separate authentic reports *must* be provided to independently and directly establish the existence of the man himself and his personal doctrines, beliefs and teachings.

Shī’ah, in that case he has no other choice but to quote nothing but authentic *Shī’i* reports in support of himself.

Incidentally, there are only three reliable *āthār* concerning Ibn Sabā throughout all Shī’i books. Shaykh ‘Alī Āl Muḥsin has compiled the Shī’i *rimāyāt* about ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and examined their various chains³, and has thus concluded:

والصحيح من تلك الروايات منحصر بثلاث روايات مروية في رجال الكشي، وهي
تثبت وجود عبد الله بن سبأ، وأنه ادعى الألوهية في أمير المؤمنين، فأحرقه بالنار،
ولا تثبت أكثر من ذلك.

The authentic from these reports are only three reports recorded in *Rijāl al-Kashī*, and they establish the existence of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and that he claimed divinity for Amīr al-Mūminīn, and that he (‘Alī) therefore burnt him (i.e. Ibn Sabā) with fire. Nothing more than that is proved.⁴

This is the first of the three reports, as quoted by Āl Muḥsin:

رواه الكشي أيضاً بسنده عن هشام بن سالم، قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله يقول وهو
يحدّث أصحابه بحديث عبد الله بن سبأ وما ادعى من الربوبية في أمير المؤمنين علي
بن أبي طالب، فقال: إنه لما ادعى ذلك فيه استتابه أمير المؤمنين، فأبى أن يتوب
فأحرقه بالنار.

Al-Kashī narrated it too with his chain from Hishām b. Sālīm, who said: I heard Abū ‘Abd Allāh saying, while addressing his companions on the issue of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā and his claim of divinity for Amīr al-Mūminīn, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: “When he made that claim concerning him, Amīr al-Mūminīn asked him to repent. But, he refused to repent. So, he burnt him with fire.”⁵

Āl Muḥsin also copies the second *ḥadīth*:

³ ‘Alī Āl Muḥsin, *‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā: Dirāsāt wa Taḥlīl* (1st edition, 1422 H), pp. 45-50

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 49

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 47

رواه الكشي أيضاً في كتابه المذكور بسنده عن أبان بن عثمان قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله يقول لعن الله عبد الله بن سبأ، إنه ادعى الربوبية في أمير المؤمنين، وكان والله أمير المؤمنين عبداً لله طائعاً، الويل لمن كذب علينا، وإن قوماً يقولون فينا ما لا نقوله في أنفسنا، نبأ إلى الله منهم، نبأ إلى الله منهم.

Al-Kashī records again in his mentioned book with his chain from Abān b. ‘Uthmān, who said: I heard Abū ‘Abd Allāh saying: “**May Allāh curse ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā.** Verily, he claimed divinity for Amīr al-Mūminīn. I swear by Allāh, Amīr al-Mūminīn was only an obedient slave of Allāh. Woe unto whosoever lies upon us. A group say concerning us what we never say about ourselves, we dissociate ourselves from them unto Allāh. We dissociate ourselves from them unto Allāh.”⁶

And this is the third report, cited by Shaykh Āl Muḥsin:

رواه أيضاً بسنده عن أبي حمزة الثمالي قال: قال علي بن الحسين: لعن الله من كذب علينا، إني ذكرت عبد الله بن سبأ فقامت كل شعرة في جسدي، لقد ادعى أمراً عظيماً، ما له لعنه الله! كان علي والله عبداً لله صالحاً، أخو رسول الله، ما نال الكرامة من الله إلا بطاعته لله ولسوله، وما نال رسول الله الكرامة من الله إلا بطاعته.

He narrated again with his chain from Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, who said:

‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn said: “May Allāh curse whosoever lies upon us. I remember ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and every hair on my body rises. He made a terrible claim. What was wrong with him? **May Allāh curse him.** I swear by Allāh, ‘Alī was only a righteous slave of Allāh and the brother of the Messenger of Allāh. He did not achieve honour from Allāh except through his obedience to Allāh and to His Messenger. The Messenger of Allāh too did not achieve honour from Allāh except with his obedience of Him.”⁷

Then, Āl Muḥsin comments about the three *aḥādīth*:

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ *Ibid*

وهذه الروايات الثلاث صحيحة السند

These three reports have *ṣaḥīḥ* chains.⁸

Any Sunnī who wants to debate any Shīrī on the topic of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, *la’natullāh ‘alaihi*, can therefore only quote the three *riwāyāt* above if he is sincere. However, he would NEVER be able to establish the Sunnī claims below, through those authentic Shīrī *aḥādīth*:

1. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā was a black Arab with a black mother.
2. He was a Jew from Sana in Yemen.
3. He accepted Islām during the *khilāfah* of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān.
4. He stirred up the public, especially the Egyptians, against ‘Uthmān and caused the latter’s bloody overthrow.
5. He was the first to claim that ‘Alī was the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh.
6. He was the first to proclaim belief in *al-raj’ah* – that is, that the Prophet will one day return to this world after death.
7. He was the first to publicly criticize or revile Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.
8. He was popularly called *Ibn al-Sawdā* – son of *the* black mother.
9. Imām ‘Alī was frustrated with him, and abused him racially by calling him “the black container” and also banished him to al-Madāin.
10. Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib saw it as legitimate to execute him for reviling Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, and would have done so had people not talked him out of the decision.

Therefore, our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah will *always* lose any debate on Ibn Sabā with any Shīrī as long as both sides are honest.

Meanwhile, what about the Sunnī sources? What if a Sunnī only intended to convince another Sunnī concerning ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā? Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) outlines the necessary rules here:

و الجواب من وجوه أحدها انه لا بد من إقامة الدليل على صحة المنقول إلا
فلاستدلال بما لا تثبت

The reply is from several angles. One of them is: **evidence must be presented for the authenticity of whatever is quoted**. Unless this is done, using it as proof is invalid.⁹

⁸ *Ibid*

Elsewhere, in rejecting a report, he adds:

فيقال أولا هذه الحكاية لم يذكر لها إسنادا فلا تعرف صحتها فإن المتقولات إنما
تعرف صحتها بالأسانيد الثابتة

It is said (in reply) that first and foremost, he has not mentioned any chain for this narration. Therefore, its authenticity is unknown. **This is because the authenticity of quoted reports is known only through their authentic chains.**¹⁰

He further reiterates:

ومعلوم أن من احتج في أي مسألة كانت بشيء من النقل فلا بد أن يذكر إسنادا
تقوم به الحجة

It is well-known that whosoever relies upon as proof any narration in any issue, **he must mention (at least) a chain which establishes it as a *ḥujjah* (proof).**¹¹

So, every Sunnī must do the following with every report he mentions on ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā:

1. Quote the report *with the full chain*.
2. Provide clear evidence for the reliability of the chain.

Interestingly, our dear Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah himself has failed completely to comply with either of the two obligatory rules in his discourses about Ibn Sabā. For instance, this is his submission about how that controversial, “elusive” character mounted onto the Islāmic scene:

وأما بيعة عثمان فلم يتخلف عنها أحد مع كثرة المسلمين وانتشرهم من إفريقية إلى
خراسان ومن سواحل الشام إلى أقصى اليمن ومع كونهم كانوا ظاهرين على عدوهم
من المشركين وأهل الكتاب يقاتلونهم وهي في زيادة فتح وانتصار ودوام دولة ودوام

⁹ Abū al-‘Abbās Ḥamad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* (Muassasat Qurṭubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim], vol. 7, p. 136

¹⁰ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 138

¹¹ *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 481

المسلمين على مبايعته والرضا عنه ست سنين نصف خلافته معظمين له مادحين له
لا يظهر من أحد منهم التكلم فيه بسوء

ثم بعد هذا صار يتكلم فيه بعضهم وجمهورهم لا يتكلم فيه إلا بخير وكانت قد طالت
عليهم إمارته فانه بقي اثنتي عشرة سنة لم تدم خلافة أحد من الأربعة ما دامت
خلافته فإن خلافة الصديق كانت سنتين وبعض الثالثة وخلافة عمر عشر سنين
وبعض الأخرى وخلافة على أربع سنين وبعض الخامسة ونشأ في خلافته من دخل
في الإسلام كرها فكان منافقا مثل ابن سبأ وأمثاله وهم الذين سعوا في الفتنة بقتله

As for the *bay'ah* of ‘Uthmān, there was no one who did not pledge it despite the great number of the Muslims and their spread from Africa to Khurāsān (in Iran, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan), and from the plains of Syria to the remotest places of Yemen. This was also despite their victories over their enemies, such as the idolaters and the *Ahl al-Kitāb* who fought them. This was accompanied by conquests and the survival of the state and the survival of the Muslims; and they (i.e. the Muslims) followed him and were pleased with him for six years – which was half of the period of his *khilāfah*. They showed great respect to him, and praised him. There was not a single one of them who criticized him.

Then, after this, appeared those who criticized him. Yet, the majority of them did not talk about him except in good terms. However, his rule had gotten too long for them, for it lasted twelve years. The *khilāfah* of none of the four (rightly guided *khilāfahs*) lasted as long as his *khilāfah*. The *khilāfah* of al-Ṣiddīq was for just a little over two years; the *khilāfah* of ‘Umar lasted a little over ten years; and the *khilāfah* of ‘Alī was for a little over four years. **During his (‘Uthmān’s) *khilāfah*, there were those who entered Islām unwillingly, and they were hypocrites, such as Ibn Sabā and his likes, and they were those who started the *fitnah* (crisis) by killing him.**¹²

Really? ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā “unwillingly” accepted Islām and, within a short period, successfully masterminded the assassination and overthrow of the mighty *khilāfah*?! Is there *any* reliable evidence for this? Well, our Shaykh makes no attempt to pretend that there is any! He has neither quoted any *rivāyah* with any *sanad*, nor has he provided any evidence whatsoever for the authenticity of any report on his claims.

¹² *Ibid*, vol. 8, pp. 315-316

All right then, is there anything else we should know about ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā? Our Shaykh says “yes”:

ولا ريب أن كثيراً ممن يحب الرسول من بني هاشم وغيرهم وقد تشيع قد تلقى من الرافضة ما هو من أعظم الأمور قدحا في الرسول فإن أصل الرفض إنما أحدثه زنديق غرضه إبطال دين الإسلام والتدح في رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كما قد ذكر ذلك العلماء وكان عبد الله بن سبأ شيخ الرافضة لما أظهر الإسلام أراد أن يفسد الإسلام بمكره وخبثه كما فعل بولص بدين النصارى

There is no doubt that a lot of those who loved the Messenger among the Banū Hāshim and others - and who also became Shī’ah - imbibed from the Rāfiḍah some of the most blasphemous matters concerning the Messenger. **This is because *al-rafiḍ* was founded by an infidel, whose aim was to destroy the religion of Islām, and to blaspheme the Messenger of Allāh**, peace be upon him, as mentioned by the scholars. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā – the *shaykh* of the Rāfiḍah - when he professed Islām, he intended to corrupt Islām with his plots and malice, as Paul did with Christianity.¹³

Interestingly, once again, our Shaykh fails to provide *any* proof whatsoever for his claims!

So, what exactly did ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā do to found Shī’ism? Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah thinks he has a clue on that as well:

قد علم أهل العلم أن أول ما ظهرت الشيعة الإمامية المدعية للنص في أواخر أيام الخلفاء الراشدين وافترى ذلك عبد الله بن سبأ وطائفة الكذابون فلم يكونوا موجودين قبل ذلك

The scholars have known that the Shī’ah Imāmiyyah, who claimed the *naṣṣ* (for ‘Alī), first appeared during the last periods of the rule of the *khulafā al-rāshidin* (i.e. the rightly guided *khulafāhs*). **That was invented by ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā and a group of liars**. So, they never existed before then.¹⁴

He adds:

¹³ *Ibid*, vol. 8, pp. 478-479

¹⁴ *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 251

وهذا معروف عن ابن سبأ واتباعه وهو الذي ابتدع النص في علي وابتدع أنه
معصوم

And this is well-known about Ibn Sabā and his followers. **He was the one who innovated the *naṣṣ* (i.e. a claim of prophetic appointment as *khalīfah*) for ‘Alī, and innovated the claim that he (‘Alī) was *maṣ’ūm* (infallible).**¹⁵

The only problem here is that there is ZERO evidence provided to support these claims. Merely claiming that the rumours were “well-known” is not sufficient. An authentically transmitted eye-witness account is required in cases like this. None is quoted anyway, anywhere!

Were there any the other “innovations” created by ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā? Our Shaykh proceeds:

قلنا نعم وأشهر الناس بالردة خصوم أبي بكر الصديق رضي الله عنه وأتباعه كمسيلمة الكذاب وأتباعه وغيرهم وهؤلاء تتولاها الرافضة كما ذكر ذلك غير واحد من شيوخهم مثل هذا الإمامي وغيره ويقولون إنهم كانوا على الحق وأن الصديق قاتلهم بغير حق ثم من أظهر الناس ردة الغالية الذين حرقهم علي رضي الله عنه بالنار لما ادعوا فيه الإلهية وهم السبائية أتباع عبدالله بن سبأ الذين أظهروا سب أبي بكر وعمر

We say: yes, the most notorious of mankind for apostasy were the enemies of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, may Allāh be pleased with him, and his followers, such as Musaylamah the Liar and his followers and others. These people (i.e. the apostates) are loved by the Rāfiḍah, as mentioned by many of their *shuyūkh*, like this Imāmī and others. They say that they (those apostates) were upon the truth, and that al-Ṣiddīq fought them unjustly.

Those who were most notorious among mankind for extreme apostasy were **those burnt with fire by ‘Alī**, may Allāh be pleased with him, **when they called him Allāh. They were the Sabāiyyah, followers of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā**, those who were the first to curse Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid*, vol. 7, p. 220

¹⁶ *Ibid*, vol. 3, pp. 458-459

He reiterates the same elsewhere:

وأين شبهة مثل أبي موسى الأشعري الذي وافق عمرا على عزل علي ومعاوية وأن
يجعل الأمر شورى في المسلمين من شبهة عبدالله بن سبأ وأمثاله الذين يدعون أنه
إمام معصوم أو أنه إله أو نبي

Where is the confusion of the likes of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī who concurred with 'Amr to dethrone (both) 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah and to subject the matter to consultation among the Muslims from the confusion of 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā and his likes who called him (i.e. 'Alī) an infallible Imām, or that he was Allāh, or that he was a prophet?¹⁷

Once more, our Shaykh makes no attempt to quote any report or chain for his submissions. Meanwhile, we have decided to help him out and his followers by actually checking the authenticity of all the primary *Sunnī riwāyāt* about 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā – especially all those ones that Sunnīs table as evidence concerning him - in order to distinguish the truths from the fables. We sincerely hope that this work of ours will be highly beneficial to every soul seeking to learn the *real* truth about the character called Ibn Sabā and the activities and doctrines that have been attributed to him. In this book, we have adopted the same strict investigative and transparent research methodology as we did in our first and second books. We implore Allāh to forgive us all our mistakes, and to accept this as a worthy act of *'ibādah*. And may Allāh send His *ṣalawāt* and *barakāt* upon our master, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, and upon his purified offspring.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 61

1 TRACING THE FAIRYTALE

EXPLICIT *ĀTHĀR* NAMING ‘ABD ALLĀH B. SABĀ

Reports and statements in Sunnī books mentioning the name “Abd Allāh b. Sabā” are generally of three types:

1. *Riwayāt* with full chains of transmission.
2. *Riwayāt* with NO chain of transmission.
3. Unsupported testimonies and submissions of Sunnī *‘ulamā* who were never eye-witnesses to the events.

Apparently, the last two categories are *mursal* by default, and are therefore *da’if* evidences. Chainless and unsupported testimonies are not acceptable as proof, especially in crucial matters like this. So, we will naturally confine ourselves only to reports in the books of the Ahl al-Sunnah with chains of narration.

NARRATION ONE

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H), in his *Tārīkh*, records:

فَمَا كَتَبَ بِهِ إِلَى السَّرِيِّ عَنْ شَعِيبٍ عَنْ سَيْفٍ عَنْ عَطِيَّةٍ عَنْ يَزِيدِ الْفَقْعَسِيِّ قَالَ
كَانَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَبَأَ يَهُودِيًّا مِنْ أَهْلِ صَنْعَاءَ أُمِّهِ سَوْدَاءُ فَاسْلَمَ زَمَانَ عَثْمَانَ ثُمَّ تَنَقَّلَ فِي
بِلْدَانِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ يَحَالُو ضَلَالَتَهُمْ فَبَدَأَ بِالْحِجَازِ ثُمَّ الْبَصْرَةَ ثُمَّ الْكُوفَةَ ثُمَّ الشَّامَ فَلَمْ يَقْدِرْ
عَلَى مَا يَرِيدُ عِنْدَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ فَأَخْرَجُوهُ حَتَّى أَتَى مِصْرَ فَاعْتَمَرَ فِيهِمْ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ
فِيهَا يَقُولُ لِعَجَبٍ مَنْ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّ عَيْسَى يَرْجِعُ وَيَكْذِبُ بِأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا يَرْجِعُ وَقَدْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ

جل إن الذي فرض عليك القرآن لرادك إلى معاد فحمد أحق بالرجوع من عيسى قال
 فقبل ذلك عنه ووضع لهم الرجعة فتكلموا فيها ثم قال لهم بعد ذلك إنه كان ألف نبي
 ولكل نبي وصي وكان علي وصي محمد ثم قال محمد خاتم الأنبياء وعلي خاتم الأوصياء
 ثم قال بعد ذلك من أظلم ممن لم يميز وصية رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ووثب
 على وصي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وتناول أمر الأمة ثم قال لهم بعد ذلك
 إن عثمان أخذها بغير حق وهذا وصي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

Al-Sirrī - Shu'ayb - Sayf - 'Aṭīyah - Yazīd al-Faq'asī:

'Abd Allāh b. Sabā was a Jew from the people of Ṣan'ā (the capital of Yemen). His mother was black. He accepted Islām during the rule of 'Uthmān. Then he roamed the cities of the Muslims trying to turn them into heretics. He started with the Hijāz (in Saudi Arabia), then Baṣra (in Iraq), then Kūfa (in Iraq), then Syria. But he did not achieve his aim with any of the people of Syria. Rather, they expelled him and he went to Egypt, and he settled among them. Then, he said to them, "It is strange of he who claims that 'Īsā will return but rejects that Muḥammad will return. Meanwhile, Allāh the Almighty has said, 'Verily, He Who has ordained the Qur'ān upon you (O Muḥammad) will surely bring you back to a place of return' (28:85). As such, Muḥammad is more entitled to return than 'Īsā." So, it was accepted from him, and he created for them (the doctrine of) *al-raj'ah*, and they spoke about it. Then he said, "Muḥammad is the last of the prophets and 'Alī is the last of the designated (immediate) successors (of prophets)." Then he added after that, "Who is more unjust that he who did not fulfil the testamentary will of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and jumped over the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and administered the affairs of the *Ummah*?" Then he said to them, "Verily, 'Uthmān unjustly seized it, and this ('Alī) is the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh."¹⁸

The same report, with very slight variations, is later re-narrated by Imām Ibn Asākir (d. 571 H) as well:

أخبرنا أبو القاسم إسماعيل بن أحمد أنا أحمد بن النعمان أنا محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن
 العباس أنا أبو بكر بن سيف نا السري بن يحيى نا شعيب بن إبراهيم نا سيف بن

¹⁸ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1407 H), vol. 2, p. 647

عمر عن عطية عن يزيد الفقعسي قال كان ابن سبأ يهودياً من أهل صنعاء من أمة
سوءاء فأسلم زمن عثمان بن عفان ثم تنقل في بلاد المسلمين يحاول ضلالتهم فبدأ
بالحجاز ثم بالبصرة ثم الكوفة ثم الشام فلم يقدر على ما يريد عند أحد من أهل
الشام فأخرجوه حتى أتى مصر فاعتمر فيهم فقال لهم فيما كان يقول العجب ممن يزعم
أن عيسى يرجع ويكذب بأن محمداً يرجع وقد قال الله عز وجل إن الذي فرض
عليك القرآن لرادك إلى معاد فمحمد أحق بالرجوع من عيسى قال فقبل ذلك عنه
ووضع له الرجعة فنكلموا فيها ثم قال بعد ذلك إنه كان ألف نبي ولكل نبي وصي
وكان علي وصي محمد ثم قال محمد خاتم النبيين وعلي خاتم الأوصياء ثم قال بعد ذلك
من أظلم ممن لم يجز وصية رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ووثب علي وصي
رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم تناول الأمة ثم قال لهم بعد ذلك إن عثمان قد
جمع أموالاً أخذها بغير حقها وهذا وصي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

Abū al-Qāsim Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad – Aḥmad b. al-Nuqūr – Muḥammad b.
'Abd al-Raḥman b. al-'Abbās – Abū Bakr b. Sayf – al-Sirī b. Yaḥyā –
Shu'ayb b. Ibrāhīm – Sayf b. 'Umar – 'Aṭīyyah – Yazīd al-Faq'asī:

Ibn Sabā was a Jew from the people of Ṣan'ā (the capital of Yemen), from a black slave-woman. He accepted Islām during the rule of 'Uthmān. Then he roamed the cities of the Muslims trying to turn them into heretics. He started with the Hijāz (in Saudi Arabia), then Baṣra (in Iraq), then Kūfa (in Iraq), then Syria. But he did not achieve his aim with any of the people of Syria. Rather, they expelled him and he went to Egypt, and he settled among them. Then, he said to them, "It is strange of he who claims that 'Īsā will return but rejects that Muḥammad will return. Meanwhile, Allāh the Almighty has said, 'Verily, He Who has ordained the Qur'ān upon you (O Muḥammad) will surely bring you back to a place of return' (28:85). As such, Muḥammad is more entitled to return than 'Īsā." So, it was accepted from him, and he created for them (the doctrine of) *al-raj'ah*, and they spoke about it. Then he said, "There were one thousand prophets, and each prophet had a designated successor. And 'Alī was the designated successor of Muḥammad." Then he said, "Muḥammad is the last of the prophets and 'Alī is the last of the designated (immediate) successors (of prophets)." Then he added after that, "Who is more unjust than he who did not fulfil the testamentary will of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and jumped over the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and administered the *Ummah*?"

Then he said to them, “Verily, ‘Uthmān unjustly embezzled funds, and this (‘Alī) is the designated successor of the Messenger of Allāh.”¹⁹

This *riwāyah* of Yazīd al-Faq’asī is the only one – with a chain of narration - throughout all books of the Ahl al-Sunnah that makes the following claims:

1. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, *la’natullāh ‘alaihi*, had a black slave mother.
2. He accepted Islām during the rule of ‘Uthmān.
3. He believed that Imām ‘Alī, *‘alaihi al-salām*, was the designated successor of Prophet Muḥammad, *ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘ālihi*.
4. He believed in the *‘aqīdah* called *al-raj’ah*.

So, if the report collapses, all the four points above go down with it. There would be absolutely nothing else to base those assertions upon. Therefore, let us examine the narrators.

In the chain of the *riwāyah*, there is Shu’ayb b. Ibrāhīm. Who was he? Was he reliable or not? Al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 852 H) helps us out here:

شعيب بن إبراهيم الكوفي: رواية كتب سيف عنه فيه جملة انتهى. ذكره ابن عدي وقال ليس بالمعروف وله أحاديث وأخبار وفيه بعض النكرة وفيها ما فيه تحامل على السلف وفي ثقات ابن حبان شعيب بن إبراهيم من أهل الكوفة يروي عن محمد بن أبان البلخي روى عنه يعقوب بن سفيان فيحتمل ان يكون هو والظاهر أنه غيره

Shu’ayb b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfi: the narration of the books of Sayf was by him. **There is obscurity concerning him.** Ibn ‘Adī mentioned him and said, “**He is unknown.** He narrated *ahādīth* and stories, **and there is some repugnancy concerning him.** Among his narrations are those which are prejudiced against the *Salaf.*” In *al-Thiqāt*, Ibn Ḥibbān said, “Shu’ayb b. Ibrāhīm, from the people of Kūfah. He narrated from Muḥammad b. Abān al-Balkhī and Ya’qūb b. Sufyān narrated from him”. It is possible that he (i.e. the Shu’ayb mentioned by Ibn Ḥibbān) was him (i.e. the Shu’ayb who narrated from Sayf), but what is obvious is that he was not him.²⁰

¹⁹ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi’ī, *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: ‘Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, pp. 3-4

²⁰ Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Miẓān* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muassasat al-‘Alamī li al-Maṭbū’āt; 2nd edition, 1390 H), vol. 3, p. 145, # 517

Therefore, Shu’ayb b. Ibrāhīm is *majhūl* (unknown). Ordinarily, we should simply ignore the other narrators in the chain. This singular fact about Shu’ayb itself has torpedoed the entire report. But, there is more!

Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748 H) wants us to know about Sayf too:

سيف بن عمرا لقميبي الأسيدي: ويقال الضبي الكوفي. صاحب كتاب الفتوح وكتاب الردة ن وغير ذلك. روى عن جابر الجعفي، وهشام بن عروة، وإساعيل بن أبي خالد، وعبيد الله بن عمر، وطائفة كثيرة من المجاهيل والإخباريين. روى عنه النضر بن حباد العتكي، ويعقوب بن إبراهيم الزهري، وشعيب بن إبراهيم الكوفي، وأبو معمر إساعيل القطعي، وجبارة بن المغلس، وآخرون. قال يحيى بن معين: ضعيف الحديث. وقال أبو حاتم: متروك. بابة الواقدي. وقال أبو داود: ليس بشيء. وقال ابن حبان: أتهم بالزندقة. وروى عباس عن يحيى قال: سيف بن عمر الضبي يحدث عنه المحاربي، ضعيف. وكذا قال النسائي. وقال الحاكم: سيف بن عمر الضبي أتهم بالزندقة، وهو ساقط في رواية الحديث. وروى ابن حبان بإسناد إنه كان يضع الحديث.

Sayf b. ‘Umar al-Tamīmī al-Uṣaydī: He is also called al-Ḍabī al-Kūfī, author of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, *Kitāb al-Riddah* and others. He narrated from: Jābir al-Ju’fī, Hishām b. ‘Urwah, Ismā’īl b. Abī Khālid, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Umar, and a lot of unknown narrators and storytellers. Those who narrated from him are: al-Naḍar b. Ḥamād al-‘Atkī, Ya’qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Zuhri, Shu’ayb b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī, Abū Ma’mar Ismā’īl al-Qaṭī, Jabārah b. al-Muglis, and others. Yaḥyā b. Ma’in said: “**He is *ḍa’īf* in *ḥadīth*”.** Abū Ḥatīm said, “**He is *matrūk* (rejected)**, the same kind with al-Wāqidī”. Abū Dāwud said, “**He is nothing.**” Ibn Ḥibbān said, “**He is accused of disbelief**”. And ‘Abbās narrated that Yaḥyā said, “Sayf b. ‘Umar al-Ḍabī narrated *ahādīth* from al-Muḥāribī. **He is *ḍa’īf*.”** Al-Nasāī said the same thing. Al-Ḥākim said, “Sayd b. ‘Umar al-Ḍabī. **He is accused of disbelief**, and he is a failure as long as *ḥadīth* narration is concerned.” Ibn Ḥibbān narrates with a chain that **he used to fabricate *ahādīth***.²¹

‘Allāmah al-Albānī (d. 1420 H) also says:

²¹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Wafiyāt al-Mashābir wa al-‘Ālām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī; 1st edition, 1407 H) [Dr. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmīrī], vol. 11, pp. 161-162, # 4

وأما سيف بن عمر؛ فمعروف؛ لكنه متهم بالوضع؛ قال الذهبي في "المغني": "له تواليف، متروك باتفاق".

As for Sayf b. 'Umar, he is well-known. However, **he has been accused of fabricating reports**. Al-Dhahabī said in *al-Mughnī*: "**He wrote books. He is rejected (*matrūk*) by consensus.**"²²

Elsewhere, the 'Allāmah adds:

قلتُ وفي هذا نظر، فإن أكثر الطرق المشار إليها مدارها على سيف بن عمر والواقدي وهما كذابان

I say: There is an error in this, for most of the indicated chains, their pivot is **Sayf b. 'Umar and al-Wāqidi, and they both were LIARS.**²³

Apparently, no one can ever be more unreliable than Sayf!

It is even further interesting that the man who was supposed to have witnessed all of 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā's actions – including all his journeys and experiences in Hijāz, Baṣra, Kūfa, Syria and Egypt – Yazīd al-Faq'asī is completely and *absolutely* unknown (*majbūl*). It is so bad that he does not even have a single entry in any Sunnī book of *rija'*!

With the above, it is crystal clear that the *only* report throughout all Sunnī books - which connects one 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā with Judaism, Yemen, a black mother, the doctrine of *al-raj'ah*, the *wiṣayab* (designated succession) of Amīr al-Mūminīn 'Alī, and acceptance of Islām during 'Uthmān's rule – is absolutely *mandū'* (fabricated). No report can be more worthless than it is.

NARRATION TWO

So, let us find out if there is an alternative Sunnī report which refers explicitly to 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā. Through our investigations, we discovered

²² Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādith al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawqū'ah wa Atharibah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 11, p. 748, # 5440

²³ Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ b. Tajātī b. Ādam al-Ashqūdī al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādith al-ṣaḥībah wa Shaybun min Fiqhibah wa Fawā'idibah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī'; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 3, pp. 101-102, # 1110

that only six more exist, apart from the *mandū'* one above. This is one of those six, recorded by Imām Ibn Asākir:

أخبرنا أبو البركات الأنطاقي أنا أبو طاهر أحمد بن الحسن وأبو الفضل أحمد بن الحسن قالوا أنا عبد الملك بن محمد بن عبد الله أنا أبو علي بن الصواف نا محمد بن عثمان بن أبي شيبة نا محمد بن العلاء نا أبو بكر بن عياش عن مجالد عن الشعبي قال أول من كذب عبد الله بن سبأ

Abū al-Barakāt al-Anmāṭī – Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan and Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan – 'Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh – Abū 'Alī b. al-Ṣawāf – **Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān b. Abī Shaybah** – Muḥammad b. al-'Alā – Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh – **Mujālid** – al-Shaḥīb:

The first one to tell a lie was 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā.²⁴

This chain, however, is *mandū'* too! Imām al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463 H) documents under his biography of Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān b. Abī Shaybah:

أخبرنا علي بن محمد بن الحسين الدقاق قال قرانا على الحسين بن هارون عن أبي العباس بن سعيد قال سمعت عبد الله بن أسامة الكلبي يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب أخذ كتب بن عبدوس الرازي ما زلنا نعرفه بالكذب

وقال بن سعيد سمعت إبراهيم بن إسحاق الصواف يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب ويسرق حديث الناس ويحيل على أقوام بأشياء ليست من حديثهم

قال سمعت داود بن يحيى يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب وقد وضع أشياء كثيرة يحيل على أقوام أشياء ما حدثوا بها قط

وقال سمعت عبد الرحمن بن يوسف بن خراش يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب بين الأمر يزيد في الأسانيد ويوصل ويضع الحديث

²⁴ Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi'ī, *Tarikh Madīnah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: 'Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, p. 7

وقال سمعت محمد بن عبد الله الحضرمي يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب ما زلنا نعرفه بالكذب مذ هو صبي

وقال سمعت عبد الله بن احمد بن حنبل يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب ...

وقال سمعت جعفر بن محمد بن أبي عثمان الطيالسي يقول بن عثمان هذا كذاب يجيء عن قوم بأحاديث ما حدثوا بها قط متى سمع انا عارف به جدا ...

وقال سمعت محمد بن احمد العدوى يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب...

وقال حدثني محمد بن عبيد بن حجاج قال سمعت جعفر بن هذيل يقول محمد بن عثمان كذاب....

‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Daqaq – al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn – Abū al-‘Abbās b. Sa‘īd – ‘Abd Allāh b. Usāmah al-Kalbī: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is A LIAR.** He took the books of Ibn ‘Abdaws al-Rāzī. **We have ALWAYS known him as A LIAR**”.

Ibn Sa’d – Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Ṣawāf: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is A LIAR.** He steals the *ahādīth* of the people and he falsely attributes things to people which are never part of their *ahādīth*.”

Ibn Sa’d – Dāwud b. Yaḥyā: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is A LIAR.** **He FABRICATED a lot of things.** He falsely attributes things to people which they never narrate at all.”

Ibn Sa’d – ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Yūsuf b. Kharāsh: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is a LIAR within the matter.** He falsely adds and connects names to the chains (of narrations) **and he FABRICATES *ahādīth*.**”

Ibn Sa’d – Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is A LIAR.** **We have ALWAYS known him as A LIAR since he was a child.**”

Ibn Sa’d – ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: “**Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān is a LIAR....**”

Ibn Sa'd – Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Abī 'Uthmān al-Ṭayālīsī: **“This Ibn 'Uthmān is A LIAR.** He attributes to people *aḥādīth* which they never narrated since he started hearing (as a child). **I know him very well”**...

Ibn Sa'd – Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-'Adawī: **“Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān is a LIAR...”**

Ibn Sa'd – Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd b. Ḥammād – Ja'far b. Huzayl: **“Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān is A LIAR....”**²⁵

We need not comment further about him!

In the chain is another problematic narrator: Mujālid. Imām al-Dhahabī says about him too:

مجالد بن سعيد الهمداني، مشهور صاحب حديث على لين فيه.

روى عن قيس بن أبي حازم، والشعبي، وعنه يحيى القطان، وأبو أسامة، وجاعة .

قال ابن معين وغيره: لا يحتج به، وقال أحمد: يرفع كثيرا مما لا يرفعه الناس، ليس بشيء. وقال النسائي: ليس بالقوي. وذكر الأشيخ أنه شيعي. وقال الدارقطني: ضعيف. وقال البخاري: كان يحيى بن سعيد يضعفه، وكان ابن مهدي لا يروى عنه.

Mujālid b. Sa'īd al-Ḥamdānī: well-known, a narrator of *ḥadīth*, **with weakness in him.**

He narrated from Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim and al-Sha'bī, and Yaḥyā b. al-Qaṭṭān, Abū Usāmah and a group narrated from him.

Ibn Ma'īn and others said, **“He is not accepted as a ḥujjah (proof).”** Aḥmad said, **“He attributes to the Prophet lots of what people do not attribute to him. He is nothing.”** Al-Nasāī said, **“He is not strong.”** Al-Ashja' mentioned that he was a Shi'i. Al-Dāraquṭnī said, **“Ḍa'īf”.** Al-Bukhārī said, **“Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd declared him ḍa'īf, and Ibn Maḥdī did not narrate from him.”**²⁶

²⁵ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah), vol. 3, pp. 45-46, # 979

²⁶ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Miẓān al-'itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa) [annotator: 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī], vol. 3, p. 438, # 7070

Apparently, this second narration is extremely *mawḍū'* as well! Yet, we constantly see some Sunnī brothers proudly quoting it as evidence!

NARRATION THREE

Let us now examine the third existing Sunnī report on 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā. Imām Ibn Asākir documents:

أبَانَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ طَرْخَانَ بْنِ بَلْتَكِينَ بْنِ يَحْكَمَ أَنَا أَبُو الْفَضَائِلِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْبَاقِي بْنِ طَوْقٍ قَالَ قَرَأْتُ عَلَى أَبِي الْقَاسِمِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ الرَّقِيِّ نَا أَبُو أَحْمَدَ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَبِي مُسْلِمٍ أَنَا أَبُو عَمْرٍو مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْوَاحِدِ أَخْبَرَنِي الْغَطَافِيُّ عَنْ رَجَالِهِ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ عَنْ آبَائِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ عَنْ جَابِرٍ قَالَ لَمَّا بُوِعَ عَلِيُّ خَطَبَ النَّاسَ فَقَامَ إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَبَأٍ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَنْتَ دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ قَالَ فَقَالَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَنْتَ الْمَلِكُ فَقَالَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَ الْخَلْقَ وَبَسَطْتَ الرِّزْقَ فَأَمَرَ بِقَتْلِهِ فَاجْتَمَعَتِ الرَّافِضَةُ فَقَالَتْ دَعِهِ وَأَنْفِهِ إِلَى سَابَاطِ الْمَدَائِنِ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ قَتَلْتَهُ بِالْمَدِينَةِ خَرَجْتَ أَصْحَابَهُ عَلَيْنَا وَشِيعَتُهُ فَنَفَاهُ إِلَى سَابَاطِ الْمَدَائِنِ فَمِ الْقَرَامِطَةُ وَالرَّافِضَةُ قَالَ ثُمَّ قَامَتْ إِلَيْهِ طَائِفَةٌ وَهُمْ السَّبِيئَةُ وَكَانُوا أَحَدَ عَشَرَ رَجُلًا فَقَالَ ارْجِعُوا فَإِنِّي عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ أَبِي مَشْهُورٍ وَأُمِّي مَشْهُورَةٌ وَأَنَا ابْنُ عَمِّ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالُوا لَا نَرْجِعُ دَعِ دَاعِيكَ فَأَحْرَقَهُمُ بِالنَّارِ وَقَبْرُهُمْ فِي صَحْرَاءٍ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ مَشْهُورَةً فَقَالَ مَنْ بَقِيَ مِنْ مَنْ لَمْ يَكْشِفْ رَأْسَهُ مِنْهُمْ عَلِمْنَا إِنَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحْتَجَوْا بِقَوْلِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ لَا يَعْذِبُ بِالنَّارِ إِلَّا خَالِقُهَا قَالَ ثَعْلَبٌ وَقَدْ عَذِبَ بِالنَّارِ قَبْلَ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ الصَّدِيقِ شَيْخِ الْإِسْلَامِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ وَذَلِكَ أَنَّهُ رَفَعَ إِلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ يَقَالُ لَهُ الْفَجَاءَةُ وَقَالُوا إِنَّهُ شَتَمَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِهِ فَأَخْرَجَهُ إِلَى الصَّحْرَاءِ فَأَحْرَقَهُ بِالنَّارِ قَالَ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ قَدْ عَذِبَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ بِالنَّارِ فَأَعْبَدُوهُ أَيْضًا

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ṭarkhān b. Baltakīn b. Yaḥbakum – Abū al-Faḍāil Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī b. Ṭawq – Abū al-Qāsim 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Alī b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-Raqī – Abū Aḥmad 'Ubayd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Muslim – Abū 'Umar Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid – **al-Ghatāfi** – **his men** – al-Ṣādiq – his pure fathers – jābir:

When 'Alī was given the *ba'yah* (oath of allegiance), he addressed the people. Then, 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā stood up to him and said, "You are the *Dabbah* from the Earth." He ('Alī) said, "Fear Allāh." He ('Abd Allāh b. Sabā) said, "You are the King." He ('Alī) replied, "Fear Allāh."

He ('Abd Allāh b. Sabā) told him, "You created the creation and you spread the *rizq* (sustenance)". Then, he ('Alī) ordered his execution.

But the Rāfiḍah gathered and said, "Leave him. Instead, banish him to Sābāt of al-Madā'in. If you killed him in Madīnah, his companions and followers would rebel against us." Therefore, he ('Alī) banished him to Sābāt of al-Madā'in. So, the Qarāmiṭah and the Rāfiḍah re-grouped (there). Then a group called al-Sabaiyyah rose to him ('Alī) and they were eleven men. He ('Alī) said, "Recant, for I am 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. My father was well-known, and so was my mother. And I am the cousin of Muḥammad, peace be upon him." They replied, "We will not recant. Call your caller." So, he ('Alī) burnt them with fire, and buried them in eleven well-known deserts. Those who survived, whose heads were not exposed among them, said, "We know that he is Allāh." And they used the words of Ibn 'Abbās – "None punishes with fire except its Creator" as proof.

Tha'lab said, "But, Abū Bakr, the *shaykh* of Islām, may Allāh be pleased with him, had punished with fire before 'Alī. It was when a man called al-Fajā was brought to him, and they accused him of insulting the Prophet, peace be upon him, after his death. Then he (Abū Bakr) took him out into the desert and burnt him with fire. So, Ibn 'Abbās said, "Abū Bakr also punished with the fire. Therefore, worship him too."²⁷

First and foremost, there is a man called al-Ghatāfi in the *sanad*. He is completely unknown and untraceable. Worse still, he narrated from "his men", who are also completely unknown and untraceable! As such, the chain is at least doubly *majhūl*, and therefore *very ḍa'if*, on account of these facts alone!

Apart from its severe weakness, the report is also historically inaccurate. It assumes that there were groups called the Rāfiḍah, the Qarāmiṭa, and the Sabaiyyah during the rule of Amīr al-Mūminīn! That simply is ridiculous. This, for instance, is what Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) has to say about the origin of the Rāfiḍah:

لكن لفظ الرافضة إنما ظهر لما رفضوا زيد بن علي بن الحسين في خلافة هشام وقصة
زيد بن علي بن الحسين كانت بعد العشرين ومائة سنة إحدى وعشرين أو اثنتين
وعشرين ومائة في اواخر خلافة هشام

²⁷ Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi'i, *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: 'Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, pp. 9-10

But the word “Rāfiḍah” (Rejecters) was first used when they rejected (*rafaḍū*) Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn during the *kbilāfab* of Hishām, and the incident of Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn occurred after 120 H, 121 H or 122 H, during the last days of the *kbilāfab* of Hishām.²⁸

Elsewhere, he reiterates:

قلت الصحيح أنهم سموا رافضة لما رفضوا زيد بن علي بن الحسين بن علي بن أبي طالب لما خرج بالكوفة أيام هشام بن عبد الملك وقد ذكر هذا أيضا الأشعري وغيره

I say: the correct opinion is that they were named Rāfiḍah when they rejected Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, when he rebelled in Kūfah during the days of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik. Al-Ash’arī and others have also mentioned this.²⁹

So, the Rāfiḍah and their name surfaced only almost a century after the death of Imām ‘Alī!

NARRATION FOUR

At this point, we move to the fourth, explicit Sunnī report on ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah submits in his *Minhāj*:

وروى أبو عاصم خشيش بن أصرم في كتابه ورواه من طريقه أبو عمرو الطلمنكي في كتابه في الأصول قال أبو عاصم حدثنا أحمد بن محمد وعبد الوارث ابن إبراهيم حدثنا السندي بن سليمان الفارسي حدثني عبد الله بن جعفر الرقي عن عبد الرحمن بن مالك بن مغول عن أبيه قال قلت لعامر الشعبي ما ردك عن هؤلاء القوم وقد كنت فيهم رأسا قال رأيتهم يأخذون بأعجاز لا صدور لها ثم قال لي يا مالك لو أردت أن يعطوني رقابهم عبيدا أو يملئوا لي بيتي ذهبا أو يحجوا إلى بيتي هذا على أن أكذب على علي رضي الله عنه لفعلوا ولا والله لا أكذب عليه أبدا يا مالك إني قد درست الأهواء فلم أر فيها أحق من الخشبية فلو كانوا من الطير لكانوا رخا ولو كانوا من الدواب لكانوا حمرا يا مالك لم يدخلوا في الإسلام رغبة فيه لله ولا رهبة من الله

²⁸ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah* (Muasassat Qurṭubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim], vol. 1, pp. 34-35

²⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 471

ولكن مقتنا من الله عليهم وبغيا منهم على أهل الإسلام يريدون أن يغمصوا دين الإسلام كما غمص بولص بن يوشع ملك اليهود دين النصرانية ولا تجاوز صلاتهم آذانهم قد حرقهم علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه بالنار ونفاهم من البلاد منهم عبد الله بن سبأ يهودي من يهود صنعاء نفاه إلى ساباط وأبو بكر الكروس نفاه إلى الحجابية وحرق منهم قوما أتوه فقالوا أنت هو فقال من أنا فقالوا أنت ربنا فأمر بنار

Abū 'Āṣim Khashīsh b. Aṣrama recorded in his book; and through his route, Abū 'Amr al-Ṭalmankī documented it in his book on *al-Uṣūl*. Abū 'Āṣim said: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad and 'Abd al-Wārith b. Ibrāhīm – **al-Sanadī b. Sulaymān al-Fārisī** – 'Abd Allāh b. Ja'far al-Raqqī – **'Abd al-Raḥman b. Mālik b. Migwal** – his father:

I said to Āmir al-Sha'bī, "Why did you leave these people, while you used to be their head?"

He replied, "Their opinions are derived from invalid sources. They lack any basis." Then he said, "O Mālik, If I had demanded that they became my slaves or filled my house with gold, or made *Hajj* to this house of mine, and that in exchange I would lie upon 'Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him, they would have done so. But, by Allāh, I will never lie upon him, never! O Mālik, I have studied the various sects. However, I have never seen among them any which is more stupid than the Khashabiyah. If they were from birds, they would have been vultures; and if they had been from animals, they would have been donkeys. O Mālik, they did not enter Islām out of hope in it from Allāh, nor from fear of Allāh. Rather, it was due to the hatred of Allāh upon them, and their rebellion upon the people of Islām. They seek to corrupt the religion of Islām as Paul b. Yūsha', king of the Jews, corrupted Christianity. Their *ṣalat* never exceed their *aḥzān*. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, had burnt them with fire, and banished them from the towns. Among them was 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā the Jew from the Jews of Ṣan'a. He banished him to Sābāt (of the Madāin area). As for Abū Bakr al-Karūs, he banished him to al-Jābiyyah. He (also) burnt a group among them who came to him and said, 'You are Him.' He asked, 'Who am I?' They replied, 'You are our God.'" So, he ordered for a fire.³⁰

³⁰ *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp. 28-30

In the chain is ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Mālīk b. Mīḡwal. Al-Ḥāfiẓ says about him:

عبد الرحمن بن مالك بن مغول: روى عن أبيه والأعمش. قال احمد والدارقطني متروك وقال أبو داود كذاب وقال مرة يضع الحديث وقال النسائي وغيره ليس بثقة

‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Mālīk b. Mīḡwal: he narrated from his father and al-A’mash. Aḥmad and al-Dāraquṭnī said: “**Matrūk (rejected)**”. Abū Dāwud said, “**A LIAR**”, and also said, “**he FABRICATED *ah̄ādīth***”. Al-Nasāī and others said, “**He is NOT trustworthy.**”³¹

‘Allāmah al-Albānī also states about another chain containing his name:

قلت: ورجاله ثقات غير عبد الرحمن بن مالك بن مغول، وهو كذاب كما قال أبو داود، وقال الدارقطني: متروك، فهو آفة هذا الإسناد

I say: Its narrators are trustworthy except ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Mālīk b. Mīḡwal, **AND HE WAS A LIAR**, as stated by Abū Dāwud. And al-Dāraquṭnī said, “**Matrūk (rejected)**”, and he is the defect in this chain.³²

As if this was not enough, al-Sanadī b. Sulaymān al-Fārisī – also in the chain under inspection – is absolutely *majhūl*, with no trace in the Sunnī books of *rijāl*. We honestly wonder how Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah dared to use such a report as *evidence* to establish points about the Shī’ah.

NARRATION FIVE

A twin report is further documented by Ibn Taymiyyah:

روى أبو حفص بن شاهين في كتاب اللطيف في السنة حدثنا محمد بن أبي القاسم بن هارون حدثنا أحمد بن الوليد الواسطي حدثني جعفر بن نصير الطوسي الواسطي عن عبد الرحمن بن مالك بن مغول عن أبيه قال قال لي الشعبي أحذركم

³¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Miẓān* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muassasat al-‘Alamī li al-Maṭbū’āt; 2nd edition, 1390 H), vol. 3, p. 427, # 1676

³² Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ b. Tajātī b. Ādam al-Ashqūdī al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-ṣaḥībah wa Shaybun min Fiqḥihāb wa Fawāidihāb* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’ārif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 2, p. 471, # 824

هذه الأهواء المضلة وشرها الرافضة لم يدخلوا في الإسلام رغبة ولا رهبة ولكن مقتنا
لأهل الإسلام وبغيا عليهم قد حرقهم علي رضي الله عنه بالنار وقاهم إلى البلدان
منهم عبد الله ابن سبأ يهودي من يهود صنعاء نفاه إلى سبابط

Abū Ḥafṣ b. Shāhīn recorded in *Kitāb al-Laṭīf fī al-Sunnah*: Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim b. Hārūn – Aḥmad b. al-Walīd al-Wāsiṭī – Ja'far b. Naṣīr al-Ṭūsī al-Wāsiṭī – 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Mālik b. Migwal – his father:

Al-Sha'bī said to me, "I warn you concerning these heretical sects, and the worst of them are the Rāfiḍah. They do not enter Islām out of hope (in it from Allāh), nor from fear (of Allāh). Rather, they do so out of hatred of the people of Islām and in rebellion against them. 'Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him, had burnt them with fire and banished them to towns. Among them was 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā, a Jew from the Jews of Ṣan'ā. He ('Alī) exiled him to Sabāṭ (of al-Madāin).³³

In the chain is 'Abd al-Raḥman, who was a liar and *ḥadīth* fabricator. So, the *riwāyah* is *mawḍū'*.

Besides, this is what al-Ḥāfiẓ records about al-Sha'bī:

قال أبو سعد ابن السمعاني ولد سنة عشرين وقيل سنة ٣١ ومات سنة ١٠٩

Abū Sa'd b. al-Sam'ānī said: "He (al-Sha'bī) was born in 20 H, and it is said 31 H, **and he died in 109 H.**³⁴

Meanwhile, this is what Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah himself confesses about the term "Rāfiḍah":

لكن لفظ الرافضة إنما ظهر لما رفضوا زيد بن علي بن الحسين في خلافة هشام وقصة
زيد بن علي بن الحسين كانت بعد العشرين ومائة سنة إحدى وعشرين أو اثنتين
وعشرين ومائة في اواخر خلافة هشام

³³ Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* (Muasassat Qurṭubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim], vol. 1, p. 23

³⁴ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tabdhīb al-Tabdhīb* (Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 5, p. 59, # 110

But the word “Rāfiḍah” (Rejecters) was first used when they rejected (*rafaḍū*) Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn during the *kbilāfab* of Hishām, and the incident of Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn occurred after 120 H, 121 H or 122 H, during the last days of the *kbilāfab* of Hishām.³⁵

In simpler words, al-Sh’abī had already died before that word was ever used in human history! How then did he manage to tell ‘Abd al-Rahman’s father about the Rāfiḍah from his grave?!

NARRATION SIX

Al-Ḥāfiẓ gives us the sixth existing explicit Sunnī report on ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā:

وقال أبو إسحاق الفزاري عن شعبة عن سلمة بن كهيل عن أبي الزعراء عن زيد بن وهب أن سويد بن غفلة دخل على علي في إمارته فقال اني مررت بن بفر يذكرون أبا بكر وعمر يرون انك تضرر لهما مثل ذلك منهم عبد الله بن سبا وكان عبد الله أول من أظهر ذلك فقال علي مالي ولهذا الخبيث الأسود ثم قال معاذ الله أضمر لهما الا الحسن الجميل ثم أرسل إلى عبد الله بن سبا فسيره إلى المدائن وقال لا يساكنني في بلدة ابدا ثم نهض إلى المنبر حتى اجتمع الناس فذكر القصة في ثنائه عليها بطوله وفي آخره الا ولا يبلغني عن أحد يفضلني عليها الا جلده حد المفتري

Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī narrated from Shu’bah from Salamah b. Kuhayl from Abū al-Za’rā from Zayd b. Wahb that Suwayd b. Ghafilah entered upon ‘Alī during his rule, and said, “I passed by a group who were mentioning Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, claiming that you hold the same views towards them both. Among them was ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and he was the first to manifest that. So, ‘Alī said, “What does this evil black man want from me?” Then he said, “I seek Allāh’s refuge. My opinion of them both (i.e. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar) is nothing but good and beautiful.” Then he sent a messenger to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā and exiled him to al-Madā’in, and said, “He shall not live in the same town as me ever again”. Then he rushed to the pulpit and gathered the people, and delivered a long speech to praise them both (i.e. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar). At its end, he said, “Verily, if it reaches me that anyone places me

³⁵ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* (Muasasat Qurṭubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim], vol. 1, pp. 34-35

above them both, I will whip him with the whipping of a lying slanderer.”³⁶

So, who was Abū al-Za’rā? Al-Barqānī (d. 425 H) disagrees with a popular choice here, as documented by al-Ḥāfiẓ:

وروى البرقاني في اللفظ من طريق شعبة عن سلمه بن كهيل عن أبي الزعراء وعن زيد بن وهب أن سويد بن غفلة دخل على علي في امارته فقال يا أمير المؤمنين اني مررت بنفر يذكرون أبا بكر وعمر الحديث. قال البرقاني أبو الزعراء هذا هو حجية بن عدي وليس هو صاحب ابن مسعود ذلك اسمه عبد الله بن هانئ.

Al-Barqānī narrated in the text from the route of Shu’bah from Salamah b. Kuhayl from Abū al-Za’rā, and from Zayd b. Wahb that Suwayd b. Ghaflah entered upon ‘Alī during his rule, and said, “O Amīr al-Mūminīn! I passed by a group who were mentioning Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.” The *ḥadīth*. Al-Barqānī said: “**This Abū al-Za’rā was Ḥujayyah b. ‘Adī, and not the companion of Ibn Mas’ūd, whose name was ‘Abd Allāh b. Hānī.**”³⁷

Al-Barqānī has corroboration from Imām Muslim (d. 261 H), who identifies Ḥujayyah as:

أبو الزعراء أحجية بن عدي الكندي

Abū al-Za’rā Ḥujayyah b. ‘Adī al-Kindī³⁸

However, these positions of both al-Barqānī and Muslim are of no convincing basis in the eyes of al-Ḥāfiẓ, who submits elsewhere in the same book that only three people – *excluding* Ḥujayyah – were actually known as Abū al-Za’rā:

من كنيته أبو الزعراء

³⁶ Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Miẓān* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muasassat al-‘Ilamī li al-Maṭbū‘āt; 2nd edition, 1390 H), vol. 3, p. 290, # 1225

³⁷ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Tabḥīb al-Tabḥīb* (Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 2, p. 190, # 399

³⁸ Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *al-Kamā wa al-Asmā* (Madīnah al-Munawwarah: al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmiyyah; 1st edition, 1404 H) [annotator: ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Qushqarī], vol. 1, p.

أبو الزعراء الأزدي الأكبر، اسمه: عبد الله بن هانئ، تقدم.

أبو الزعراء الجشمي الأصغر، اسمه: عمرو بن عمر، تقدم.

أبو الزعراء الطائي، اسمه: يحيى بن الوليد الكوفي، تقدم.

Those whose *kunya* was Abū al-Za'rā:

1. Abū al-Za'rā al-Azdī al-Akbar: his name was 'Abd Allāh b. Hānī.
2. Abū al-Za'rā al-Jashmī al-Aṣghar: his name was 'Amr b. 'Umar.
3. Abū al-Za'rā al-Ṭāī: his name was Yaḥyā b. al-Walīd al-Kūfī.³⁹

In his *Taqrib*, he has equally omitted "Abū al-Za'rā" from the names of Ḥujayyah⁴⁰. Meanwhile, other major Sunnī *rijāl* scholars who have also conspicuously omitted "Abū al-Za'rā" from the names of Ḥujayyah include: Imām Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 H)⁴¹, Imām al-'Ijlī (d. 261 H)⁴², Imām Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327 H)⁴³, Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 H)⁴⁴, Imām al-Mizzī (d. 742)⁴⁵, and Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748 H)⁴⁶.

³⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 12, p. 90

⁴⁰ Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrib al-Tabdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā], vol. 1, p. 192, # 1154

⁴¹ Muḥammad b. Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Sādir), vol. 6, p. 225

⁴² Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-'Ijlī al-Kūfī, *Ma'rifat al-Thiqāt* (Madīnah: Maktabah al-Dār; 1st edition, 1405 H), vol. 1, p. 288, # 275

⁴³ Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs b. al-Munzir al-Tamīmī al-Ḥanzalī al-Rāzī, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī; 1st edition, 1371 H), vol. 3, p. 314, # 1400

⁴⁴ Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān b. Aḥmad al-Tamīmī al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* (Hyderabad: Majlis Dāirat al-Ma'rīf al-'Uthmāniyyah; 1st edition, 1398 H), vol. 4, p. 186

⁴⁵ Abū al-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tabdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl* (Beirut by Muasasat al-Risālah; 4th edition, 1413 H) [annotator: Dr. Bashār 'Awād Ma'rūf], vol. 5, p. 485, # 1141

⁴⁶ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-'Iṭidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfah; 1st edition, 1382 H) [annotator: 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī], vol. 1, p. 466, # 1759; Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Dhahabī al-Dimashqī, *al-Kāshif fī Ma'rīfat Man Labu Rināyat fī al-Kutub al-Sittah* (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah li al-Thaqāfat al-Islāmiyyah; 1st edition, 1413 H), vol. 1, p. 315, # 956

Besides, the *riwāyah* transmitted by Ḥujayyah (which is also often quoted on Ibn Sabā) is *very different* from that narrated by “Abū al-Za’rā”. Imām Ibn Abī Khaythamah (d. 279 H) reports:

حدثنا محمد بن عباد المكي قال نا سفیان قال نا عبد الجبار بن عباس الهمداني عن سلمة عن حجية بن عدي الكندي: رأيت عليا على المنبر وهو يقول من يعذرنى من هذا الحميت الأسود الذي يكذب على الله يعني ابن السوداء

Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād – Sufyān – ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. ‘Abbās al-Hamdānī – Salamah – Ḥujayyah b. ‘Adī al-Kindī:

I saw ‘Alī upon the pulpit and he was saying, “Who will excuse me of **this evil black CONTAINER**, who tells lies upon Allāh?” He meant *Ibn al-Sawdā*.⁴⁷

For Allāh’s sake, how exactly does the above look like this one:

وقال أبو إسحاق الفزاري عن شعبة عن سلمة بن كهيل عن أبي الزعراء عن زيد بن وهب أن سويد بن غفلة دخل على علي في إمارته فقال اني مررت بن بفر يذكرون أبا بكر وعمر يرون انك تضر لهم مثل ذلك منهم عبد الله بن سبا وكان عبد الله أول من أظهر ذلك فقال علي مالي ولهذا الخبيث الأسود ثم قال معاذ الله أضمر لها الا الحسن الجميل ثم أرسل إلى عبد الله بن سبا فسيره إلى المدائن وقال لا يساكنني في بلدة ابدا ثم نهض إلى المنبر حتى اجتمع الناس فذكر القصة في ثنائه عليها بطوله وفي آخره الا ولا يبلغني عن أحد يفضلني عليها الا جلده حد المفتري

Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī narrated from Shu’bah from Salamah b. Kuhayl from **Abū al-Za’rā** from Zayd b. Wahb that Suwayd b. Ghafilah entered upon ‘Alī during his rule, and said, “I passed by a group who were mentioning Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, claiming that you hold the same views towards them both. Among them was ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and he was the first to manifest that. So, ‘Alī said, “What does **this evil black MAN** want from me?” Then he said, “I seek Allāh’s refuge. My opinion of them both (i.e. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar) is nothing but good and beautiful.” Then he sent a messenger to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā and exiled him to al-Madāin, and said, “He shall not live in the same town as me ever again”. Then he rushed to the pulpit and gathered the

⁴⁷ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Abī Khaythamah Zuhayr b. Ḥarb, *Tarikh Ibn Abī Khaythamah* (al-Farūq al-Ḥadīthiyah li al-Ṭabā’ah wa al-Nashr; 1st edition, 1424 H), vol. 3, p. 177, # 4359

people, and delivered a long speech to praise them both (i.e. Abū Bakr and 'Umar). At its end, he said, "Verily, if it reaches me that anyone places me above them both, I will whip him with the whipping of a lying slanderer."

Where is the similarity? Do they even resemble in any way or by any means? Apparently, there is NOTHING in common between them. Yet, we find some Sunnī brothers referring to the first report as evidence that Abū Za'rā in the second is Ḥujayyah?! In fact, some of them go as far as claiming that both reports are the same?! How do these people reason?

So, as we can see, many top Sunnī *rijāl* scholars contradicted the suggestion that Ḥujayyah had the nickname "Abū al-Za'rā". Also, what Salamah narrated from "Abu al-Za'rā" was *fundamentally* different, in all aspects, from what he narrated from Ḥujayyah. These facts, obviously, sufficiently confirm that the "Abū al-Zar'ā" in the *riwāyah* of al-Fazārī was NOT Ḥujayyah b. 'Adī.

In that case, which of the three Abū Za'rās identified by al-Ḥāfiẓ was the "Abū al-Za'rā" of al-Fazārī's report? Imām al-Mizzī helps us out here. He states about the first of them:

عبد الله بن هانئ الكندي، الأزدي أبو الزعراء الكوفي الكبير، من بني البداء بن الحارث. وهو خال سلمة بن كهيل.

روى عن: عبد الله بن مسعود، وعمر بن الخطاب. روى عنه: ابن أخته سلمة بن كهيل.

قال البخاري: لا يتابع في حديثه. وقال علي بن المديني: عامة رواية أبي الزعراء، عن عبد الله بن مسعود، ولا أعلم أحدا روى عنه إلا سلمة بن كهيل، واسمه عبد الله بن هانئ. وقال النسائي نحو ذلك....

وأما أبو الزعراء لا كبر هذا، فلا تعرف له رواية، إلا عن ابن مسعود، وعمر بن الخطاب، ولا يعرف له راو، إلا سلمة بن كهيل، ولم يدركه سفيان بن عيينة، ولا أحد من أقرانه.

وذكره ابن حبان في كتاب "الثقات" روى له الترمذي حديثا، والنسائي آخر.

'Abd Allāh b. Hānī al-Kindī, al-Azdī, Abū al-Za'rā al-Kūfī al-Kabīr, from Banū al-Badā b. al-Ḥārith. He was the uncle of Salamah b. Kuhayl.

He narrated from 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. **His nephew, Salamah b. Kuhayl, narrated from him.**

Al-Bukhārī said, "**He is NOT followed in his *ḥadīth*.**" 'Alī b. al-Madīnī said, "Most of the reports of Abū al-Za'rā are from 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd. **I do not know anyone who narrated from him except Salamah b. Kuhayl,** and his name was 'Abd Allāh b. Hānī." Al-Nasāī said the like of that too....

With regards to this Abū al-Za'rā al-Akbar, **there is NO known narration by him except from Ibn Mas'ūd and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and there is NO known narrator from him except Salamah b. Kuhayl.** Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah never met him, nor did anyone else among his (i.e. Sufyān's) contemporaries.

Ibn Ḥibbān mentioned him in *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*. Al-Tirmidhī narrated a single *ḥadīth* from him, and al-Nasāī narrated the other.⁴⁸

Apparently, this is our guy!

Concerning the second Abū al-Za'rā, al-Mizzī also submits:

عمرو بن عمرو، ويقال: ابن عامر ابن مالك بن نضلة الجشعي، أبو الزعراء الكوفي،
ابن أخي أبي الأحوص الجشعي.

روى عن: عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة بن مسعود، وعكرمة مولى ابن عباس،
وعمه أبي الأحوص عوف بن مالك بن نضلة الجشعي.

روى عنه: سفیان الثوري وساه عمرو بن عامر، وسفيان ابن عيينة، وعبيدة بن
حميد.

⁴⁸ Abū al-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tabdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl* (Beirut by Muasassat al-Risālah; 4th edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Bashār 'Awād Ma'rūf], vol. 16, pp. 240-242, # 3627

‘Amr b. ‘Amr, and he is also called Ibn ‘Āmr, Ibn Mālik b. Naḍlah al-Jashmī, Abū al-Za’rā al-Kūfī, nephew of Abū al-Aḥwaṣ al-Jashmī.

He narrated from ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Utbah b. Mas’ūd, ‘Ikrimah freed slave of Ibn ‘Abbās, and his uncle Abū al-Aḥwaṣ ‘Awf b. Mālik b. Naḍlah al-Jashmī.

Sufyān al-Thawrī narrated from him and named him ‘Amr b. ‘Āmir. Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyaynah also narrated from him, as well as ‘Ubaydah b. Ḥumayd.⁴⁹

Without doubt, this is *not* the Abū al-Za’rā in the report on ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā! Salamah did not narrate from him. The same was the case with the third Abū al-Za’rā:

يحيى بن الوليد بن المسير الطائي ثم السننسي، أبو الزعراء الكوفي.

روى عن سعيد بن عمرو بن أشوع، ومحل بن خليفة الطائي.

روى عنه زيد بن الحباب، وسويد بن عمرو الكلبي، وأبو عاصم الضحاك بن مخلد، و عبد الرحان بن مهدي، وأبو حميد عصام بن عمرو البغدادي، ويحيى بن المتوكل الباهلي.

Yaḥyā b. al-Walīd b. al-Musayyar al-Ṭāī al-Sinbasī, Abū al-Za’rā al-Kūfī.

He narrated from Sa’īd b. ‘Amr b. Ashwa’ and Muḥil b. Khalīfah al-Ṭāī.

And the following narrated from him: Zayd b. al-Ḥubāb, Suwayd b. ‘Amr al-Kalbī, Abū ‘Āṣim al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Mukhlid, ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Mahdī, Abū Ḥamīd ‘Iṣām b. ‘Amr al-Baghdādī, and Yaḥyā b. al-Mutawakil al-Bāhili.⁵⁰

Needless to say, “our guy” is only the first of them: ‘Abd Allāh b. Hānī. Meanwhile, al-Mizzī has confirmed that “there is NO known narration by him except from Ibn Mas’ūd and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.” This reveals an *‘illa*

⁴⁹ Abū al-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl* (Beirut by Muasassat al-Risālah; 1st edition, 1413 H) [annotator: Dr. Bashār ‘Awād Ma’rūf], vol. 22, p. 166, # 4417

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, vol. 32, pp. 30-31, # 6942

(hidden defect) in all narrations by this Abū al-Za’rā from other than Ibn Mas’ūd and ‘Umar. All of them are disconnected and therefore *ḍa’if*, and so is this particular narration of his from Zayd b. Wahb as well!

A “counter-proof” often deployed by our opponents is this report, quoted by al-Ḥāfiẓ:

وروى البرقاني في اللفظ من طريق شعبة عن سلمه بن كهيل عن أبي الزعراء وعن زيد بن وهب أن سويد بن غفلة دخل على علي في امارته فقال يا أمير المؤمنين اني مررت بنفر يذكرون أبا بكر وعمر الحديث .قال البرقاني أبو الزعراء هذا هو حجية بن عدي وليس هو صاحب ابن مسعود ذلك اسمه عبد الله بن هاني.

Al-Barqānī narrated in the text from the route of Shu’bah from Salamah b. Kuhayl from Abū al-Za’rā, **AND from Zayd b. Wahb** that Suwayd b. Ghafrah entered upon ‘Alī during his rule, and said, “O Amīr al-Mūminīn! I passed by a group who were mentioning Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.” The *badūth*.⁵¹

They argue that Salamah narrated from both Abū al-Za’rā *and* Zayd b. Wahb. As such, whether Abū al-Za’rā’s report is *ḍa’if* or not would be inconsequential, as there would be a separate route to establish the *riwāyah*. However, al-Barqānī (d. 425 H) never met Shu’bah (d. 160 H), and the *sanad* between them is unknown. Therefore, it is impossible to rely upon this report of al-Barqānī. Most probably, one of the unknown narrators in the truncated chain muddled up the *isnād*. So, basically, our opponents have no valid objection, and the *riwāyah* of Abū al-Za’rā ‘Abd Allāh b. Hānī from Zayd b. Wahb is *ḍa’if*.

In addition, the *riwāyah* is equally, historically inaccurate. The report, for example, is quick to point out that the first ever human being to “mention” Abū Bakr and ‘Umar negatively was ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā. This, however, is untrue! Amīr al-Mūminīn himself had earlier described both Abū Bakr and ‘Umar with shocking words. Imām Muslim (d. 261 H) quotes ‘Umar saying to both Imām ‘Alī and ‘Abbās:

فلما توفي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال أبو بكر أنا ولي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فرأيتاه كاذبا آثما غادرا خائنا والله يعلم إنه لصادق بار راشد تابع

⁵¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Tabdhīb al-Tabdhīb* (Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 2, p. 190, # 399

للحق ثم توفي أبو بكر وأنا ولي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم وولي أبا بكر
فأيتاني كاذبا آتما غادرا خائنا

When the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, died, **Abū Bakr said: “I am the *walī* of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him.”...** So both of you (‘Alī and ‘Abbās) thought him (i.e. Abū Bakr) to be **a liar, sinful, a traitor and dishonest.** And Allāh knows that he was really truthful, pious, rightly-guided and a follower of the truth. **Abū Bakr died and I became the *walī* of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, and the *walī* of Abū Bakr. So both of you thought me to be a liar, sinful, a traitor and dishonest.**⁵²

Amīr al-Mūminīn declared both Abū Bakr and ‘Umar to be traitors, sinful and dishonest liars! This, of course, was during the lifetimes of both of them, long before ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā could ever have surfaced.

Besides, what “praise” exactly would Amīr al-Mūminīn have had for Abū Bakr and ‘Umar in view of his extremely negative opinions of them? It is simply illogical to assume that Amīr al-Mūminīn would *ever* consider people whom he thought to be “liars, traitors, sinful and dishonest” as better than himself!

What seals the series of fallacies in the report is its last sentence:

“Verily, if it reaches me that anyone places me above them both, I will whip him with the whipping of a lying slanderer.”

Many of the Ṣaḥābah, *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhum*, and Ṭābi‘īn actually considered him to be the best of the entire *Ummah* after the Messenger of Allāh, and he never condemned or punished them. Imām Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463 H), among others, submits:

وروى عن سلمان وأبي ذر والمقداد وخباب وجابر وأبي سعيد الخدري وزيد بن
الأرقم أن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه أول من أسلم وفضله هؤلاء على غيره

Salmān, Abū Dharr, al-Miqdād, Khabāb, Jābir, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī and Zayd b. Arqam narrated that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allāh be

⁵² Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī) [annotator: Muḥammad Fuād ‘Abd al-Bāqī], vol. 3, p. 1376, #1757

pleased with him, was the first to accept Islām, **and they considered him the most superior (among the Ṣaḥābah).**⁵³

Al-Ḥāfiẓ adds about another Ṣaḥābī, Abū al-Ṭufayl, *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu*:

قال أبو عمر كان يعترف بفضل أبي بكر وعمر لكنه يقدم عليا

Abū ‘Umar said: He accepted the merit of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar **but he considered ‘Alī to be the most superior.**⁵⁴

Did ‘Alī ever reproach Khabāb, Jābir, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, Zayd b. Arqam and Abū al-Ṭufayl or anyone like them? The answer is a loud “no”!

NARRATION SEVEN

Imām Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430 H) in his *al-Ḥilya* records the last report:

حدثنا إبراهيم بن محمد ثنا عبد الله ثنا يوسف بن أسباط ثنا محمد بن عبد العزيز التميمي الكوفي عن مغيرة عن أم موسى قالت بلغ عليا أن ابن سبأ يفضله على أبي بكر وعمر فهم علي بقتله فقتل له أتقتل رجلا إنما أجلك وفضلك فقال لا جرم لا يساكنني في بلدة أنا فيها قال عبد الله بن خبيق فحدثت به الهيثم بن جميل فقال لقد نفي ببلد بالمدائن إلى الساعة

Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad – ‘Abd Allāh – **Yūsuf b. Asbāṭ** – Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tamīmī al-Kūfī – **Mughīrah** – **Umm Mūsā**, who said:

It reached ‘Alī that Ibn Sabā was placing him (i.e. ‘Alī) in merits and virtues above Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. So, he decided to kill him. But, it was said to him, “Will you kill a man who only thinks highly of you and considers you superior?” Then, he said, “Surely, he shall not live with me in the same town.”

⁵³ Abū ‘Umar Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Barr b. ‘Āṣim al-Nimrī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Istī‘āb fī Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl; 1st edition, 1412 H) [annotator: ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī], vol. 3, pp. 1090, # 1855

⁵⁴ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamayūz al-Ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1415 H) [annotators: Shaykh ‘Ādil Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and Shaykh ‘Alī Muḥammad Ma‘ūḍ], vol. 7, p. 193, # 10166

'Abd Allāh b. Khabīq narrated from al-Haytham b. Jamīl who said: "He was permanently exiled to a town in al-Madā'in."⁵⁵

Concerning Yūsuf b. Asbāt, 'Allāmah al-Albānī says:

ويوسف بن أسباط؛ ضعيف أيضاً.

Yūsuf b. Asbāt is *ḍa'if* too.⁵⁶

Elsewhere, he comments about a *sanad* containing Yūsuf's name:

قلت: وهذا سند ضعيف من أجل يوسف بن أسباط قال أبو حاتم: كان رجلا عابدا، دفن كتبه، وهو يغلط كثيرا، وهو رجل صالح، لا يحتج به، كما في "المرح (418 / 2 / 4) "

I say: **This chain is *ḍa'if*, due to Yūsuf b. Asbāt.** Abū Ḥātim said: "He was a devout worshipper. He buried his books, **and he used to make A LOT of mistakes**, and he was a righteous man. **He is NOT accepted as a *ḥujjah***" as stated in *al-Jarḥ* (4/2/418).⁵⁷

Also, Mughīrah in the chain is a *mudalis*, and has narrated in an 'an-'an manner. Al-Ḥāfiẓ submits:

المغيرة بن مقسم بكسر الميم الضمي مولاهم أبو هشام الكوفي الأعمى ثقة متقن إلا أنه كان يدللس ولا سيما عن إبراهيم

Al-Mughīrah b. Miqṣam al-Ḍabī, their freed slave, Abū Hishām al-Kūfī, the Blind: *Thiqah* (trustworthy), precise, **except that he used to do *tadlis***, especially from Ibrāhīm.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Abū Na'īm Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyah al-Anlīyā wa Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣḥiyā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī; 4th edition, 1405 H), vol. 8, p. 253

⁵⁶ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'ifah wa al-Mawḍū'ah wa Atharibah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 11, p. 118, # 5073

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 325, # 175

⁵⁸ Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrib al-Tabḍīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā], vol. 2, p. 208, # 6875

'Allāmah al-Albānī too says about him:

فلا أدري كيف غفل عنها الذهبي وهو نفسه قد أورد المغيرة هذا في "منظومته" في المدلسين؟! وهي معروفة مطبوعة عدة طبعات، وذكره فيهم غيره من الحفاظ المتقدمين والمتأخرين، وأورده خاتمتهم العسقلاني في الطبقة الثالثة منهم الذين أكثروا التديس، فلم يحتاج الأئمة من أحاديثهم إلا بما صرحوا فيه بالسراع

I do not know how al-Dhahabī missed it, while he personally has included this al-Mughīrah in his *Manẓūmah* among the *mudalīsīn* (i.e. those who do *tadlīs*)?! And it is well-known, published several times. Others from the classical and later *ḥadīth* scientists also included him (i.e. al-Mughīrah) among them (i.e. *mudalīsīn*). **The last of them, al-'Asqalānī, included him (i.e. al-Mughīrah) in the third *ṭabaqat* among them, those who did *tadlīs* A LOT. Therefore, the Imāms do not accept their *aḥādīth* as *ḥujjah* except what they explicitly transmit with *simā'*.**⁵⁹

The last defect in the *sanad* is Umm Mūsā, the main narrator herself. Al-Ḥāfiẓ declares about her:

أم موسى سرية علي قيل اسمها فاختة وقيل حبيبة مقبولة

Umm Mūsā, mistress of 'Alī. It is said that her name was Fākhtah or Ḥabībah: *Maqbulah* (i.e. accepted only when seconded).⁶⁰

While analyzing another *riwayah* of Mughīrah from the same Umm Mūsā, 'Allāmah al-Albānī also says:

قلت: وفيه نظر من وجهين:

الأول: أن أم موسى هذه، لم تثبت عدالتها وضبطها. وقد أوردها الذهبي نفسه في "فصل النسوة المجهولات" من "الميزان"، وقال فيها: "تفرد عنها مغيرة بن مقسم. قال

⁵⁹ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah wa Atharibah al-Sayyiah fī al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 13, p. 633, # 6289

⁶⁰ Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrib al-Ṭabdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā], vol. 2, p. 673, # 8820

الدارقطني: يخرج حديثها اعتباراً". ولذلك لم يوثقها الحافظ في "التقريب" بل قال فيها: "مقبولة". يعني: عند المتابعة....

والاخر: أن المغيرة - وهو ابن مقسم الضبي - وإن كان ثقة متقناً؛ إلا أنه كان يدلّس؛ كما قال الحافظ، وقد عنعنه.

I say: These are two problems with it:

The first: is that this Umm Mūsā, her 'adālah (uprightness) and truthfulness are NOT established. Al-Dhahabī has himself mentioned her in the "Chapter on Majhūlah (Unknown) Women" in al-Mizān, and he said concerning her: "Mughīrah b. Miqsam was the only one who narrated from her. Al-Dāraqūṭnī said: 'Her ahādīth are recorded for support purposes.'" This is why al-Ḥāfiẓ in al-Taqrīb did NOT declare her *thiqah* (trustworthy). Rather, he said concerning her "*maqbulah*", that is (she is accepted) where she is seconded.

The other: is that al-Mughīrah – and he was Ibn Miqsam al-Ḍabī – even though he was *thiqah* (trustworthy), precise, **except that he used to do *tadlis*, as al-Ḥāfiẓ stated. And he has narrated it in an 'an-'an manner.**⁶¹

The bottomline is that the report of Abū Naʿīm is *ḍaʿīf jiddan* (very weak). It has several serious defects in it: Yūsuf b. Asbāṭ is *ḍaʿīf*, al-Mughīrah is a *mudalis* and has narrated in an 'an-'an manner; and Umm Mūsā is *majhūlah* (unknown) or *maqbulah* and has NOT been seconded in her report. Besides, there were many of the Ṣaḥābah who considered Amīr al-Mūminīn to have been superior to Abū Bakr and ʿUmar – and he never punished or killed them! This exposes the clear fallacy of the fairytale from Abū Naʿīm.

As things stand, these are the only seven reports in the Sunnī books which mention ʿAbd Allāh b. Sabā *explicitly*, and all of them are both very unreliable and blatantly false.

⁶¹ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍaʿīfah wa al-Mawḍūʿah wa Atharīyah al-Sayyiah fī al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 10, p. 649, # 4945

2 TRACING THE FAIRYTALE

EXPLICIT *ĀTHĀR* NAMING ‘ABD ALLĀH AL-SABĀĪ

There is only one report in the Sunnī books mentioning a man named ‘Abd Allāh al-Sabāī. This is the *rimāyah* as documented by Imām Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim (d. 287 H):

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة حدثنا محمد بن الحسن الأسدي حدثنا هارون بن صالح عن الحارث بن عبد الرحمن عن أبي الجلاس قال سمعت عليا يقول لعبدالله السبائي ويلك ما أفضي إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بشيء كتمه أحدا من الناس ولقد سمعته يقول إن بين يدي الساعة ثلاثين كذابا وإنك أحدهم

Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah – Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Asadī – Hārūn b. Ṣāliḥ – al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman – Abū al-Jalās:

I heard ‘Alī saying to ‘Abd Allāh al-Sabāī: “Woe to you! The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, did not inform me of anything which he hid from anyone among mankind. I had heard him (i.e. the Prophet) saying, ‘Before the Hour, there will be thirty liars’. Verily, you are one of them.”⁶²

‘Allāmah al-Albānī (d. 1420 H) has this verdict on it:

⁶² Abū Bakr b. Abī ‘Āṣim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Mukhlid al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Sunnah* (al-Maktab al-Islāmī; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī], vol. 1, p. 462, # 982

إسناده ضعيف، أبو الجلاس كوفي مجهول كما في "التقريب". وهارون بن صالح مجهول أيضا، وفي "التقريب": "مستور".

والحديث أخرجه أبو يعلى من طريقين آخرين عن الأسدي به

Its chain is *ḍa'īf*. Abū al-Jalās Kūfi is *majhūl* (unknown), as stated in *al-Taqrīb*. Hārūn b. Ṣāliḥ too is *majhūl*. In *al-Taqrīb*, he is called *mastūr* (hidden).

And the *ḥadīth* is recorded by Abū Ya'lā through two *other* chains from al-Asadī with it.⁶³

So, let us find out the other two chains recorded by Imām Abū Ya'lā (d. 307 H). This is the first:

حدثنا أبو كريب محمد بن العلاء حدثنا محمد بن الحسن الأسدي حدثنا هارون بن صالح الهمداني عن الحارث بن عبد الرحمن عن أبي الجلاس قال سمعت عليا يقول لعبد الله السبائي: ويلك! والله ما أفضى إلي بشيء كتمه أحدا من الناس ولقد سمعته يقول: إن بين يدي الساعة ثلاثين كذابا وإنك لأحدهم

Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-'Alā – Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Asadī – Hārūn b. Ṣāliḥ al-Hamdānī – al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān – Abū al-Jalās:

I heard 'Alī saying to 'Abd Allāh al-Sabāī: "Woe to you! I swear by Allāh, he (i.e. the Prophet) did not inform me of anything which he hid from anyone among mankind. I had heard him (i.e. the Prophet) saying, 'Before the Hour, there will be thirty liars'. Verily, you are one of them."⁶⁴

The annotator, Shaykh Dr. Asad comments:

إسناده ضعيف

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ Abū Ya'lā Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Muthannā al-Mawṣilī al-Tamīmī, *Musnad* (Damascus: Dār al-Māmun li al-Turāth; 1st edition, 1404 H) [annotator: Dr. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad], vol. 1, p. 349, # 449

Its chain is *da'if*.⁶⁵

What about the second? Abū Ya'lā says:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة حدثنا محمد بن الحسن بإسناده مثله

Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah narrated to us – Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan narrated the like of it to us with his chain.⁶⁶

Apparently, this is the same chain from Ibn Abī Āṣim. Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah narrated it, and has identified “his chain” simply as – Hārūn b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥamdānī – al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd al-Raḥman – Abū al-Jalās. It is indeed very strange that 'Allāmah al-Albānī refers to the chains in *Musnad Abū Ya'lā* as “two *other* chains”, even though the *isnād* of Ibn Abī Āṣim, and the two chains of Abū Ya'lā, are all one and the same!

We know already that the report is unreliable. So, the alleged event never took place. Amīr al-Mūminīn, '*alaihi al-salām*, never said those words to any 'Abd Allāh al-Sabā. But, there are still other issues we would like to address.

The *athar* does NOT mention “'Abd Allāh b. Sabā”. It only says “'Abd Allāh al-Sabā”, which literally means “'Abd Allāh from the offspring of Sabā”. Obviously, 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā could rightly be also called 'Abd Allāh al-Sabā. But, there were other 'Abd Allāhs as well, from the same lineage of Sabā, who were also known with that title. Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748 H) tells us about one of them:

(وقعة النهروان)

وفيهما سارت الخوارج لحرب علي، فكانت بينهم وقعة النهروان، وكان على الخوارج عبد الله بن وهب السبائي، فهزهم علي وقتل أكثرهم، وقتل ابن وهب.

The Incident of al-Nahrawān

In it, the Khawārij marched to fight a war against 'Alī. So, the Incident of al-Nahrawān was between them. The head of the Khawārij was

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 350, # 450

‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb *al-Sabā*. ‘Alī defeated them and killed most of them, and he killed Ibn Wahb.⁶⁷

As such, “‘Abd Allāh al-Sabā” could well have been a reference to this Kharijite, or to some other “‘Abd Allāh” from the offspring of Sabā!

However, there is some evidence that the “‘Abd Allāh al-Sabā” in the report of Abū Ya’lā was actually ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and none else. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 H) copies:

وقال الحافظ أبو يعلى : حدثنا أبو كريب، حدثنا محمد بن الحسن الأسدي، حدثنا هارون بن صالح الهمداني ، عن الحرص بن عبد الرحمن، عن أبي الجلاس قال : سمعت علياً يقول لعبد الله بن سبأ ، ويلك والله ما أفضي إليّ بشيء كتمه أحداً من الناس ، ولقد سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول : إن بين يدي الساعة ثلاثين كذاباً وإنك لأحدهم .

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ya’lā said: Abū Kurayb – Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Asadī – Hārūn b. Šāliḥ al-Hamdānī – al-Ḥarṣ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman – Abū al-Jalās:

I heard ‘Alī saying to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā: “Woe to you! I swear by Allāh, he did not inform me of anything which he hid from anyone among mankind. I had heard the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, saying, ‘Before the Hour, there will be thirty liars’. Verily, you are one of them.”⁶⁸

Al-Ḥāfiẓ too submits:

وقال أبو يعلى الموصلي في مسنده ثنا أبو كريب ثنا محمد بن الحسن الأسدي ثنا هارون بن صالح عن الحارث بن عبد الرحمن عن أبي الجلاس سمعت علياً يقول

⁶⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Waḥyāt al-Mashāhīr wa al-A’lām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī; 1st edition, 1407 H) [Dr. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmīrī], vol. 3, p. 588

⁶⁸ Abū al-Fīdā Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *al-Nihāyah fī al-Fitan wa al-Malahim* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: Prof. ‘Abduh al-Shāfi’ī], vol. 1, p. 50. We had earlier very strongly criticized this rendition of the *ḥadīth* by Ibn Kathīr. However, upon further researches, we accept the possibility that he had only used a now extinct version of the book of Abū Ya’lā. He has been corroborated by al-Ḥāfiẓ.

لعبد الله بن سبا والله ما أفضى إلي بشيء كتمه أحدا من الناس ولقد سمعت يقول
إن بين يدي الساعة ثلاثين كذابا وإنك لأحدهم

Abū Ya’lā al-Mawṣilī said in his *Musnad*: Abū Kurayb – Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Asadī – Hārūn b. Ṣāliḥ – al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman – Abū al-Jalās:

I heard ‘Alī saying to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā: “I swear by Allāh, he did not inform me of anything which he hid from anyone among mankind. I had heard (him), saying, ‘Before the Hour, there will be thirty liars’. Verily, you are one of them.”⁶⁹

Yet, even these facts do not help the Sunnī claims, as all these reports have the same *ḍa’if* chain.

⁶⁹ Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Miẓān* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muasassat al-‘Alamī li al-Maṭbū’āt; 2nd edition, 1390 H), vol. 3, p. 289-290, # 1225

3 TRACING THE FAIRYTALE

EXPLICIT *ĀTHĀR* NAMING *IBN AL-SAWDĀ*

According to Sunnī *‘ulamā*, ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā was “well-known” as *Ibn al-Sawdā* – the son of the black woman. Imām Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630 H), for instance, submits:

وكان عبد الله بن سبأ المعروف بابن السوداء

He was ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā, *well-known as Ibn al-Sawdā*.⁷⁰

The only existing testimony concerning the colour of his mother, however, is the *mawdū’* (fabricated) report of Yazīd al-Faq’asī. Therefore, there really is absolutely **NO** evidence that ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā had a black mother. As a result, there is no basis for naming him *Ibn al-Sawdā* or for suggesting that he could be called that.

Secondly, there is equally no reliable proof that the contemporaries of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā ever called him *Ibn al-Sawdā*. Rather, his own existence at all is not even established through *any* authentic chain in the Sunnī books! Logic demands that whichever Sunnī wants to claim that ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā was *Ibn al-Sawdā*, or that he was well-known as that, must do the following:

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Abī al-Karam Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir; 1385 H), vol. 3, pp. 144-145

1. Provide at least a single authentic, explicit Sunnī report proving the existence of a man called ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā.
2. Provide at least a single authentic, explicit Sunnī *riwāyah* showing that the man named ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā was addressed as *Ibn al-Sawdā* by his contemporaries.

The truth is – no Sunnī has *ever* been able to do either of the above, and no Sunnī will be able to do so till the Day of *al-Qiyāmah*. Therefore, as things stand, there is no valid Sunnī evidence that a man named ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā *ever* existed, or that such a man was *ever* called *Ibn al-Sawdā* by those who knew him. With this background fact, we are good to proceed to some Sunnī reports on the unknown son of the black woman!

NARRATION ONE

Imām Ibn Asākir (d. 571 H) helps us with the first of them:

قال ونا سيف عن أبي حارثة وأبي عثمان قالا لما قدم ابن السوداء مصر عجمهم واستخلاهم واستخلوه وعرض لهم بالكفر فأبعدوه وعرض لهم بالشقاق فأطعموه فبدأ فظعن على عمرو بن العاص وقال ما بالها أكثركم عطاء ورزقا ألا نصب رجلا من قريش يسوي بيننا فاستحلوا ذلك منه وقالوا كيف نطيع ذلك مع عمرو وهو رجل العرب قال تستعفون منه ثم يعمل عملنا ويظهر الائتار بالمعروف والطعن فلا يرده علينا أحد

Sayf – Abū Ḥārithah and Abū ‘Uthmān:

When *Ibn al-Sawdā* arrived in Egypt, he tested them. He was delighted with them and they were delighted with him. He presented *kufr* (disbelief) to them, and they distanced themselves from it. He then suggested sedition to them and they gave him hope. Then he began and slandered ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ, saying, “Why is his pension and salary the largest among you?” Will a man from Quraysh not be put forward to settle the matter between us?” They were pleased with that from him, and said, “How can we achieve this with ‘Amr when he is the man of the Arabs?” He said, “Seek his dismissal! Then we will play our role and begin to publicly command the good and to defame. At that time, no one will hold us back.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi‘ī, *Tarikh Madinah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: ‘Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, p. 6

In this chain again is Sayf b. 'Umar. We will only remind ourselves of the words of 'Allāmah al-Albānī (d. 1420 H) concerning him:

قلتُ وفي هذا نظر، فإن أكثر الطرق المشار إليها مدارها على سيف بن عمر
والواقدي وهما كذابان

I say: There is an error in this, for most of the indicated chains, their pivot is **Sayf b. 'Umar and al-Wāqidī**, and they both were **LIARS**.⁷²

As such, the *sanad* is *mawdū'* and the *riwāyah* is thereby a fabrication.

Ibn Asākir apparently assumes that the "Ibn al-Sawdā" in the report was 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā – which is why he has placed the *riwāyah* under his biography of the latter. However, there is no valid proof that 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā had a black mother, to begin with! Even Ibn Asākir makes no attempt to provide any, either! Meanwhile, decency and common sense dictate that whosoever seeks to rely upon the above report to prove the existence of 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā – as Ibn Asākir did - must first do the following:

1. Bring convincing, solid proof that there was a man - at that period in time - named 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā who had a black mother.
2. Supply reliable evidence that the black mother of this man was well-known among the people, and was widely recognized as "the black woman".
3. Provide an authentically transmitted eye-witness testimony which establishes that the man - 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā - was also known as *Ibn al-Sawdā*.

We are absolutely certain that no creature can fulfil any of the above conditions till the Hour! As such, we believe that anyone who claims that *Ibn al-Sawdā* in the fabricated *riwāyah* was 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā (whoever that was) – apparently with no valid evidence at all – is a bigot who only plays dirty games with the truth. Undoubtedly, there is zero evidence to establish that 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā was *ever* referred to or known as *Ibn al-Sawdā* by any of his contemporaries. Therefore, it is clearly impossible to connect the

⁷² Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ b. Tajātī b. Ādam al-Ashqūdī al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādith al-ṣaḥīḥah wa Shaybun min Fiḥbihāb wa Fawā'idihāb* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī'; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 3, pp. 101-102, # 1110

above tale of Sayf to him. So, the report is completely useless and irrelevant, since it is strictly about a hopelessly unidentifiable character.

NARRATION TWO

With the collapse of the first *riwāyah*, Imām Ibn Asākir takes us to another:

قرأنا على أبي عبد الله يحيى بن الحسن عن أبي الحسين بن الـابنوسي أنا أحمد بن عبيد بن الفضل وعن أبي نعيم محمد بن عبد الواحد بن عبد العزيز أنا علي بن محمد بن خرفة قالنا نا محمد بن الحسن نا ابن أبي خيثمة نا محمد بن عباد نا سفيان عن عمار الدهني قال سمعت أبا الطفيل يقول رأيت المسيب بن نجبة أتى به ملبية يعني ابن السوداء وعلي على المنبر فقال علي ما شأنه فقال يكذب على الله وعلى رسوله

Abū 'Abd Allāh Yahyā b. al-Ḥasan – Abū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Abnūsī – Ahmad b. 'Ubayd b. al-Faḍl and Abū Na'īm Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. 'Abd al-'Azīz – 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Khazafah and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan – Ibn Abi Khaythamah – Muḥammad b. 'Abbād – Sufyān – Ammār al-Dūhnī – Abū al-Ṭufayl:

I saw al-Musayyab b. Najabah, bringing him – **that was Ibn al-Sawdā** - while 'Alī was on the pulpit. So, 'Alī said, "What is his problem?" He replied, "He lies upon Allāh and upon His Messenger."⁷³

This report suffers from the same fatal defect as the first. We do not know who this *Ibn al-Sawdā* was, and there is no reliable Sunnī *riwāyah* to connect him to 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā. Meanwhile, even if we assumed, for the sake of argument, that he was Ibn Sabā, the *athar* still does not prove any of the primary Sunnī claims about him. For instance, it does not prove that he was negative towards Abū Bakr and 'Umar, or that he believed in the succession or '*iṣma* (sinlessness) of Amīr al-Mūminīn 'Alī, '*alaihi al-salām*. It also says nothing about 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā's alleged belief in *al-raj'ah* or his claimed participation in the bloody overthrow of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. It is therefore basically an utterly valueless report, as long as Ibn Sabā is concerned.

NARRATION THREE

Imām Ibn Abī Khaythamah (d. 279 H) reports:

⁷³ Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi'ī, *Tarikh Madinah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: 'Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, p. 7

حدثنا محمد بن عباد المكي قال نا سفيان قال نا عبد الجبار بن عباس الهمداني عن سلمة عن حجية بن عدي الكندي: رأيت عليا على المنبر وهو يقول من يعذرني من هذا الحميت الأسود الذي يكذب على الله يعني ابن السوداء

Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād – Sufyān – ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. ‘Abbās al-Hamdānī – Salamah – **Ḥujayyah b. ‘Adī al-Kindī**:

I saw ‘Alī upon the pulpit and he was saying, “Who will excuse me of this evil black container, who tells lies upon Allāh?” **He meant *Ibn al-Sawdā***.⁷⁴

Imām Ibn Asākir has also transmitted the same *riwāyah*:

أنبأنا أبو عبد الله محمد بن أحمد بن إبراهيم بن الخطاب أنا أبو القاسم علي بن محمد بن علي الفارسي ح وأخبرنا أبو محمد عبد الرحمن بن أبي الحسن بن إبراهيم الداراني أنا سهل بن بشر أنا أبو الحسن علي بن منير بن أحمد بن منير الخلال قالنا أنا القاضي أبو الطاهر محمد بن أحمد بن عبد الله الذهلي نا أبو أحمد بن عبدوس نا محمد بن عباد نا سفيان نا عبد الجبار بن العباس الهمداني عن سلمة بن كهيل عن حجية بن عدي الكندي قال رأيت عليا كرم الله وجهه وهو على المنبر وهو يقول من يعذرني من هذا الحميت الأسود الذي يكذب على الله ورسوله يعني ابن السوداء

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Khaṭṭāb – Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Fārisī; AND Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Abī al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm al-Dārānī – Sahl b. Bishr – Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Munīr b. Aḥmad b. Munīr al-Khalāl – al-Qāḍī Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Dhuhlī – Abū Aḥmad b. ‘Abdūs – Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād – Sufyān – ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. al-‘Abbās al-Hamdānī – Salamah b. Kuhayl – **Ḥujayyah b. ‘Adī al-Kindī**:

I saw ‘Alī, *karamallāh wajbah*, while he was upon the pulpit and he was saying, “Who will excuse me of this evil black container, who tells lies upon Allāh and His Messenger?” **He meant *Ibn al-Sawdā***.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Abī Khaythamah Zuhayr b. Ḥarb, *Tārikh Ibn Abī Khaythamah* (al-Farūq al-Ḥadīthiyah li al-Ṭabā’ah wa al-Nashr; 1st edition, 1424 H), vol. 3, p. 177, # 4359

⁷⁵ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi’ī, *Tārikh Madīnah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: ‘Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, p. 8

This *riwāyah* is inconsequential as well. First, the phrase “He meant *Ibn al-Sawdā*” is an interpolation (*idrāj*) of one of the narrators. But, who was it? It could have been anyone from Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād to Ḥujayyah. There is no explicit proof to establish that the interpolation came from Ḥujayyah, the eye-witness, and not from any of the sub-narrators. As such, there is no sufficient basis to rely upon it in identifying whoever ‘Alī allegedly called an “evil black container”. Moreover, even if we assumed, for the sake of argument, that it was Ḥujayyah who made the identification, then the report would still be of zero value. The only thing it would have done in such a case is to show that Amīr al-Mūminīn once called one *Ibn al-Sawdā* a “black container” – nothing more, nothing less. Meanwhile, the exact identity of this *Ibn al-Sawdā* remains unknown through any reliable Sunnī report. Therefore, the report would still be redundant and unusable.

NARRATION FOUR

This is the fourth “evidence” of Imām Ibn Asākir, allegedly about ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā:

أخبرنا أبو بكر أحمد بن المظفر بن الحسين بن سوسن التمار في كتابه وأخبرني أبو طاهر محمد بن محمد بن عبد الله السنجي بمرور عنه أنا أبو علي بن شاذان نا أبو بكر محمد بن جعفر بن محمد الادمي نا أحمد بن موسى الشطوي نا أحمد بن عبد الله بن يونس نا أبو الأحوص عن مغيرة عن سباط قال بلغ عليا أن ابن السوداء ينتقص أبا بكر وعمر فدعا به ودعا بالسيف أو قال فهم يقتله فكلّم فيه فقال لا يساكني ببلد أنا فيه قال فسيره إلى المدائن

Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Muzaffar b. al-Ḥusayn b. Sūsān al-Tamār – Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Sinjī – Abū ‘Alī b. Shadhān – **Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja’far b. Muḥammad al-Ādamī** – Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Shaṭawī – Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūnus – Abū al-Aḥwaṣ – Muḥīrah – **Ṣabāt**:

It reached ‘Alī that *Ibn al-Sawdā* was reviling Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. So, he sent for him and called for the sword, or he decided to kill him. But, he was persuaded against it. Then he said, “He cannot live with me in the same town”. So, he banished him to al-Madāin.⁷⁶

This report is very *ḍa’if*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, vol. 29, p. 9

Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463 H) has done a *tarjamah* for Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Adamī but has mentioned no *tawthīq* for him whatsoever concerning his narrations. None exists in any other Sunnī book either. By contrast, al-Baghdādī has actually recorded this under the said *tarjamah*:

قال محمد بن أبي الفوارس سنة ثمان وأربعين وثلاثمائة فيها مات محمد بن جعفر
الادمي وكان قد خلط فيما حدث

Muḥammad b. Abī al-Fawāris said: “In the year 348 H, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar died, **and he used to mix things up in what he narrated.**”⁷⁷

This makes him *daʿīf* as a narrator.

Besides, the main narrator of the report too, Sabāt, is completely unknown in the Sunnī books of *rijāl*. No mention of him whatsoever is made. So, he is perfectly *majbūl*.

But, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) thinks it is not over yet:

فروى أبو الأحوص عن مغيرة عن شبك عن إبراهيم قال: بلغ علي بن أبي طالب أن
عبد الله بن السوداء ينتقص أبا بكر وعمر فهم بقتله فقيل له: تقتل رجلا يدعو إلى
حكيم أهل البيت؟ فقال: "لا يساكني في دار أبدا."

وفي رواية عن شبك قال: بلغ عليا أن ابن السوداء يبغض أبا بكر وعمر قال: فدعاه
ودعا بالسيف أو قال: فهم بقتله فكلّم فيه فقال: "لا يساكني ببلد أنا فيه" فنفاه إلى
المدائن وهذا محفوظ عن أبي الأحوص وقد رواه النجاد وابن بطة واللالكائي وغيرهم

ومراسيل إبراهيم جيد لا يظهر علي رضي الله عنه أنه يريد قتل رجل إلا وقتله
حلال عنده ويشبهه والله أعلم أن يكون إنما تركه خوف الفتنة بقتله

Abū al-Aḥwas narrated from Mughīrah **from Shibāk from Ibrāhīm** that he said, “It reached ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Sawdā

⁷⁷ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah), vol. 2, p. 149, # 565

was reviling Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. Then he decided to kill him. But it was said to him, ‘Will you kill a man who calls towards love of you, Ahl al-Bayt?’ Then he said, ‘He can never again stay with me in the same house.’”

In another report from Shibāk, he said: “It reached ‘Alī that *Ibn al-Sawdā* hated Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. Then he sent for him and called for the sword, or he decided to kill him. But he was dissuaded from it. As a result, he said, ‘He can not stay in the same town with me.’ So, he banished him to al-Madāin.” **This is accurately preserved (*maḥfūz*) from Abū al-Aḥwaṣ**, and al-Najād, Ibn Baṭṭah, al-Lālikāi and others have recorded it.

And the *marāsīl* (i.e. disconnected narrations) of Ibrāhīm are good (*jiyyāa*).⁷⁸

The pretensions of Ibn Taymiyyah nonetheless, both reports are unreliable! Imām Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 H) tells us why:

إبراهيم النخعي وهو إبراهيم بن يزيد بن عمرو بن الأسود أبو عمران كان مولده سنة
خمسين ومات سنة خمس أو ست وتسعين

Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaṭī: he was Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd b. ‘Amr b. al-Aswad, Abū ‘Imrān. **He was born in 50 H** and died in 95 or 96 H.⁷⁹

It is unanimously agreed upon within the *Ummah* that Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was martyred in 40 H, some 10 years before this Ibrāhīm was born! That means he was narrating as an eye-witness what occurred long before his birth! Yet, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah – who apparently admits that the report of Ibrāhīm is *mursal* (disconnected) – wants us to believe it was a “good” testimony. What happened to his common sense?

It gets worse with the *riwāyah* of Shibāk – which our Shaykh has graded as “correctly preserved”. He too was not an eye-witness, and had only gotten his story – as he personally indicated – from Ibrāhīm! In fact, even though

⁷⁸ Taqiy al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm b. ‘Abd al-Salām b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī al-Dimashqī, *al-Ṣarīm al-Mashūl ‘alā Shatīm al-Rasūl* (Saudi Arabia: al-Ḥaras al-Waṭanī al-Sa’ūdī) [annotator: Muḥammad Muḥy al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd], p. 584

⁷⁹ Abū Ḥatīm Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān b. Aḥmad al-Tamīmī al-Bustī, *Mashābir ‘Ulamā al-Amṣār* (Dār al-Wafā li al-Ṭabā’at wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Marzūq ‘Alī Ibrāhīm], p. 163, # 748

Imām ‘Alī belonged to the first *ṭabaqah* (i.e. generation of narrators), Shibāk only fell in the sixth – a fact which throws him far, far away from the time of the alleged incident! Yet, al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 852 H) has some further damaging information about him:

شباك ... الضبي الكوفي الأعمى ثقة له ذكر في صحيح مسلم وكان يدلّس من
السادسة.

Shibāk ... al-Ḍabī al-Kūfī, the Blind: *Thiqah* (trustworthy). He is mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. **He used to do *tadlīs*. He was from the sixth (*ṭabaqah*).**⁸⁰

The bottom-line of all this is obvious. Both Shibāk and Ibrāhīm were completely cut off from the time of Amīr al-Mūminīn. So, neither of them could have validly narrated about events which occurred during his *ḵbilāfab*. Secondly, in the chain of Ibrāhīm is Shibāk, a *mudalīs*, who has narrated from the former in an ‘*an-an*’ manner. This is another, independent evidence of the unreliability of the chain of Ibrāhīm! So, both reports quoted by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah are not just *da’if* – they are *very weak* (*da’if jiddan*)! But, what have we got our Shaykh stating about them instead?! This is how some people behave when they become desperate about their fallacies.

Even then, these reports only show that one *Ibn al-Sawdā* hated and reviled Abū Bakr and ‘Umar during the *ḵbilāfab* of Imām ‘Alī. It nowhere identifies him as Ibn Sabā. Also, it does not confirm the Sunnī claims that ‘Abd Allāh b. Sabā believed in *al-raj’ah*, or in the *wiṣāyah* or ‘*iṣma*’ of ‘Alī, nor does it establish his guilty in the murder of ‘Uthmān.

⁸⁰ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrib al-Ṭabḍib* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā], vol. 1, pp. 410-411, # 2742

4 TRACING THE FAIRYTALE

EXPLICIT *ĀTHĀR* MENTIONING “THE BLACK CONTAINER”

There are Sunnī reports which allege that Imām ‘Alī, *‘alaihi al-salām*, called someone – or perhaps each of a set of people - “the black container”. We have quoted one of such *riwāyāt* in the last chapter. We will here proceed to examine all the other existing Sunnī *riwāyāt* on “the black container”.

Ibn Asākir (d. 571 H) records:

أخبرنا أبو القاسم يحيى بن بطريق بن بشرى وأبو محمد عبد الكريم بن حمزة قالا أنا أبو الحسن بن مكي أنا أبو القاسم المؤمل بن أحمد بن محمد الشيباني نا يحيى بن محمد بن صاعد نا بندار نا محمد بن جعفر نا شعبة عن سلمة عن زيد بن وهب عن علي قال ما لي ومال هذا الحميت الأسود قال ونا يحيى بن محمد نا بندار نا محمد بن جعفر نا شعبة عن سلمة قال قال سمعت أبا الزعراء يحدث عن علي عليه السلام قال ما لي ومال هذا الحميت الأسود

Abū al-Qāsim Yaḥyā b. Baṭrīq b. Bushrā and Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Ḥamzah – Abū al-Ḥasan b. Makkī – Abū al-Qāsim al-Muammal b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Shaybānī – Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ṣā’id – Būndār – Muḥammad b. Ja’far – Shu’bah – Salamah – Zayd b. Wahb:

‘Alī said, “What do I have to do with this black container?”

And Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad – Bundār – Muḥammad b. Ja'far – Shu'bah
– Salamah – Abū al-Za'rā:

'Alī, *'alaihi al-salām*, said: "What do I have to do with this black container?"⁸¹

These ones are even more redundant than the previous one. No information whatsoever is given on the "black container". Who was he? What did he do? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! If we connected them with the other report, then we would have the identity of the "black container" as simply *Ibn al-Sandā* and his crime as telling lies upon Allāh and His Messenger, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa ālihi*. But, who was that even?!

The final Sunnī *rimāyah* on the "black container" is this one, reported by Imām Ibn Abī Khaythamah (d. 279 H):

حدثنا عمرو بن مرزوق قال أنا شعبة عن سلمة بن كهيل عن زيد بن وهب قال قال علي [مالي] ولهذا الحميت الأسود يعني عبد الله بن سبأ وكان يقع في أبي بكر وعمر

كذا قال : عن سلمة عن زيد بن وهب

'Amr b. Marzūq – Shu'bah – Salamah b. Kuhayl – Zayd b. Wahb:

'Alī said, "[What do I have to do] with this black container?". He meant 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā and he used to attack Abū Bakr and 'Umar.

That was how he said: from Salamah from Zayd b. Wahb.⁸²

Imām Ibn Asākir also reports:

أخبرنا أبو محمد بن طائوس وأبو يعلى حمزة بن الحسن بن المفرج قالوا أنا أبو القاسم بن أبي العلاء أنا أبو محمد بن أبي نصر أنا خيثمة بن سليمان نا أحمد بن زهير بن

⁸¹ Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi'ī, *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: 'Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, p. 7

⁸² Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Abī Khaythamah Zuhayr b. Ḥarb, *Tārīkh Ibn Abī Khaythamah* (al-Farūq al-Ḥadīthiyah li al-Ṭabā'ah wa al-Nashr; 1st edition, 1424 H), vol. 3, p. 177, # 4358

حرب نا عمرو بن مرزوق أنا شعبة عن سلمة بن كهيل عن زيد قال قال علي بن
أبي طالب ما لي ولهذا الحميت الأسود يعني عبد الله بن سبأ وكان يقع في أبي بكر
وعمر

Abū Muḥammad b. Tāwūs and Abū Ya'lā Ḥamzah b. al-Ḥasan b. al-
Mufarrāj – Abū al-Qāsim b. Abī al-'Alā – Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr
– Khaythamah b. Sulaymān – Aḥmad b. Zuhayr b. Ḥarb – 'Amr b.
Marzūq – Shu'bah – Salamah b. Kuhayl – Zayd:

'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib said, "What do I have to do with this black
container?". He meant 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā and he used to attack
Abū Bakr and 'Umar.⁸³

This report has some serious problems. First and foremost, it is *mudraj*
(interpolated). The sentence "He meant 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā and he used to
attack Abū Bakr and 'Umar" was inserted by a narrator, and we have no
explicit proof of who it was. It could have been any of the narrators from
Amr b. Marzūq to Zayd b. Wahb. With no solid evidence to pinpoint a
particular narrator as the source of the interpolation, it is impossible to rely
upon it as an eye-witness testimony. So, that identification is *da'if*.

Meanwhile, we have already seen the version of the *athar* transmitted by
Muḥammad b. Ja'far from Shu'bah from Salamah from Zayd. It does NOT
contain the last phrase above, identifying the "black container" explicitly as
'Abd Allāh b. Sabā, and explaining his lies upon Allāh and His Messenger as
his attacks on Abū Bakr and 'Umar! Therefore, neither Shu'bah, nor
Salamah, nor Zayd, was the source of that addition. Rather, the only
possible origin of that interpolation was 'Amr b. Marzūq. This then rightly
leads to the conclusion that the *idraj* is NOT an eye-witness account. By
contrast, it was made by someone who was disconnected from the reported
incident by about one century! That confirms its invalidity.

Moreover, 'Amr b. Marzūq in the chain is *da'if*. Al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 852 H) says
about him:

عمرو بن مرزوق الباهلي أبو عثمان البصري أثنى عليه سليمان بن حرب وأحمد بن
حنبل وقال يحيى بن معين ثقة مأمون ووثقه ابن سعد وأما علي بن المديني فكان

⁸³ Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi'i, *Tarikh
Madinah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: 'Alī Shīrī], vol. 29, pp. 7-8

يقول اتركوا حديثه وقال القواريري كان يحيى بن سعيد لا يرضى عمرو بن مرزوق
وقال الساجي كان أبو الوليد يتكلم فيه وقال ابن عمار والعجلي ليس بشئ وقال
الدارقطني كثير الوهم

قلت: لم يخرج عنه البخاري في الصحيح سوى حديثين أحدهما حديثه عن شعبة
عن عمرو بن مرة عن عروة عن أبي موسى في فضل عائشة وهو عنده بمتابعة آدم
بن أبي إياس وغندر وغيرها عن شعبة والثاني حديثه عن شعبة عن ابن أبي بكر
عن أنس في ذلك الكبائر مقرونا عنده بعبد الصمد عن شعبة فوضح أنه لم يخرج له
احتجاجا والله أعلم

'Amr b. Marzūq al-Bāhīlī, Abū 'Uthmān al-Baṣrī: Sulaymān b. Ḥarb
and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal extolled him; and Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn said, "*Thiqah*
(trustworthy), reliable" and Ibn Sa'd declared him *thiqah*
(trustworthy). As for 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, he used to say, "**Reject his
aḥādīth!**" Al-Qawārīrī also said, "Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd was not pleased with
'Amr b. Marzūq". Al-Sājī said, "Abū al-Walīd used to criticize him".
Both Ibn 'Ammār and al-'Ijlī said, "**He is nothing**". And al-
Dāraquṭnī said, "**He hallucinated A LOT**".

I say: al-Bukhārī has not narrated from him in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* except two
ḥadīths only. One of them is his *ḥadīth* from Shu'bah, from 'Amr b.
Marrāh, from 'Urwah, from Abū Mūsā concerning the merit of
'Āishah, and with him, it is with him through the *mutāba'at* of Ādam
b. Abī Iyās, Ghandār and others from Shu'bah. In his second *ḥadīth*
from Shu'bah from Ibn Abī Bakr from Anās concerning that *al-
Kabāir*, he is conjoined (in the chain) with 'Abd al-Ṣamad from
Shu'bah, with him (i.e. al-Bukhārī). **So, it becomes clear that he did
NOT narrate from him as a *ḥujjah* (proof), and Allāh knows
best.**⁸⁴

If a narrator is *thiqah* (trustworthy), but hallucinates *a lot*, then his
uncorroborated reports are *ḍa'īf*. No wonder, al-Bukhārī (d. 256 H) did not
accept 'Amr b. Marzūq as a *ḥujjah*, and only conjoined him with others
from Shu'bah in the chains. Therefore, the above chain of 'Amr b. Marzūq
– in which he has stood alone without support – is *ḍa'īf*.

⁸⁴ Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī al-Shāfi'ī, *Hadī al-Sārī
Muqaddimah Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī; 1st edition, 1408 H), pp. 431-
432

However, some of our Sunnī brothers attempt to defend 'Amr by quoting these further submissions of al-Ḥāfiẓ:

قال أبو زرعة سمعت أحمد بن حنبل وقلت له ان علي بن المدني يتكلم في عمرو ابن مرزوق فقال عمرو رجل صالح لا أدري ما يقول علي ... قال أبو زرعة وسمعت سليمان ابن حرب وذكر عمرو بن مرزوق فقال جاء بما ليس عندهم ففسدوه وقال الفضل بن زياد سأل عنه أبو عبيد الله الحداني عن أحمد بن حنبل فقال ثقة مأمون فتشنا على ما قيل فيه فلم نجد له أصلا

Abū Zur'ah said: I heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and I said to him that 'Alī b. al-Madīnī criticized 'Amr b. Marzūq. He said, " 'Amr is a righteous man. I do not know what 'Alī says" ... Abū Zur'ah said: I also heard Sulaymān b. Ḥarb and he mentioned 'Amr b. Marzūq and said, "He came with what they did not have. So, they envied him." Al-Faḍl b. Ziyād said: Abū 'Ubayd Allāh al-Ḥadānī asked about him from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and he said, "Trustworthy, reliable. We investigated what whas said about him, and we did not find any basis for it."⁸⁵

Then, our opponents claim through these that all the criticisms against 'Amr were due to envy! However, this line of argument does not offer much help to our Sunnī brothers. Sulaymān b. Harb (d. 224 H) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 H) were obviously referring to the contemporaries of 'Amr in their objections. It is possible that *some* of those people were indeed influenced by envy in their castigation of him. It is equally possible that Sulaymān and Aḥmad were heavily biased in favour of him, or were both unable to conduct sufficient probes to determine the truth about him. In any case, what we primarily rely upon against him is from Imām al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385 H) and Imām al-Ḥākim (d. 403 H), later scholars who apparently had investigated his reports and had then drawn their conclusions. Obviously, the charge of envy does not affect the duo. Al-Ḥāfiẓ submits about 'Amr:

وقال ابن عمار الموصلي ليس بشئ وقال العجلي عمرو ابن مرزوق بصري ضعيف يحدث عن شعبة ليس بشئ وقال الحاكم عن الدارقطني صدوق كثير الوهم وقال الحاكم سيئ الحفظ

⁸⁵ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tabdhīb al-Tabdhīb* (Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 8, p. 88, # 160

Ibn ‘Ammār al-Mawṣilī said: “**He is nothing.**” Al-‘Ijlī said, “ **‘Amr b. Marzūq Baṣrī is *ḍa’if*.** He narrated from Shu’bah. **He was nothing.** Al-Ḥākim narrated that al-Dāraquṭnī said: “Very truthful. **He hallucinated A LOT.**” And al-Ḥākim said, “**He had a defective memory.**”⁸⁶

Certainly, the reports of a narrator like this are *ḍa’if*, without doubt! Most importantly, the criticisms against him are “explained”. Therefore, they take precedence over any praise of him.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 89, # 160

5 HITTING THE FINAL NAIL

THE *WIṢĀYAH* AND THE *RAJ'AH*

The aim of those who ceaselessly peddle the Ibn Sabā fables is primarily to prove:

1. that he was the origin of the claim that Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī, *‘alaihi al-salām*, was declared *khalfah* by his Prophet, *ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ālihi*; and
2. that he founded the claim that *khilāfah* belongs exclusively to ‘Alī and the offspring of Muḥammad; and
3. that he was the first to express belief in *al-raj’ah*.

However, even in the authentic Sunnī *aḥādīth*, evidence can be produced to establish that belief in the *khilāfah* of the Ahl al-Bayt, *‘alaihim al-salām*, as well as in *al-raj’ah*, was part of the *original* teachings of Islām. For instance, Imām Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim (d. 287 H) records:

ثنا محمد بن المنثري، حدثنا يحيى بن حماد، عن أبي عوانة، عن يحيى بن سليم أبي بلج
عن عمرو بن ميمون، عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي:
أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنك لست نبيا وأنت خليفتي في كل مؤمن من
بعدي.

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā – Yahyā b. Ḥammād – Abū ‘Awānah –
Yahyā b. Sulaym Abū Balj – ‘Amr b. Maymūn – Ibn ‘Abbās: **The
Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, said to ‘Alī:** “You are to me

of the status of Hārūn to Mūsā, with the exception that you are not a prophet. **And you are my *khalīfah* over every believer after me.**"⁸⁷

Dr. al-Jawābirah says:

إسناده حسن. رجاله رجال الشيخين غير أبي بلج واسمه يحيى بن سليم بن بلج، قال الحافظ: صدوق ربما أخطأ. وله شواهد

Its chain is *ḥasan*. Its narrators are narrators of the two Shaykhs, except Abū Balj, and his name is Yaḥyā b. Sulaym b. Balj. Al-Ḥāfiẓ said: "*Ṣadūq* (very truthful), *maybe* he made mistakes." **There are witnesses for it (i.e. the *ḥadīth*).**"⁸⁸

‘Allāmah al-Albānī (d. 1420 H) also comments on the *sanad*:

إسناده حسن. ورجاله ثقات رجال الشيخين غير أبي بلج واسمه يحيى بن سليم بن بلج قال الحافظ: "صدوق ربما أخطأ."

Its chain is *ḥasan*. Its narrators are trustworthy, and are narrators of the two Shaykhs (i.e. al-Bukhārī and Muslim) except Abū Balj. His name is Yaḥyā b. Sulaym b. Balj. Al-Ḥāfiẓ said: "*Ṣadūq* (very truthful), *maybe* he made mistakes."⁸⁹

Assessing the same chain, Imām al-Ḥākim (d. 403 H) declares:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This *ḥadīth* has a ***ṣaḥīḥ* chain**.⁹⁰

And Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748 H) seconds him:

⁸⁷ Abū Bakr b. Abī ‘Āṣim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Mukhlid al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Sunnah* (Dār al-Ṣamī‘ī li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘) [annotator: Dr. Bāsim b. Fayṣal al-Jawābirah], vol. 1, pp. 799-800, # 1222

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹ Abū Bakr b. Abī ‘Āṣim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Mukhlid al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Sunnah* (al-Maktab al-Islāmī; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī], vol. 2, p. 565, # 1188

⁹⁰ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā], vol. 3, p. 143, # 4652

صحيح

Ṣaḥīḥ.⁹¹

‘Allāmah Aḥmad Shākir (d. 1377 H) too has the same verdict on same *isnād*:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.⁹²

And Imām al-Būṣayrī (d. 840 H) holds the same view, concerning the chain:

سند صحيح

A *ṣaḥīḥ* chain.⁹³

This *ḥadīth* is explicit, straightforward, and authentic⁹⁴. It leaves no room for doubt or manipulation. It absolutely establishes that Imām ‘Alī was indeed the designated *khalīfah* of Muḥammad, the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds.

‘Allāmah al-Albānī has a second *ḥadīth* for our research:

إني تارك فيكم خليفتين: كتاب الله حبل ممدود ما بين السماء والأرض وعترتي أهل بيتي ولهنما لن يتفرقا حتى يرثا علي الحوض

I am leaving behind over you two *khalīfahs*: the Book of Allāh - a rope stretching between the heaven and the earth – and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until

⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁹² Abū ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī, *Musnad* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth; 1st edition, 1416 H) [annotator: Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir], vol. 1, p. 331, # 3062

⁹³ Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Ismā‘īl al-Būṣayrī, *Itihāf al-Khiyarah al-Mabarrah bi Zawāid al-Masānid al-‘Ashara* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 7, p. 184, # 6630

⁹⁴ This author has published an entire book entitled *On the Khalīfah of ‘Alī over Abū Bakr: A Dictionary of Ṣaḥīḥ Sunnī Aḥādīth* in which he has explored the above *ḥadīth* and several similar others in great detail.

they meet me at the Lake-Font.⁹⁵

Then, the ‘Allāmah comments:

صحيح

*Ṣaḥīḥ*⁹⁶

On the same page, al-Albānī copies another similar *ḥadīth*:

إني تارك فيكم ما إن تمسكتم به لن تضلوا بعدي أحدهما أعظم من الآخر كتاب الله
 جبل ممدود من السماء إلى الأرض وعترتي أهل بيتي ولن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي
 الحوض فانظروا كيف تخلفوني فيها

I am leaving behind over you that which if you adhere to it you will never go astray after me, one of them both is greater than the other: **the Book of Allāh** – a rope stretching from the heaven to the earth – **and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt**. Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font. Therefore, watch carefully how you treat them in my absence.⁹⁷

Again, ‘Allāmah al-Albānī says:

صحيح

*Ṣaḥīḥ*⁹⁸

This *ḥadīth* too grants and limits the *kebilafah* to ‘Alī and his offspring through Sayyidah Fāṭimah⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn b. al-Ḥajj Nūḥ b. Tajāṭī b. Ādam al-Ashqūdī al-Albānī, *ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’ al-ṣaḡbir wa Ziyādātuhu* (Al-Maktab al-Islāmī), vol. 1, p. 482, # 2457

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 482, # 2458

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁹⁹ This author has a book on the two *ḥadīths*, entitled *Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn: The Deposed Will of the Last Prophet to Humanity*. In it, he has done an extensive research on the authenticity, meaning and history of the *ḥadīths*.

We therefore ask our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah, especially the Salafiyyah: are you going to play your "Ibn Sabā" card against the Messenger of Allāh too?!

With regards to the second issue, there is need for some little explanations in order to make the matter clearer. The word *al-raj'ah* literally means "the return". Any "return" to anything is a *raj'ah*. For instance, an ex-Muslim who "returns" to Islām has done a *raj'ah* back to the true faith. In the same manner, a traveller who "returns" home has done a *raj'ah*. Technically, however, *al-raj'ah* is the "return" of *any* dead person into this world *through resurrection*. It is therefore completely different from other concepts such as rebirth or reincarnation. It is the same body, with the same soul, that returns to this world from *Barzakh* by Allāh's Command. At a more specific level, *al-raj'ah* – in Shi'ī theology – is the "return" after death of certain people to this earth – through resurrection - during the "End Times" period. Another word for this, in Shi'i terminology, is *al-karrah*¹⁰⁰.

There is, without doubt, a general rule set in the Book of Allāh:

حتى إذا جاء أحدهم الموت قال رب ارجعون لعلي أعمل صالحا فيما تركت كلا إنها كلمة هو قائلها ومن ورائهم برزخ إلى يوم يبعثون

Until when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord! Send me back, so that I may do good in that which I have left behind!" No! It is but a word that he speaks, **and behind them is *Barzakh* until the Day when they will be resurrected.**¹⁰¹

So, anyone who dies is prevented from ever returning to this world. He is rather locked behind the *Barzakh* till *al-Qiyāmah*. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 H) states under the above verse:

وقال مجاهد: البرزخ: الحاجز ما بين الدنيا والاخرة. وقال محمد بن كعب: البرزخ: ما بين الدنيا والاخرة ليسوا مع أهل الدنيا ياكلون ويشربون ، ولا مع أهل الاخرة يجازون بأعمالهم. وقال أبو صخر: البرزخ: المقابر ، لا هم في الدنيا ، ولا هم في الاخرة ، فهم مقبون إلى يوم يبعثون .

¹⁰⁰ The word *al-karrah* has been used in the Book of Allāh to mean the return of a dead person to life on the earth through resurrection after death. See Qur'an 2:167, 26:102 and 39:58

¹⁰¹ Qur'an 23:99-100

Mujāhid said: “The *Barzakh* is a barrier between this world and the Hereafter.” Muḥammad b. Ka’b said, “The *Barzakh* is what is between this world and the Hereafter. They are not from the people of this world who eat and drink, and are not with the people of the Hereafter who are rewarded according to their deeds.” Abū Ḍakhr said, “**The *Barzakh* refers to the graves. They are not in this world and they ARE NOT in the Hereafter. They will remain there till the Day of Resurrection.**”¹⁰²

However, Allāh has provided some exceptions to this general rule – and those are the instances of *al-raj’ah*. Examples of them are given in His Book. For instance, Allāh states:

وإذ قلتم يا موسى لن نؤمن لك حتى نرى الله جمهرة فأخذتكم الصاعقة وأتم تنظرون
ثم بعثناكم من بعد موتكم لعلكم تشكرون

And when you said, “O Mūsā! We shall never believe in you until we see Allāh plainly.” But you were seized with a thunderbolt while you were looking. **Then, We resurrected you after your death**, so that you may be grateful.¹⁰³

And:

ألم تر إلى الذين خرجوا من ديارهم وهم ألوف حذر الموت فقال لهم الله موتوا ثم
أحياهم

Did you not see those who went forth from their homes in thousands, fearing death? Allāh said to them, “Die”. **Then, He resurrected them.**¹⁰⁴

And:

أو كالذي مر على قرية وهي خاوية على عروشها قال أنى يحيي هذه الله بعد موتها
فأماته الله مائة عام ثم بعثه

¹⁰² Abū al-Fidā Ismā’īl b. ‘Umar b. Kathīr al-Qurshī al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* (Dār al-ṭaybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sāmī b. Muḥammad Salāmah], vol. 5, p. 494-495

¹⁰³ Qur’ān 2:55-56

¹⁰⁴ Qur’ān 2:243

Or like he who passed by a town and it had tumbled over its roofs. He said: “Oh! How will Allāh ever bring it to life after its death?” **So, Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years, and then resurrected him.**¹⁰⁵

The Qur’ān also quotes Allāh as having said to ‘Īsā, one of the Isrāīlīte prophets:

وإذ تخرج الموتى ياذني

And when **you resurrect the dead** with My Permission¹⁰⁶

Prophet ‘Īsā himself said this to his people, as reported by the Book of Allāh:

وأحيي الموتى بإذن الله

And **I resurrect the dead** by Allāh’s Permission.¹⁰⁷

These are all instances of people “returning” from *Barzakh* into this world through resurrection. They are all instances of *al-raj’ah*.

We see from these verses that *al-karrah* occurred in the previous *Ummahs* before ours, especially among the Isrāīlītes. There is significance in this fact for our research. This is on account of this *ḥadīth*, documented by Imām al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 H):

حدثنا محمود بن غيلان حدثنا أبو داود الحفري عن سفیان الثوري عن عبد الرحمن بن زياد الأفريقي عن عبد الله بن يزيد عن عبد الله بن عمرو قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ليأتين على أمتي ما أتى على بني إسرائيل حذو النعل بالنعل حتى إن كان منهم من أتى أمه علانية لكان في أمتي من يصنع ذلك وإن بني إسرائيل تفرقت على ثنتين وسبعين ملة وتفرق أمتي على ثلاث وسبعين ملة كلهم في النار إلا ملة واحدة قالوا ومن هي يا رسول الله قال ما أنا عليه وأصحابي

¹⁰⁵ Qur’ān 2:259

¹⁰⁶ Qur’ān 5:110

¹⁰⁷ Qur’ān 3:49

Maḥmūd b. Ghilān – Abū Dāwud al-Ḥafarī – Sufyān al-Thawrī – ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Ziyād al-Afrīqī – ‘Abd Allāh b. Yazīd – ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr:

The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, said: **“Verily, everything that occurred to the offspring of Isrāīl will occur to my *Ummah* in identical manners, such that if any of them had sexual intercourse with his mother publicly, there will certainly be in my *Ummah* someone who will do that.** Verily, the offspring of Isrāīl divided into seventy-two religions; and my *Ummah* will divide into seventy-three religions, all of them will be in the Fire except one religion.” They said, “Who are those, O Messenger?” He replied, “That which I and my Ṣaḥābah follow.”¹⁰⁸

‘Allāmah al-Albānī comments:

حسن

*Ḥasan*¹⁰⁹

Of course, *al-raj’ah* occurred to the offspring of Isrāīl too. Therefore, it *certainly* is part of our *Ummah* as well.

The Qur’ān too proclaims:

سنة الله في الذين خلوا من قبل ولن تجد لسنة الله تبديلا

That was the *Sunnah* of Allāh in the case of those passed away of old,

¹⁰⁸ Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Sulamī al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jamī’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī) [annotator: Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī], vol. 5, p. 26, # 2641. This authentic *ḥadīth* establishes some fundamental principles. First, it shows that the similar occurrences between our *Ummah* and that of the Isrāīlites may not be 100% identical. What matters most is the basic fact common to both examples as well as the substantial similarity between them. For instance, the offspring of Isrāīl divided into 72 religions. However, our own *Ummah* will divide into 73 religions. 73, of course, is not the same as 72, even though they are close together. Yet, the basic fact remains: the Isrāīlites divided, and we too are divided. Another crucial principle from this *ḥadīth* is that anything that a Ṣaḥābī said or did – which was never said or done by the Prophet – is misguidance, from one of the 72 heretical religions. The Messenger was careful to emphasise that the truth is not what his Ṣaḥābah alone were upon, but what he and his Ṣaḥābah followed *together*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

and you will not find any change in the *Sunnah* of Allāh.¹¹⁰

And:

سنة الله التي قد خلت من قبل ولن تجد لسنة الله تبديلا

That has been the *Sunnah* of Allāh already with those who passed away before. **And you will not find any change in the *Sunnah* of Allāh.**¹¹¹

Al-Raj'ah was without doubt part of the *Sunnah* of our Lord with the previous *Ummahs*. Obviously, it is compulsorily part of His *Sunnah* with our *Ummah* too. There is never any change in the *Sunnah* of Allāh with the various *Ummahs*.

¹¹⁰ Qur'ān 33:62

¹¹¹ Qur'ān 48:23

6 ‘AQĪDAH AL-RAJ’ AH BETWEEN ‘UMAR AND ‘ALĪ

‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Sunnī *khalīfah*, was one of the earliest to publicly declare belief in *al-raj’ah*, long before even the unproved profession of the same *‘aqidah* by Ibn Sabā. Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 H) records:

حدثنا إسماعيل بن عبد الله حدثنا سليمان بن بلال عن هشام ابن عروة عن عروة
بن الزبير عن عائشة رضي الله عنها زوج النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم: أن رسول
الله صلى الله عليه و سلم مات وأبو بكر بالسنع - قال إسماعيل يعني بالعالية -
فقام عمر يقول والله ما مات رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قالت وقال عمر
والله ما كان يقع في نفسي إلا ذاك وليبعثنه الله فليقطعن أيدي رجال وأرجلهم.

Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd Allāh – Sulaymān b. Bilāl – Hishām b. ‘Urwah – ‘Urwah
b. al-Zubayr – ‘Āishah, may Allāh be pleased with her, the wife of the
Prophet, peace be upon him:

The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, died while Abū Bakr was
at a place called al-Sunah (i.e. al-‘Āliyah). ‘Umar stood up, saying, “I
swear by Allāh! The Messenger of Allāh is not dead!” She (‘Āishah)
narrated: ‘Umar said, “I swear by Allāh! Nothing occurred to my mind
except that. **Verily! Allāh will RESURRECT¹¹² him and he will cut**

¹¹² A Sunnī brother raises an objection to our translation of *yab’ath* as “resurrect”. He says that it only means “send” in this context, and not “resurrect”. Meanwhile, Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, the Sunnī translator of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, has also rendered the word as

the hands and legs of some men."¹¹³

It is this very belief that has been attributed to 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā in the *mawḍū'* (fabricated) report documented by Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H):

فقال لهم فيما يقول لعجب من يزعم أن عيسى يرجع ويكذب بأن محمدا يرجع وقد قال
الله عز وجل إن الذي فرض عليك القرآن لرادك إلى معاد فمحمد أحق بالرجوع من
عيسى قال فقبل ذلك عنه ووضع لهم الرجعة فتكلموا فيها

Then, he said to them, "It is strange of he who claims that 'Īsā will return but rejects that Muḥammad will return. Meanwhile, Allāh the Almighty has said, 'Verily, He Who has ordained the Qur'ān upon you (O Muḥammad) will surely bring you back to a place of return' (28:85). As such, **Muḥammad is more entitled to return than 'Īsā.**" So, it was accepted from him, and he created for them (the doctrine of) *al-raj'ah*, and they spoke about it.¹¹⁴

It is indeed strange that the Ahl al-Sunnah ignore 'Umar and attack Ibn Sabā instead for this *'uqūdab*, despite the *complete* lack of evidence to establish that the latter *ever* believed it?! Indeed, wonders never end.

"resurrect" (see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, English Translation, Volume 5, Book 57, Number 19). The alternative translation – "send" – which is offered by our Sunnī brother makes no sense. For instance, 'Umar's words would look like this: "Verily! Allāh will SEND him and he will cut the hands and legs of some men." But, Allāh has *already* sent His Prophet decades before that period! Or, did 'Umar not believe, up till that moment, that Muḥammad was a messenger sent by Allāh? What may be said here is that 'Umar was double-speaking, perhaps due to the "shock" which he allegedly suffered as a result of the "sudden" death of the Prophet, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihī wa 'alīhī*, or for some other reasons that were well-known to his Lord. He was denying and also affirming the Messenger's death at the same time! If he did not die, how would he resurrect? Was all this only a tactical drama by 'Umar to stall time, in order to allow a certain plan to materialize? We believe so.

Interestingly, while 'Umar later suddenly "believed" the death of the Prophet of Allāh once Abū Bakr arrived and spoke, we have been unable to locate any authentic Sunnī evidence showing that he ever recanted his other claim about the future *raj'ah* of Muḥammad.

¹¹³ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm b. Mughīrah al-Bukhārī al-Ju'fī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Baghā], vol. 3, p. 1341, # 3467

¹¹⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1407 H), vol. 2, p. 647

Meanwhile, there is also good Sunnī evidence to support a theory that Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *‘alaihi al-salām*, equally believed in his own *raj’ah* before the *Qiyāmah*. Imām al-Ṭabarī again records:

حدثنا محمد بن المثنى، قال ثنا محمد بن جعفر، قال ثنا شعبة، عن القاسم بن أبي بزة، عن أبي الطفيل، قال سمعت عليا وسأله عن ذي القرنين أنبيا كان؟ قال كان عبدا صالحا، أحب الله فأحبه، وناصح الله فنصحه، فبعته الله إلى قومه، فضربوه ضربتين في رأسه، فسمي ذا القرنين، وفيكم اليوم مثله.

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā – Muḥammad b. Ja’far – Shu’bah – al-Qāsim b. Abī Bazzah – Abū al-Ṭufayl:

I heard ‘Alī while they asked him about Dhū al-Qarnayn: “Was he a prophet?” He replied, “He was a righteous servant. He loved Allāh and Allāh loved him. He sought the guidance of Allāh and He guided him. Then, Allāh sent him to his people. **But, they struck him twice on his head. As a result, he was named Dhū al-Qarnayn. And among you today is an example of him.**¹¹⁵

Commenting upon this exact *riwāyah*, Prof. Ibn Yāsīn pronounces:

وسنده صحيح

¹¹⁵ Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Ja’rī b. Yazīd b. Kathīr b. Ghālīb al-Āmulī al-Ṭabarī, *Jamī al-Bayān fī Tāwīl al-Qur’ān* (Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: Ṣidqī Jamīl al-‘Attār], vol. 16, pp. 12-13. A Sunnī opponent makes some very ridiculous claims about this *riwāyah*. He is unable to reject its authenticity. So, he alleges that it is “very possible” that Amīr al-Mūminīn learnt this *ḥadīth* from the Israelites! Alas, Imām ‘Alī was, without any doubt, NOT among those Ṣaḥābah who used to go to the Israelites to learn their religion! *Mawqūf* reports bordering on *al-ghayb* – like this one – from Ṣaḥābah like ‘Alī are graded *marfū’* (i.e. from the Prophet). Even a beginner in Sunnī *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* knows this! Our Sunnī friend also claims that the Prophet was once asked about Dhū al-Qarnayn, and he did not know whether Dhū al-Qarnayn was a prophet or not. But, the explanation of thing is very simple. The Messenger of Allāh made that statement *before* Allāh informed him of the status of Dhū al-Qarnayn. However, when He eventually told him, he too narrated it to his Ṣaḥābah. That is the logical explanation in view of the *ahādīth* of Amīr al-Mūminīn.

Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.¹¹⁶

So , the matter is clear and undisputable.

This *ṣaḥīḥ athar* proves the following:

1. Dhū al-Qarnayn, *‘alaihi al-salām*, was not a prophet. But, he was a righteous servant loved by Allāh, and he was rightly guided by Him.
2. He was given that name only because he was *fatally* struck twice on his head.
3. Even though he was not a prophet, Allāh nonetheless “sent” him to his people, like a prophet. This shows that non-prophets can be given *some* qualities and jobs of prophets.

Imām al-Ṭabarī further presents:

حدثنا محمد بن بشار، قال ثنا يحيى، عن سفيان، عن حبيب بن أبي ثابت، عن أبي الطفيل، قال سئل علي رضوان الله عليه عن ذي القرنين، فقال كان عبدا ناصح الله فناصره، فدعا قومه إلى الله، فضربوه على قرنيه فمات، فأحياه الله، فدعا قومه إلى الله، فضربوه على قرنيه فمات، فسمي ذا القرنين.

Muḥammad b. Bashār – Yahyā – Sufyān – Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit – Abū al-Ṭufayl:

‘Alī, *riḍwānullāh ‘alaihi*, was asked about Dhū al-Qarnayn, and he replied, “He was a servant who sought the guidance of Allāh, and He guided him. He called his people to Allāh. **So, they struck him on his qarn, AND HE DIED. But, Allāh RESURRECTED him, and he (again) called his people to Allāh. They (once again) struck him on his qarn, AND HE DIED. Therefore, he was named Dhū al-Qarnayn.**¹¹⁷

This report too is *ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 852 H) states about the first narrator:

¹¹⁶ Prof. Dr. Ḥikmat b. Bashīr b. Yāsīn, *Mawsū‘at al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Masbūr min al-Tafsīr bi al-Māthūr* (Madīnah: Dār al-Māthar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘ wa al-Ṭabā‘at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 3, p. 322

¹¹⁷ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Ja‘īr b. Yazīd b. Kathīr b. Ghālib al-Āmulī al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān fī Tawīl al-Qur‘ān* (Dār al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: Ṣidqī Jamīl al-‘Attār], vol. 16, p. 12

محمد بن بشار بن عثمان العبدي البصري أبو بكر بNDAR ثقة

Muḥammad b. Bashār b. ‘Uthmān al-‘Abdī al-Baṣrī, Abū Bakr Būndār:
Thiqah (trustworthy).¹¹⁸

Concerning the second narrator, he also says:

يحيى بن سعيد بن فروخ بفتح الفاء وتشديد الراء المضمومة وسكون الواو ثم معجمة
التميمي أبو سعيد القطان البصري ثقة متقن حافظ إمام قدوة

Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd b. Farrūkh al-Tamīmī, Abū Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān al-Baṣrī:
Thiqah (trustworthy), extremely precise, a *ḥadīth* scientist, an Imām,
a leader.¹¹⁹

On the third narrator, al-Ḥāfiẓ submits:

سفيان بن سعيد بن مسروق الثوري أبو عبد الله الكوفي ثقة حافظ فقيه عابد إمام
حجة

Sufyān b. Sa‘īd b. Masrūq al-Thawrī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Kūfī: **Thiqah**
(trustworthy), a *ḥadīth* scientist, a jurist, a devout worshipper of Allāh,
an Imām, a *ḥujjah (authority)*.¹²⁰

The fourth narrator is *thiqah* (trustworthy) too, as al-Ḥāfiẓ declares:

حبيب بن أبي ثابت قيس ويقال هند بن دينار الأسدي مولا هم أبو يحيى الكوفي ثقة
فقيه جليل وكان كثير الإرسال والتدليس

Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit Qays, and he is called Hind, b. Dīnār al-Asadī,
their freed slave, Abū Yaḥyā al-Kūfī: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a jurist,
meritorious. He used to do a lot of *irsāl* and *tadlis*.¹²¹

The only problem here is that Ḥabīb was a *mudalis*, and he has narrated in an *‘an-‘an* manner from Abū al-Ṭufayl, *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu*. However, this

¹¹⁸ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tabḍīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā], vol. 2, p. 58, # 5772

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 303, # 7584

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 371, # 2452

¹²¹ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 183, # 1087

matter is resolved by the *mutāba'ab* of al-Qāsim b. Abī Bazzah, which has already been examined above. Therefore, the report of Ḥabīb is *ṣaḥiḥ* through the *mutāba'ab* of al-Qāsim.

Meanwhile, Imām Ibn Abī Shaybah (d. 235 H) has also documented a slightly more detailed *riwāyah* through the same narrators:

حدثنا يحيى بن سعيد عن سفيان عن حبيب بن أبي ثابت عن أبي الطفيل
قال: سئل علي عن ذي القرنين فقال: لم يكن نبيا ولا ملكا، ولكنه كان عبدا ناصح
الله فنصحه فدعا قومه إلى الله فضرب على قرنه الأيمن فمات فأحياه الله، ثم دعا
قومه إلى الله فضرب على قرنه الأيسر فمات فأحياه الله فسمي ذا القرنين.

Yahyā b. Sa'īd – Sufyān – Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit – Abū al-Ṭufayl:

'Alī was asked about Dhū al-Qarnayn, and he replied, "He was neither a prophet nor an angel. Rather, he was a servant who sought the guidance of Allāh, and He guided him. He called his people to Allāh. **So, he was struck on his right *qarn*, AND HE DIED. But, Allāh RESURRECTED him, and he (again) called his people to Allāh. He was (once again) struck on his left *qarn*, AND HE DIED. Then, Allāh RESURRECTED him (again). Therefore, he was named Dhū al-Qarnayn.**¹²²

Of course, the *sanad* is *ṣaḥiḥ* through its *mutāba'ab*, as we have already established.

Prof. Ibn Yāsīn quotes another report for us:

قال الضياء المقدسي: أخبرنا أبو المجد زاهر بن أحمد بن حامد بن أحمد الثقفى -
بقراءة علي عليه بأصهبان- قلت له: أخبركم أبو عبد الله الحسين بن عبد الملك ابن
الحسين الخلال -قراءة عليه وأنت تسمع- أنا الإمام أبو الفضل عبد الرحمن ابن أحمد
بن الحسن بن بندار الرازي المقرئ، أنا أبو الحسن أحمد بن إبراهيم ابن أحمد بن علي
بن فراس، ثنا أبو جعفر محمد بن إبراهيم الديلي، ثنا أبو عبيد الله سعيد بن عبد
الرحمن الخزومي، ثنا سفيان ابن عيينة عن ابن أبي حسين، عن أبي الطفيل قال:

¹²² 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shaybah Ibrāhīm b. 'Uthmān b. Abī Bakr b. Abī Shaybah al-Kūfī al-'Ubsī, *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah fī al-Aḥādīth wa al-Athār* (Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1409 H) [annotator: Prof. Sa'īd al-Lāhām], vol. 7, p. 468, # 4

سمعت ابن الكواء يسأل علي بن أبي طالب - رضي الله عنه - عن ذي القرنين فقال علي لم يكن نبياً ولا ملك، كان عبداً صالحاً، أحب الله فأحبه، وناصح الله فناصحه الله، بُعث إلى قومه فضربوه على قرنه فمات فبعثه الله، فسمى ذي القرنين.

Al-Ḍiyā al-Maqdisī said:

Abū al-Majd Zāhir b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamid b. Aḥmad al-Thaqafī – Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. al-Ḥusayn al-Khalāl – Imām Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bundār al-Rāzī al-Muqrī – Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Farās – Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Duyālī – Abū ‘Ubayd Allāh Sa’īd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Makhzūmī – Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah – Ibn Abī Ḥusayn – Abū al-Ṭufayl:

I heard Ibn al-Kawā asking ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allāh be pleased with him, about Dhū al-Qarnayn, and ‘Alī replied, “He was not a prophet, and he was not an angel. He was rather a righteous servant. He loved Allāh; so, He loved him too. He sought the guidance of Allāh; and so, He guided him. He was sent to his people. **But, they struck him on his *qarn* AND HE DIED. Then, Allāh RESURRECTED him, and he was thereby named Dhū al-Qarnayn.**¹²³

Giving the source, our professor states:

المختارة 175/2 ح 555) وصححه الحافظ ابن حجر بعد عزوه للمختارة للحافظ الضياء (الفتح 383/6).

(*Al-Mukhtarat* 2/175, # 555) and al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar declared it **ṣaḥīḥ** after attributing it to *al-Mukhtarat* of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyā (*al-Fath* 6/383)¹²⁴

These are the exact words of al-Ḥāfiẓ in his *Fath*:

¹²³ Prof. Dr. Ḥikmat b. Bashīr b. Yāsīn, *Mawsū‘at al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Masbūr min al-Tafsīr bi al-Mathbūr* (Madīnah: Dār al-Māthar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘ wa al-Ṭabā‘at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 3, p. 322

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

أخرجه سفیان بن عیینة في جامعه عن ابن أبي حسين عن أبي الطفيل نحوه وزاد
وناصح الله فناصره وفيه لم يكن نبيا ولا ملكا وسنده صحيح سمعناه في الأحاديث
المختارة للحافظ الضياء

Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah recorded it in his *Jāmi'* from Ibn Abī Ḥusayn from Abū al-Ṭufayl, and he added: "He sought the guidance of Allāh; and so, He guided him" and in it is "He was not a prophet, and he was not an angel". **Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ***. We heard it in *al-Aḥādīth al-Mukbtarat* of al-Ḥāfīz al-Ḍiyā.¹²⁵

Obviously, al-Ḥāfīz only declares the much shorter chain of Sufyān in his *Jāmi'* as *ṣaḥīḥ*. However, he confirms that what we find in *al-Aḥādīth al-Mukbtarat* of al-Ḍiyā is the same as that which was recorded by Sufyān in his book. Meanwhile, al-Ḥāfīz's *taṣḥīḥ* actually comes *before* his mention of al-Ḍiyā's book, contrary to the erroneous submission of our professor. In any case, this *ṣaḥīḥ* report is, apparently, an additional strengthening *mutaba'ah* for the *riwāyah* of Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit.

Imām Ibn Abī Āṣim (d. 287 H) here presents the seal of these *athār*:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة نا وكيع عن بسام عن أبي الطفيل عن علي رضي الله
عنه قال كان ذو القرنين عبدا صالحا نصح الله عز و جل فنصحه فضرب على قرنه
الأيمن فمات فأحياه الله عز و جل ثم ضرب على قرنه الأيسر فمات فأحياه الله عز
و جل وفيكم مثله

Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah – Wakī' – Bassām – Abū al-Ṭufayl – 'Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him:

Dhū al-Qarnayn was a righteous man. He sought the guidance of Allāh the Almighty, and He guided him. So, he was struck on his right *qarn*, AND HE DIED. But, Allāh the Almighty RESURRECTED him. Then, he was struck on his left *qarn*, AND HE DIED, and Allāh the Almighty RESURRECTED him (again). **And among you is an example of him.**¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fathī al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah li al-Ṭabā'ah wa al-Nashr; 2nd edition), vol. 6, p. 271

¹²⁶ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Amr b. Abī 'Āṣim al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Shaybānī, *al-Aḥād wa al-Mathānī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāyat; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Dr. Bāsim Fayṣal Aḥmad al-Jawābirah], vol. 1, p. 141, # 168

Concerning the first narrator, al-Ḥāfiẓ says:

عبد الله بن محمد بن أبي شيبة إبراهيم بن عثمان الواسطي الأصل أبو بكر بن أبي
شيبة الكوفي ثقة حافظ صاحب تصانيف

Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shaybah Ibrāhīm b. ‘Uthmān, of Wāsiṭī origin, Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah al-Kūfī: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a *ḥadīth* scientist, author of books.¹²⁷

On the second narrator, he states as well:

وكيع بن الجراح بن مليح الرؤاسي بضم الراء وهمزة ثم مملدة، أبو سفيان الكوفي ثقة
حافظ عابد

Wakī’ b. al-Jarāḥ b. Malīḥ al-Ruwāsī, Abū Sufyān al-Kūfī: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a *ḥadīth* scientist, a devout worshipper of Allāh.¹²⁸

And, about the last narrator, al-Ḥāfiẓ submits:

بسام بن عبد الله الصيرفي الكوفي أبو الحسن صدوق

Bassām b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣayrafī al-Kūfī, Abū al-Ḥasan: **Ṣadūq (very truthful)**.¹²⁹

So, the *isnād* is *ḥasan*, due to Bassām, and the *ḥadīth* itself is *ṣaḥīḥ* on account of its *mutāba’at* and *shawābīd*.

In the above *athar*, we read two interesting phrases:

وفيكم اليوم مثله.

And among you today is an example of him.

¹²⁷ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tabḍīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā], vol. 1, p. 528, # 3586

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. pp. 283-284, # 7441

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 124, # 663

And:

وفيكُم مثله

And among you is an example of him.

In simpler words, there was someone alive at that very moment who was an example of Dhū al-Qarnayn. That person too:

1. was not a prophet, but a righteous, sincere servant loved by Allāh;
2. sought the guidance of Allāh and was guided by Him;
3. though not a prophet, was “sent” by Allāh to his people; and
4. would be hit on the head and thereby killed, but would be resurrected by Allāh and then hit on the head again and murdered a second time.

Who was it? The answer is apparent, of course. If Allāh were to send any non-prophet to the *Ummah* at that point in time, it would have been none other than Amīr al-Mūminīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *‘alaihi al-salām*. He was the best creature alive – in all good qualities, especially in terms of piety, knowledge and guidance - at that moment. Therefore, ‘Alī could not have been referring to anyone except to himself in those statements, anyway. Besides, he was martyred by Ibn Muljam, *la’natullāh ‘alaihi*, who struck him on the head, like Dhū al-Qarnayn was. So, that too is a clear indication.

Imām Ibn Salām (d. 224 H), a grand ancient Sunnī *ḥadīth* linguist, has the same conclusion as well:

وإنما اخترت هذا التفسير على الأول لحديث عن علي نفسه هو عندي مفسر له ولنا
وذلك أنه ذكر ذا القرنين فقال: دعا قومه إلى عبادة الله فضربوه على قرنيه ضربتين
وفيكُم مثله. فنرى أنه أراد بقوله هذا نفسه - يعني أنني أدعو إلى الحق حتى أضرب
على رأسي ضربتين يكون فيهما قتلي.

I have only chosen this explanation instead of the first due to a *ḥadīth* from ‘Alī himself. It (the *ḥadīth*), in my view, explains it to us. And that is, he (‘Alī) mentioned Dhū al-Qarnayn and said, “He called his people to the worship of Allāh, and they struck him on his *qarn twice*. **And among you is an example of him**”. So, we see that he (‘Alī) was referring to himself with this statement of his – he meant: I will call to the Truth until I will be struck on my head twice. My death will be in

them.”¹³⁰

Imām Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606 H), a leading classical Sunnī *ḥadīth* linguist, also submits:

ومنه حديث علي وذكر قصة ذي القرنين ثم قال وفيكم مثله فيرى أنه إنما عنى نفسه
لأنه ضرب على رأسه ضربتين إحداها يوم الخندق والأخرى ضربة ابن ملجم

And from it is the *ḥadīth* of ‘Alī. He mentioned the story of Dhū al-Qarnayn, and then said: “And among you is an example of him.” **So, it is seen that he was only referring to himself because he was struck on his head twice:** one of them on the Day of al-Khandaq and the other was the strike of Ibn Muljam.¹³¹

This explanation of Ibn al-Athīr is slightly misleading. Dhū al-Qarnayn was given two *fatal* blows, which resulted in his deaths twice. Since ‘Alī was an example of him, then he too would be *fatally* struck twice. The blow on the Day of al-Khandaq was NOT *fatal*. So, it is automatically ruled out. Amīr al-Mūminīn was, of course, martyred by Ibn Muljam, who struck him on his head. But, he has not been resurrected by Allāh yet – as He did with Dhū al-Qarnayn. Therefore, the incident will definitely happen in the future. ‘Alī will come back, and will be fatally hit again on his death. He will die a second time, on the surface of this earth. Dhū al-Qarnayn was revived once more after the second death, and our *mawlā*, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, will still “return” after his own second death as well.

Imām al-Nasafī (d. 710 H) has this comment about the words of ‘Alī too:

وعن علي رضي الله عنه أنه قال: ليس بملك ولا نبي ولكن كان عبداً صالحاً ضرب
على قرنه الأيمن في طاعة الله فمات ثم بعثه الله فضرب على قرنه الأيسر فمات
فبعثه الله فسمي ذا القرنين وفيكم مثله أراد نفسه

It is narrated that ‘Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him, said (about Dhū al-Qarnayn): “He was neither an angel nor a prophet. But, he was a righteous servant. He was struck on his right *qarn* due to his obedience

¹³⁰ Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Salām al-Harwī, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (Haydarabad: Majlis Dāirah al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah; 1st edition, 1385 H), vol. 3, p. 80

¹³¹ Ibn al-Athīr, Abū Sa’ādāt al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1399 H) [annotators: Ṭāhir Aḥmad al-Zāwī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāhī], vol. 4, p. 52

of Allāh. So, he died. Then, Allāh resurrected him. But, he was (again) struck on his left *qarn* and he died. Then, Allāh resurrected him (once more). As a result, he was named Dhū al-Qarnayn. And there is an example of him among you.” **He meant himself.**¹³²

Meanwhile, there is a *shāhid* from the Messenger of Allāh, *ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘ālihi*, for the words of Amīr al-Mūminīn in the *athar*. Imām Aḥmad (d. 241 H) records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا عفان ثنا حماد بن سلمة ثنا محمد بن إسحاق عن محمد بن إبراهيم التيمي عن سلمة بن أبي الطفيل عن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال له يا علي ان لك كنزا من الجنة وانك ذو قرنيها

‘Abd Allāh (b. Aḥmad) – my father (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal) – ‘Affān – Ḥamād b. Salamah – Muḥammad b. Ishāq – Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Taymī – Salamah b. Abī al-Ṭufayl – ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allāh be pleased with him:

Verily, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “**O ‘Alī!** Surely, you are the owner of a treasure in Paradise, **and you are its Dhū al-Qarnayn.**”¹³³

Shaykh al-Arnāuṭ comments:

حسن لغيره

*Ḥasan li ghayrihī*¹³⁴

‘Allāmah al-Albānī (d. 1420 H) too says:

حسن لغيره

*Ḥasan li ghayrihī*¹³⁵

¹³² Abū al-Barakāt ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Nasafī, *Tafsīr al-Nasafī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāis; 2005 CE) [annotator: Shaykh Marwān Muḥammad al-Shiʿār], vol. 3, p. 40

¹³³ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī, *Musnad* (Cairo: Muassasat Qurṭubah) [annotator: Shuʿayb al-Arnāuṭ], vol. 1, p. 159, # 1373

¹³⁴ *Ibid*

¹³⁵ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tarḥīb wa al-Tarḥīb* (Riyādh: Maktabah al-Maʿārif; 5th edition), vol. 2, p. 189, # 1902

Imām al-Ḥākim (d. 403 H) also documents:

حدثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب ثنا الحسن بن علي بن عفان العامري ثنا عبد الله بن نير أخبرنا أحمد بن سهل الفقيه بخارى ثنا أبو عصمة سهل بن المتوكل البخاري ثنا عفان وسليمان بن حرب قالوا : ثنا حماد بن سلمة عن محمد بن إسحاق عن محمد بن إبراهيم التيمي عن سلمة بن أبي الطفيل أظنه عن أبيه عن علي رضي الله عنه قال قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يا علي إن لك كنزا في الجنة وإنك ذو قرنيها

Abū al-‘Abbās Muḥammad b. Ya’qūb – al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. ‘Affān al-‘Āmirī – ‘Abd Allāh b. Numayr – Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Faqīh – Abū ‘Iṣmah Sahl b. al-Mutawakīl al-Bukhārī – ‘Affān and Sulaymān b. Ḥarb – Ḥammād b. Salamah – Muḥammad b. Ishāq – Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Taymī – Salamah b. Abī al-Ṭufayl – perhaps his father – ‘Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him:

The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, said to me: “**O ‘Alī!** Verily, you are the owner of a treasure in Paradise, **and you are its Dhū al-Qarnayn.**”¹³⁶

Al-Ḥākim declares:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This *ḥadīth* has a *ṣaḥīḥ* chain.¹³⁷

And Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748 H) agrees with him:

صحيح

*Ṣaḥīḥ*¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā], vol. 3, p. 133, # 4623

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

So, what does this *ḥadīth* mean, especially the last part? The determining factor is the (ها) ["its"] in (قرنيها) ["its Dhū al-Qarnayn"]. To what does it refer. On the apparent, it refers to (الجنة) ["Paradise"] mentioned earlier in the *ḥadīth*, especially since it also has a feminine grammar. If it is a reference to Paradise, then Amīr al-Mūminīn will be its Dhū al-Qarnayn, and that is, its emperor. This is because the comparison then would be about kingdom, as opposed to personal merits or qualities. Dhū al-Qarnayn was the emperor of the earth during his lifetime, as the Qur’ān testifies:

ويسألونك عن ذي القرنين قل سأتلو عليكم منه ذكرا إنا مكنا له في الأرض وآتيناه
من كل شيء سببا

And they ask you about Dhū al-Qarnayn. Say: "I shall recite to you something of his story: **‘Verily, We established him over the earth, and We gave him the means of everything.’**"¹³⁹

Therefore, if Imām ‘Alī is the Dhū al-Qarnayn of Paradise, then he will be its emperor. Allāh will establish him over Paradise, and will give him the means of everything there. This, indeed, is an extremely great virtue of Amīr al-Mūminīn. He will be the emperor over all the *awliyyā*, prophets, messengers and Imāms except his own master, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh – who naturally will be the Grand Emperor. Some scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah agree on this too. However, the stronger opinion among them is that Imām ‘Alī is the Dhū al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah* only, according to the *ḥadīth*. Imām Ibn Salām for instance states about the *riwayah*:

قد كان بعض أهل العلم يتأول هذا الحديث أنه ذو قرني الجنة - يريد طرفيها، وإما
يأول ذلك لذكره الجنة في أول الحديث، وأما أنا فلا أحسبه أراد ذلك - والله أعلم،
ولكنه أراد إنك ذو قرني هذه الأمة، فأضمر الأمة

One of the people of knowledge interpreted this *ḥadīth* to mean that he (‘Alī) will be the Dhū al-Qarnayn of Paradise – intending its entire territories, and he made this interpretation only because of the mention of Paradise at the beginning of the *ḥadīth*. As for me, I do not think that he (the Prophet) intended that, and Allāh knows best. Rather, he (the Prophet) intended that "You are the Dhū al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah*",

¹³⁹ Qur’ān 18:83-84

and thereby pronounced the *Ummah*.¹⁴⁰

Since the lifetime of the *Ummah* has exceeded that of ‘Alī and his rule for more a millennium, obviously this alternative interpretation cannot be about political authority. He is the only Dhū al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah*, but not its only ruler. As such, the comparison between ‘Alī and Dhū al-Qarnayn – as far as our *Ummah* is concerned - is apparently about their shared personal merits and qualities, and not about their political histories. Imām al-Mundhirī (d. 656 H) gives some further explanation:

قول صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي وإنك ذو قرنيها أي ذو قرني هذه الأمة وذلك لأنه كان له شجنتان في قرني رأسه إحداها من ابن ملجم لعنه الله والأخرى من عمرو بن ود

His statement, peace be upon him, to ‘Alī “and you are its Dhū al-Qarnayn”, that is, the Dhū al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah*. **And this is because he had two head wounds on the two qarns of his head:** the first of them from Ibn Muljam, may Allāh curse him, and the other from ‘Amr b. Wudd.¹⁴¹

‘Alī Shīrī, the annotator of *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq*, quotes a similar exegesis for the *ḥadīth*:

جاء في الفائق للزمخشري ١٧٣/٣ في مادة قرن: (قال صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي رضي الله عنه إن ذلك بيتا في الجنة وإنك لذو قرنيها) الضمير للأمة وتفسيره فيما يروى عن علي رضي الله عنه إنه ذكر ذا القرنين فقال: دعا قومه إلى عبادة الله فضربوه على قرنيه ضربتين وفيكم مثله يعني نفسه الطاهرة لأنه ضرب على رأسه ضربتين إحداها يوم الخندق والثانية ضربة ابن ملجم.

It is in *al-Faiḳ* of al-Zamakhsharī 3/173 under the entry “Qarn”:

(He, peace be upon him, said to ‘Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him: “Verily, that is a house in Paradise, and you are its Dhū al-Qarnayn”.

¹⁴⁰ Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Salām al-Harwī, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (Haydarabad: Majlis Dāirah al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah; 1st edition, 1385 H), vol. 3, pp. 78-79

¹⁴¹ Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīm b. ‘Abd al-Qawī al-Mundhirī, *al-Tarḡīb wa al-Tarḥīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1417 H) [annotator: Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn], vol. 3, p. 24

The pronoun (i.e. “its”) refers to the *Ummah* and its explanation is in what it narrated from ‘Alī, may Allaah be pleased with him, that he mentioned Dhū al-Qarnayn and said, “He called his people to the worship of Allāh, and they struck him on his *qarn* twice, **and among you is an example of him”, he meant his pure self, because he was struck on his head twice: one of them on the Day of Khandaq and the second, the strike of Ibn Muljam.¹⁴²**

This escapist diversion, however, does not help either. Dhū al-Qarnayn was so named because he received two *fatal* blows to his head. Amīr al-Mūminīn is his example in this *Ummah*, and our own Dhū al-Qarnayn. Therefore, the non-fatal strikes on ‘Alī’s head do not count in the comparison. He too *must* receive two *fatal* blows to his head. We know as a fact that he already was fatally struck by Ibn Muljam. We now await his *raj’ah*, and a second fatal blow to his head. After his second death, he is expected to resurrect again, and then die, perhaps naturally.

So, Amīr al-Mūminīn is not coming back to this earth only once in the future, but actually twice; and he will die three times before the end of the world – *like Dhū al-Qarnayn*. This was ‘Alī’s own belief about himself.

¹⁴² Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Habat Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn Asākir al-Shāfi‘ī, *Tarikh Madinah Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1417 H) [annotator: ‘Alī Shīrī], vol. 43, p. 324, footnote # 4

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