

OF PURE ORIGIN



On the Identity of Prophet
Ibrāhīm's Father ﷺ



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Sheikh Muḥammad Akhtar
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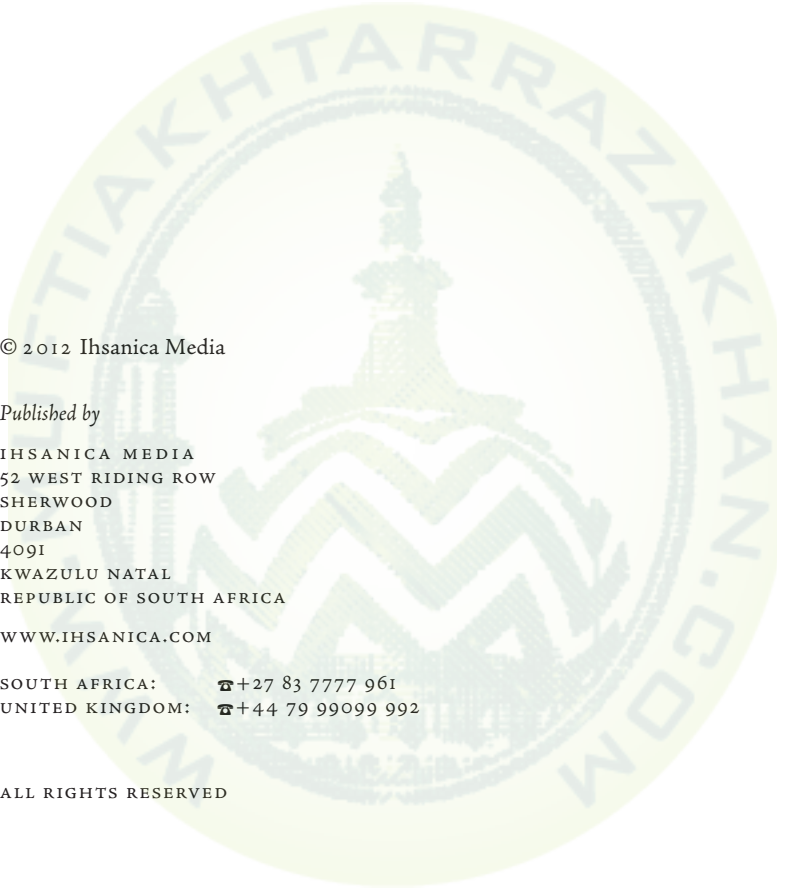
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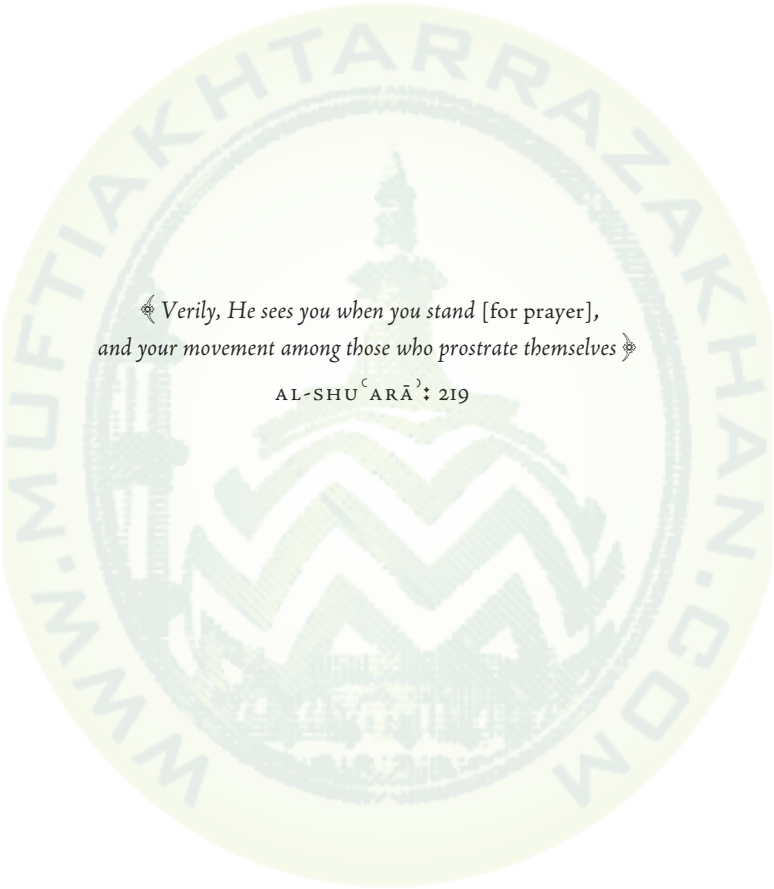
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﴿ Verily, He sees you when you stand [for prayer],
and your movement among those who prostrate themselves ﴾

AL-SHU^ʿARĀ': 219

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

It is the position of Muslims that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, our leigelord and master, is the Pure (*al-Tāhir*) and the Purifying (*al-Muṭahhir*). As such, there is nothing connected with his ﷺ blessed person, form, character, or direct lineage that is impure or tainted.

This small treatise penned by Tāj al-Sharīʿa, Sheikh Muḥammad Akhtar Riḍā Khān, the eponymous scholar and scion of the great reviver (*Mujaddid*) Imam Aḥmad Riḍā Khan, addresses the purity of the Prophet's ﷺ forefathers, and in particular the father of Prophet Ibrāhīm ؑ whom many, based on a shallow understanding of Arabic and Quranic exegesis, mistakenly call Āzar and consider a disbeliever.

In addition to proving the purity of Prophet Muḥammad's lineage ﷺ and substantiating that Prophet Ibrāhīm's father was Tarāḥ, a believer, and not Āzar, his uncle, Sheikh Muḥammad Akhtar Riḍā Khān also skillfully analyzes Arabic syntax and its role in interpreting the Quran, and examines the use of divertive evidence in interpretation. Also discussed here are weak hadith narrated with multiple chains and their acceptability outside of theology and law, anomalous readings of the Quran, and the conditional acceptability of using the scriptures of the People of the Book.

This treatise will undoubtedly prove valuable to any student of Arabic, exegesis, hadith, or prophetic biography, or anyone interested in seeing how a cross section of Islamic disciplines merge in the discussion of areas of modern contention.

PUBLISHER



INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. And may prayers and salutations be upon our master Muḥammad, and upon his family and Companions.

THIS IS A TREATISE CONCERNING ĀZAR that I have quickly written in order to defend the truth and argue against a shameful opinion held by those who oppose the scholarly majority. I have not paid any concern here to what was said by people; instead, I have sought to avoid servile conformity [*taqlīd*] to those of the past or the present and have endeavored to stick firmly to the proofs wherever they are found, be they in the Revelation [Quran], the hadith, or the views of those qualified to interpret, who distinguish between the sound and the unsound. The proof is the best guide, and Allah says the truth and guides to the straight path. In Him I seek aid and He is the best Helper.



I.1 SHEIKH AḤMAD SHĀKIR'S CONTENTION

Concerning Āzar, Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir said:

The book *Lisān al-ʿArab* states the following under this entry: “And ‘Āzar’ is a non-Arabic name. It is the name of Ibrāhīm’s father— may prayers and salutations be upon him and our Prophet. And Abū Ishāq said about the statement of the Exalted ﴿And [remember] when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar...﴾ [al-Anʿām: 74]: ‘It is read in the accusative form [*naṣb*] as “Āzara,” so the one who maintains that it is in the accusative form says that it is a genitive

substitute of the phrase “from his father [*min abīhi*].” And the one who reads it as “Āzaru” with a *ḍamma* vowel ... says that it is vocative. There is no disagreement among the genealogists that the name of his [Ibrāhīm’s] father was Tārakh, but that which is stated in the Quran indicates that his name was Āzar. It was also said that the name Āzar was a blameworthy name in their language, so it was as if He [Allah] said, ‘And remember when Ibrāhīm said to his wrongdoing father.’ Mujāhid said concerning the verse, ﴿ Do you take idols as gods? ﴾ [al-An‘am: 74], ‘He was not his father; rather, Āzar was the name of an idol.’ So if it was the name of an idol, the name Āzar is in the accusative form, as if He [Allah] said, ‘And remember when Ibrāhīm said to his father, “Do you take Āzar as an idol? Do you take idols as gods?”’

This Abū Ishāq—whom al-Jawālīqī and the author of *al-Lisān* blindly followed—is Abū Ishāq al-Zujāj Ibrāhīm b. al-Sarī, who died in the year 311 AH. The general body of scholars blindly followed him in his claim that there is no disagreement Ibrāhīm’s father was named Tārah or Tārakh.

On the contrary, Abū Ishāq was preceded by a group of Companions and Followers, all of whom were mentioned by Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī—may Allah have mercy upon him—in his well-referenced treatise *Masālik al-ḥunafā*. Al-Suyūṭī said:

This view (that Āzar was not Ibrāhīm’s father) was reported from a group of the Salaf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrated with a weak chain via Ibn ‘Abbās who said regarding Allah’s words ﴿ And [remember] when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar... ﴾: “The name of Ibrāhīm’s father was not Āzar, rather it was Tārah.”

Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim all narrated with multiple routes—some of which are authentic—from Mujāhid, who said, “Āzar was not Ibrāhīm’s father.”

Ibn al-Mundhir narrated with an authentic chain from Ibn Jurayj regarding Allah’s statement, ﴿ And [remember] when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar. . . ﴾. He said, “He is not his father; rather, he is Ibrāhīm the son of Tayrah (or Tārah) the son of Shārūkh the son of Nāḥūr the son of Fālikh (or Fāligh).” Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrated a

report with an authentic chain in which someone asked al-Suddī, “Was Ibrāhīm’s father named Āzar?” Al-Suddī replied, “No. His name was Tārah.” This is explained linguistically by the fact that the Arabs use the word father to refer to a paternal uncle, and this is wide-spread, even if it is figurative.

Shākīr’s comment about Abū Ishāq that “the general body of scholars blindly followed him in his claim that there is no disagreement that the name of Ibrāhīm’s father was Tārah or Tārakh” gives the impression that Abū Ishāq’s position was without proof. This impression is clear from Shākīr’s statement that the scholars “blindly followed him” and that his position was “his claim.” Such contemptuousness against the Salaf is appalling, and reality is contrary to what he alleges.



I.2 PROOFS FROM THE QURAN AND THE POSITION OF THE EXEGETES

There is a corroborating proof in the Revelation [Quran] for those esteemed predecessors mentioned by Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī—may Allah have mercy upon him—as we shall soon explain, Allah willing. Before that, however, let us discuss a preliminary issue that will help us to clarify this issue further.

Allah Most High says: ﴿And Ibrāhīm’s prayer for his father’s forgiveness was only because of a promise he made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Indeed, Ibrāhīm was most tender-hearted, forbearing﴾ [al-Tawba: 114] And Allah related Ibrāhīm’s words: ﴿Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny in an uncultivated valley ... Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day in which the account is established﴾ [Ibrāhīm: 37]

So here we have a few questions. Firstly, when did Ibrāhīm seek his father’s forgiveness? Secondly, when did it become clear to

him that his father was an enemy to Allah? Thirdly, our master Ibrāhīm ؑ informed us of his act of settling his progeny in Mecca, and that entails him informing us of his immigration to Mecca. Then he sought forgiveness for himself and his parents, as Allah revealed ﴿Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents﴾. It is clear that each of these events are interconnected so we must look into their exact chronological order and examine what came first from what came last. We must ask: When did our master Ibrāhīm ؑ immigrate to Mecca? When did he dissociate from his father? Did he dissociate from him after he was cast into the fire and after his father died prior to his migration to Mecca? If so, then for whom was Ibrāhīm ؑ seeking forgiveness when he said: ﴿Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents﴾? Was it the same man from whom he dissociated himself, or was it someone else? I don't think anyone will choose the former possibility, therefore the second one must be correct: that Ibrāhīm ؑ sought Allah's forgiveness for another man after his migration to Mecca, and that this man was not the one from whom he dissociated before his migration, and that this man for whom he sought forgiveness after his migration was his real father.

The one for whom he sought forgiveness before his migration was his uncle and not his father. And as Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī explicitly stated and proved, a paternal uncle can be figuratively called a father. Al-Suyūṭī said in his treatise:

So here are the statements of the Salaf from the Companions and the Followers regarding that. It is also borne out by the narration reported by Ibn al-Mundhir in his exegesis with an authentic chain from the Companion Sulaymān b. Ṣard who said, "When they wanted to cast Ibrāhīm into the fire they began gathering firewood; and even elderly women would gather wood. When they were finally ready to cast him in the fire he said, 'Allah is sufficient for me and He is the best disposer of affairs.' When they cast him in Allah said, ﴿We said, 'O fire! Be cool and fresh for Ibrāhīm'﴾ [al-Anbiyā': 69]. Ibrāhīm's uncle said, 'It was for my sake that the fire didn't touch him,' and so Allah cast upon him a burning ember

that landed on his leg, setting him ablaze.” In this report he is referred to as Ibrāhīm’s uncle.

This narration contains another benefit, for it mentions that he died during the time Ibrāhīm was cast into the fire. In the Quran Allah Most High informs us that Ibrāhīm ceased seeking forgiveness for him when it became clear that he was an enemy of Allah. The reports mention that this became clear when he died as an idolater and after that Ibrāhīm refrained from seeking forgiveness for him. This answers the questions we posed earlier and it is clear that it was not his father, but rather his uncle, who was figuratively called his father. This also establishes the sequence of events and shows that the time he was cast in the fire and the death of Āzar both occurred before his emigration from the Levant to Mecca. It shows that Ibrāhīm would seek Allah’s forgiveness for Āzar when the latter was alive, and that when he died upon idolatry it became clear to Ibrāhīm that he was an enemy of Allah and he dissociated himself from him. The verse in which Ibrāhīm says ﴿Our Lord! Forgive me ...﴾ occurs after the verses detailing his act of settling his progeny in Mecca. According to the arrangement of these verses it is understood that Ibrāhīm’s prayer was after he settled in Mecca, as is clear from the verse that states: ﴿Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny in an uncultivated valley ...﴾. Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī commented:

After the event where he was cast into the fire, Ibrāhīm emigrated from the Levant, as Allah mentioned in the Quran. Long after his migration he entered Egypt where the incident occurred between him and the tyrant [Nimrūd] due to Sāra, whereupon Ibrāhīm took Hājar as a handmaiden and returned to the Levant. Then Allah ordered him to take her and her son Ismā‘īl to Mecca, and so he took her and prayed: ﴿Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny in an uncultivated valley . . . Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day in which the account is established﴾. He sought forgiveness for his parents and that was a long time after his uncle’s death. From all of this we can infer that the one whom the Quran described with

disbelief and dissociation was none other than his uncle and not his real father. So to Allah belongs praise for that which he inspires!

After presenting these words of Imam al-Suyūṭī, let us mention some other verses of the Quran and the clarification they bring. Allah Most High said: ﴿So Lūṭ believed in him [Ibrāhīm]. And he [Ibrāhīm] said, "Indeed, I shall emigrate for the sake of my Lord. Indeed, He is the All-Mighty, the Wise." And We bestowed upon him Ishāq and Yaḳūb and placed among his progeny prophethood and the book, and we granted him his reward in this life, and in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous﴾ [al-ʿAnkabūt 26–27]. And Allah also said: ﴿And We rescued him [Ibrāhīm] and Lūṭ to the land which We blessed for all of the worlds. And We bestowed him [Ibrāhīm] with Ishāq and Yaḳūb [as a grandson], and We made all of them righteous. And We made them leaders guiding by Our command, and We inspired them to do good deeds, establish the prayer, and give the Zakat. They were indeed worshippers of Us Alone﴾ [al-Anbiyāʾ 71–73]. Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr said:

Since he abandoned his people for the sake of Allah and emigrated from their midst, and his wife was barren and he childless (he only had with him his nephew Lūṭ, the son of Hārūn, the son of Āzar) Allah Most High soon bestowed him with righteous children and placed among his progeny prophethood and the book. Every Prophet sent after him was from his progeny, and every heavenly book revealed after him was revealed to a Prophet who was one of his scions. This was a unique favor and blessing for him because he left his homeland, family, and relatives to immigrate to a land wherein he could worship Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, and invite the creation unto Him.

He immigrated to the Levant, about which Allah Most High said: ﴿to the land which We blessed for all of the worlds ...﴾ [al-Anbiyāʾ: 71]. This was stated by Ubay b. Kaʿb, Abū ʿĀliya, Qatāda, and others. Al-ʿAwfi narrated that Ibn ʿAbbās said regarding the verse: ﴿to the land which We blessed for all of the worlds ...﴾: "It is Mecca. Did you not hear His statement: ﴿Indeed, the first consecrated house established for mankind was at Becca, full of blessing and guidance for the worlds﴾

[Āl-‘Imrān: 96]?” Ka‘b al-Aḥbār claimed that it was Haran.

We have already cited from the People of the Book, who mentioned that he emigrated from Babylon with his nephew Lūṭ, his brother Nāḥūr, his wife Sāra, and his brother’s wife Malikā, and settled in Haran where his father, Tārakh, died.¹



I.3 NOTEWORTHY POINTS FROM THE WORDS OF IBN KATHĪR AND AL-SUYŪṬĪ

These clear statements from al-Suyūṭī and Ibn Kathīr are plain for all to see, and they indicate several noteworthy points:

1. They show that Ibrāhīm’s ﷺ father was Tārah.
2. They demonstrate that his father was not Āzar.
3. They indicate that Ibrāhīm’s father died after Ibrāhīm ﷺ immigrated to Haran.
4. They show that the one whose forgiveness Ibrāhīm ﷺ sought was Tārah, and that this was after his migration, which is understood from the context of the verses that mention the order of events, beginning with his invitation and ending with his statement: ﴿Our Lord! Forgive me ...﴾ [Ibrāhīm: 41].
5. They show that the one with whom Ibrāhīm ﷺ disassociated himself was Āzar, as mentioned in the Quran.
6. They prove that Āzar was not really his father, even if he was called “father” in the Quran. And Allah’s mention of Ibrāhīm’s supplication is a sufficient divertive evidence [*qarīna*] showing that it is figurative. It is noteworthy that Ibn Kathīr said, “The majority of the genealogists—including Ibn ‘Abbās—assert that the name of his father was Tārah, and the People of the Book say ‘Tārakh’ with a *khā’*.” The lineage Ibn Kathīr mentioned for Lūṭ ﷺ [i.e., Lūṭ the son of Hārūn the son of Āzar] contradicts his later statement that “his father, Tārah,

- died” and the lineage he mentioned for Ibrāhīm ﷺ. He said, “He is Ibrāhīm, the son of Tārah, the son of Nāhūr.” This statement goes against the view of the majority, so take note.
7. They show that the majority—including a group from the Companions and Followers—considered Tārah Ibrāhīm’s father: this is explicitly mentioned in numerous transmissions, some of which, as al-Suyūṭī mentioned, are authentic.
 8. They show that the multiple routes of transmission strengthen the hadith, even if the hadith is weak. With these multiple routes the hadith can be elevated to the rank of good [*ḥasan*], or even authentic [*ṣaḥīḥ*]. Therefore, the hadith is at least authentic due to corroborating reports [*ṣaḥīḥ li ghayrihi*], and the view that his father’s name was Tārah is strong, not weak. How can this be otherwise, when this report has been narrated by a group of the Companions and Followers with numerous routes of transmission and it has been met with wide acceptance? Even if there is no consensus on this point, it is certainly the view of the majority and strengthened by a divertive proof [*qarīna*] in the Quran. The takeaway from this, therefore, is that it has more right to be accepted, and charging the majority with error is objectionable.



1.4 IMAM AL-RĀZĪ AND THE CLAIM OF EXPLICITNESS

The abovementioned points refute Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir’s erroneous notion that it is a view without proof. It also refutes the view ascribed to Imam al-Rāzī who said, “This is weak.” This view does not oppose the explicit and definitive text of the Quran. Shākir’s view (quoting from Imam al-Rāzī) that “in light of the explicit [statement] of the Quran, no consideration should be given to this” is repudiated, for there is nothing in the Quran that is explicit in this regard. Had there been an explicit text about

this in the Quran, none of the Companions or Followers would have had the audacity to object to it and call Ibrāhīm’s father Tārah or Tārah and none of them would have said that Āzar was an uncle. But, there were some among them who interpreted the word father to mean paternal uncle, as we mentioned in some of the narrations quoted earlier. They buttressed their argument with relevant proofs from the Quran, which contains divertive evidence supporting it, as we detailed.

That said, there are additional points about Āzar mentioned by al-Suyūfī and others and which are found in other reports. Therefore, Allah’s words ﴿his father ...﴾ [al-An‘ām: 74] are not explicit, and there is no direct proof regarding Āzar. If, for argument’s sake, we were to concede to Shākir’s claim that it is explicit [ṣarīḥ], our contention still stands, since the word “explicit” is synonymous with apparent [ẓāhir], so outward appearance is enough and does not negate other possibilities. Imam al-Rāzī said as much in the beginning of the section from where his quote is taken: “The apparent meaning of this verse indicates that the name of Ibrāhīm’s father was Āzar, although some said his name was Tārah.”² As you can see, this entails an acknowledgment on his part that other possibilities exist, and it negates any unequivocal position or specification. Therefore, whoever says that Āzar is not his father—as stated by Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, Ibn Jurayj, al-Suddī, and Sulaymān b. Ṣard (when they said that he was Ibrāhīm’s ﷺ uncle)—then he has taken a position that the Quran can bear out, and one that is maintained and supported by a divertive proof. How can this be considered opposition to an explicit text of the Quran, especially when it is famously reported from Ibn ‘Abbās and other Companions and Followers whom we mentioned, and there is no record of any of their contemporaries objecting to them? It is not farfetched to say that it is at least a silent consensus [ijmā‘ sukūṭī], and so there is no opposing the fact that it is the view of the majority and a group from the Salaf and the Companions and Followers.



2.1 ON THE CLAIM THAT THIS VIEW IS BORROWED FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

This refutes Imam al-Rāzī's statement: "That is because this consensus occurred due to some of them following each other blindly, and that consensus is traced back to the statement of one or two people, such as the statement of Wahb, Ka'b, and others, and perhaps they took what they found from the reports of the Jews and the Christians."

As for his statement that "in light of the explicit [statement] of the Quran, no consideration is to be given to this," it is no failing on our part if we concede to his claim that it is taken from the reports of the Jews and Christians. There is no problem with accepting reports from them provided they originate from verified and reliable sources. It is known that this position does not oppose the Quran and the Sunna, and the esteemed Companions and Followers have paved the way for us and their acceptance is a proof. How can it be otherwise when they are our exemplars and both they and we received permission from the Truthful and Trustworthy ﷺ who said, "Narrate from the Children of Israel, and there is no harm."³



2.2 AL-ṬABARĪ'S VARIOUS ROUTES FOR MUJĀHID'S REPORT

After citing the different views concerning Āzar and the various ways in which the name is pronounced, Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir said:

As for the report ascribed to Mujāhid in which he said that Āzar was the name of an idol, it is unauthentic in its chain and text, and proving that via the Arabic language is farfetched. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar said in *Fatḥh al-Bārī*, "And al-Ṭabarī reported from Mujāhid

with a weak transmission: ‘Āzar was the name of an idol,’ but it is anomalous [*shādh*]⁴” And the statement of the imam of the Quranic exegetes, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī⁵, that “it is a correct statement in terms of the Arabic language” is farfetched because the Arabs do place nouns in the accusative case due to a verb that comes after an interrogative particle; they do not say, for instance: “Your brother, did you speak to?”

I say: Ustādh Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr’s statement “As for the report ascribed to Mujāhid in which he said that Āzar was the name of an idol, it is unauthentic in its chain ...” does not muster enough evidence to refute the angle mentioned earlier, and it does not prove that Mujāhid’s report is false. Al-Ṭabarī, who cited Mujāhid’s statement regarding Āzar, mentioned numerous routes for it, and it is fitting that we mention them here. Al-Ṭabarī said:

- [1] Muḥammad b. Ḥamīd and Sufyān b. Wakī^c narrated to us, saying, “Jarīr narrated to us on the authority of Layth, from Mujāhid, who said, ‘Āzar was not Ibrāhīm’s father.’”
- [2] Al-Ḥārith narrated to me, “‘Abd al-^cAzīz narrated to me, saying, ‘Al-Thawrī narrated to me, saying, “A man informed me on the authority of Ibn Abī Najīh, from Mujāhid, who said regarding the verse, ﴿ And [remember] when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar ﴾: ‘Āzar was not his father. Rather he was an idol.’””
- [3] Ibn Wakī^c narrated to us, saying, “Yaḥyā b. Yamān narrated to us from Sufyān, from Ibn Abī Najīh, from Mujāhid, who said, ‘Āzar is the name of an idol.’”
- [4] Muḥammad b. al-Husayn narrated to us, saying, “Aḥmad b. al-Mufaḍḍal narrated to us, saying, ‘Asbāt narrated to us from al-Suddi who said regarding the verse ﴿ And [remember] when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar ... ﴾: “That was the name of his father.”” It is also said that his name was actually Tārah and that the name of the idol was Āzar; so [it was as if Ibrāhīm] said, “Do you take Āzar the idol as an object of worship?”⁶

So as you can see, here are the routes from Mujāhid, and everyone knows that a weak report can be strengthened by multiple chains. We also see that Mujāhid was not alone in this opinion. Al-Suddī shared this view, and the same was reported from Ibn ʿAbbās (رضي الله عنه) and it was the view of Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib.⁷ The conclusion is that the chain in question is strengthened and supported by other corroborating reports and the text is established. This counters the claim made by Ustādh Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir that “the report ascribed to Mujāhid in which he said that Āzar was the name of an idol ... is unauthentic in its chain and text.”

What is astonishing is that Shākir quoted al-Ṭabarī’s statement regarding Āzar but failed to cite the routes al-Ṭabarī provided for Mujāhid’s statement. And then, in his attempt to refute the view that Āzar was the name of an idol, he sought to prove that the report was weak by saying, “Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in *Fatḥh al-Bārī*: ‘Al-Ṭabarī reported from Mujāhid with a weak transmission: “Āzar was the name of an idol,” and it is anomalous [*shādh*] ...’” As you know, this report from Mujāhid is transmitted with numerous routes and not just one, and just as this has been transmitted from Mujāhid, it has also been transmitted from al-Suddī, as al-Ṭabarī’s aforementioned quote shows.



2.3 ON THE USE OF WEAK HADITH NARRATED WITH NUMEROUS CHAINS

This hadith is weak, but due to the multiple routes it is elevated to the rank of good [*ḥasan*]. The gallant Imam, my grandfather Sheikh Aḥmad Riḍā, said in his outstanding treatise *al-Hād al-kāf fī ahkām al-dīʿāf*:

If a particular hadith is narrated with numerous chains that are all weak, then that weak chain is strengthened due to its association with other weak chains. Nay, if the weakness is not severe the hadith can be

elevated to the rank of good [*ḥasan*] after mending its defect and it can serve as a proof, just like the authentic reports, in the rulings that pertain to the lawful and unlawful.

Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī said in *Mirqāt*, “Multiple routes of transmission can cause a weak hadith to reach the level of a good hadith.” And at the conclusion of his collection of forged reports, *al-Mawḍūʿāt al-kubrā*, al-Qārī said, “Multiple routes of transmission elevate a hadith to the level of good [*ḥasan*], even if those routes are weak.” The erudite and verifying scholar, Ibn al-Humām, said in *Fath al-Qadīr*, “If they are all weak it will be a sound hadith due to the numerous and multiple routes of transmission.” He also said:

If a hadith’s routes of transmission are many it is conceivable that it could be elevated to the level of an authentic hadith, and a weak hadith could become a proof by that, too, because the multiplicity of its chains serves as a divertive evidence [*qarīna*] of its soundness.

Imam ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī—may Allah sanctify his illumined secret—said much the same thing in his: *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*

The majority of the hadith scholars have used weak hadith as proofs (provided they have multiple routes of transmission) and they have occasionally included them among the authentic reports, or at other times, the good reports. This type of weak report is often found in al-Bayhaqī’s *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, which he wrote in order to provide evidence for the opinions of the Imams and their colleagues.⁸

Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī said in *al-Taʿqībāt*: “If a hadith from one who is disclaimed [*munkar*] or discarded [*matrūk*] has numerous routes of transmission it can be elevated to the level of a weak-rare report [*ḍaʿīf gharīb*]. In fact, it might even be elevated to the level of good [*ḥasan*].”

This answers Ibn Ḥajar’s contention that Mujāhid’s hadith is weak and anomalous. His claim is refuted because the same

report was narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه and al-Suddī, and it was the view of Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib and is in agreement with the position of the majority—albeit with added detail—that holds that Āzar was not the name of Ibrāhīm’s father. Even if we agree with Ibn Ḥajar, for argument’s sake, still, an anomalous hadith is not synonymous with a discarded or disclaimed hadith. Moreover, as you have just read, a discarded, disclaimed, or weak-rare hadith can be elevated to the rank of good if it has corroborating reports. So the narration from Mujāhid is good at minimum and is strengthened by the fact that others have narrated it, and it is in agreement with the position of the majority and supported by the view of a group of scholars (which is another way in which a weak hadith can be elevated).



2.4 ON THE STRENGTHENING OF HADITH THAT ARE ACTED UPON BY THE PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Sheikh and Imam, Aḥmad Riḍā, said: “A hadith can be strengthened if it is acted upon by the people of knowledge, even if it is weak.” And Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī said in *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*:

It was narrated by al-Tirmidhī, who said: “It is rare report [*gharīb*], and is acted upon by the people of knowledge.” Al-Nawawī said: “And its chain is weak, transmitted by Mirāk.”

It seems that al-Tirmidhī wished to strengthen the hadith because of it being acted upon by the people of knowledge—and Allah Most High knows best. Sheikh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī said: “It has reached me from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that whoever says ‘There is no god but Allah’ seventy-thousand times, Allah will forgive him and the one on whose behalf it is said.” Once, I mentioned the phrase of Divine Unity [*lā ilāha illā Allāh*] in the manner reported, but without intending to say it on behalf of anyone in particular. So I went on to prepare some food with some of my companions and

in their company was a young man known for spiritual unveilings [*kashf*]. As we were eating the food, suddenly, that young man was overcome with weeping. When I asked him why he was weeping, he said, “I beheld my mother suffering torment.” When he said that, I donated the reward of the phrase of Divine Unity to her. After that, the young man laughed and said: “Indeed, I now see her in a goodly abode.” After that I realized the soundness of this hadith based on the soundness of his unveiling, and the soundness of his unveiling based on the soundness of the hadith ... [Al-Suyūṭī said⁹] “And many have explicitly stated that when the people of knowledge use a particular hadith it is proof that it is authentic, even if does not have a chain the likes of which can be relied upon.”



2.5 LENIENCY WITH WEAK HADITH THAT DO NOT RELATE TO DOCTRINE OR LEGAL RULINGS

In the *Muqaddima* of Imam Abū ‘Amr Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ¹⁰, and in al-Jurjānī’s *al-Muqaddima al-Jurjānīyya*, al-Suyūṭī’s *Sharḥ al-alfīyya*, al-Nawawī’s *Taqrīb*¹¹, and its commentary *Tadrīb al-rāwī*, there is the following statement: “According to the Traditionalists [*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*] and others, it is permissible to be lenient with weak chains and narrate weak reports that are not forged, and act upon them in the sphere of meritorious actions and other things that do not relate to doctrine or legal rulings, and their weakness need not be explained.”¹² A similar statement was reported from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn Maḥdī, and Ibn Mubārak. They said: “When we narrate matters pertaining to the lawful and unlawful we are strict, but when we narrate matters pertaining to meritorious actions we are lenient.”



Moving on, Ustādh Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr refuted those who said that Āzar was a vocative description, saying:

There are some who claim that it is a description, but if what they claim is correct, it would be a description with which a Prophet would never address his father. Ibrāhīm's father said to him: ﴿Do you reject my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will surely stone you. So get away from me safely before I punish you﴾ [Maryam: 46]. Ibrāhīm ؑ, the intimate friend of Allah, replied: ﴿Peace be on you! I will ask Forgiveness of my Lord for you. Indeed, He is unto me, Ever-Gracious﴾ [Maryam: 47]. Is it conceivable that someone who had shown this much etiquette with his father in the heat of an argument and after receiving threats could invite his father to his religion with insults and imprecations?

The Ustādh's point would be well-taken were it not rendered turbid by Ibrāhīm's statement at the end of the verse. There are those, like al-Ālūsī, who consider it a divertive evidence that Āzar was his uncle. Furthermore, this doesn't benefit the Ustādh, for his attempt to prove that Āzar was Ibrāhīm's father remains futile until he successfully refutes the different takes on the issue, following the way of the hadith scholars and adopting their methodology of affirmation or negation by discerning between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Since he did nothing of the sort these different views vie with one another, crowding each other out, and the differences lead to inconsistency. Either they must all be rejected without any particular view declared preponderant, or a preponderant view must be chosen. Therefore the position of the majority—including the Companions and the Followers—that Tārah was the name of Ibrāhīm's father and not Āzar is the preponderant view and is found in the Torah.¹³ This was stated by Sulaymān b. ʿUmar al-Jamal in his gloss on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.



3.2 THE PROPHET'S MOVEMENT THROUGH THE LOINS OF HIS FOREFATHERS ﷺ

This position is supported by the divertive evidence in the Quran, as well as Allah's statement: ﴿And your movement among those who prostrate themselves﴾ [al-Shu^ʿarā': 219]. This verse means, "And your movement in the loins of fathers and the wombs of mothers, from Ādam to Nūḥ to Ibrāhīm and those after him—may Allah send prayers upon all of them."¹⁴ Ibn ^ʿAbbās said regarding this verse: "In the loins of Ādam, Nūḥ, and Ibrāhīm until he came out."¹⁵ It is also reported from him that he said regarding this verse: "From Prophet to Prophet until He [Allah] took you out as a Prophet." Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī¹⁶, Ismā^ʿīl al-Ḥaqqī¹⁷, and others said, "the phrase ﴿among those who prostrate themselves﴾ means the loins of the Prophets and Messengers, from Ādam to Nūḥ to Ibrāhīm and to those after him, until his mother bore him."



3.3 STIPULATIONS OF AUTHENTICITY AND THE SYNTAX OF THE VERSE

When Shākir stipulates authenticity as it is understood by the hadith scholars he gives the impression that "authentic" is synonymous with "acceptable," and that conversely, "weak" and "anomalous" are to be rejected. This is incorrect. The technical term "authentic" does not imply the soundness [of a report] in the self-same reality, just as "weakness" does not entail rejection merely on account of [a report's] weakness. This does not warrant any further comment, for as we have shown, the Imams of this science agreed that a weak report can be accepted in areas that do not pertain to legal rulings.

In addition, we mentioned al-Suyūṭī's explicit statement that it was narrated from Mujāhid with some authentic chains that

“Āzar was not Ibrāhīm’s father.” This report, which was also narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās, suffices us despite the particulars of Mujāhid’s report that Āzar was the name of an idol.

Also, even if the report is weak it still has a corroborating proof that strengthens it, and this is in the anomalous [*shādh*] recitation of the verse, read as “Do you take Āzar ...” [*aʿāzaran tattakidhu ...*]¹⁸

And lastly, in Shākir’s attempt to refute this position he said that al-Ṭabarī’s statement “it is a correct statement in terms of the Arabic language” is farfetched. He is wrong. If we look at the recitation Shākir cited, “Do you take Āzar ... ?” it is apparent that the word Āzar is not in the accusative form due to the verb mentioned after it. The implied [*taqdīr*] meaning of the verse is “Do you take Āzar as... ?” or “Do you worship Āzar... ?” or “Do you take an idol as an object of worship?”¹⁹ Therefore, it is in the accusative form due to an omitted verb that is proven by what is mentioned. Similarly, if it estimated that Āzar is in the accusative form because of an interrogative particle, the accusative effector [*nāṣib*] is estimated before it. Whenever it is possible to explain it in light of correct Arabic there is no scope to reject it; therefore, the claim that it “is farfetched” in terms of Arabic is rejected. This is why the report from Mujāhid was mentioned by the author of *Lisān al-ʿArab* (which Shākir quoted) and others with approval, and was not criticized for the Arabic. It is likely that al-Ālūsī sensed that some people might have the same misgiving, which is why he addressed it and corrected it. He said in *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*:

And some of them held that Allah’s statement ﴿Do you take ... ?﴾ [al-Anʿām: 74] is explanatory and with an estimated meaning. In other words, it is a divertive proof that there exists an omission [*ḥadhf*] and is not explanatory [*tafsīr*] as is understood in *ishtighāl*.²⁰ That is because the phrase coming after the *hamza* does not affect what comes before it, and as the grammarians have established, that which does not affect [something in the phrase] cannot explain a governing particle.²¹



3.4 INTERPRETING THE WORD “FATHER” AS “UNCLE”

Shākir went on to say:

As for interpreting “father” as “uncle,” that entails diverting a word from its apparent and literal meaning to a figurative meaning without a divertive evidence or proof that it is figurative. Were we to interpret the explicit texts in this manner the indicated meanings of words would be worthless. And so, there are many Quranic verses dealing with Ibrāhīm and his father: about his argumentation with him about the religion, his invitation to his religion, and his father’s rejection. These include Allah’s statement in Sūra al-Tawba: ﴿And Ibrāhīm’s prayer for his father’s forgiveness was only because of a promise he made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him.﴾ [al-Tawba: 114]. See also Sūra Maryam (41–50), Sūra al-Anbiyā’ (51–52), and Sūra al-Shu‘arā’ (69–86).

We addressed this in detail when we mentioned the quote of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, and we mentioned the divertive proof from the revelation, so this is not a case of diverting a word from its apparent meaning without a divertive proof. On the contrary, the proof for this is in the Quran, and there are many hadith reports that support it. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī took it upon himself to detail the chains of these hadith reports in his book *Masālik al-ḥunafā*. One example is the Prophet’s statement ﷺ: “I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers.” This is an explicit statement from the Prophet ﷺ that his lineage is completely purified from idol worship.

In his gloss on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, Sulaymān b. ‘Umar al-Jamal said: “It is stated in the books on the Prophet’s biography [*sīra*] that his ﷺ entire lineage was purified from idol worship.” Al-Ālūsī said in *Rūḥ al-ma‘ānī*:

The position maintained by the overwhelming majority of Ahl al-Sunna is that Āzar was not Ibrāhīm’s biological father.

They [Ahl al-Sunna] insist that there was never a disbeliever among the forefathers of the Prophet ﷺ, because he said: ‘I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers.’ The idolaters are spiritually impure [*najas*], and restricting their purity to chastity and being free of fornication is not a reliable proof, for the point of consideration is the generality of the expression and not the particular circumstance for which it was revealed.

Scholars have written treatises on this topic and inferred proofs for it. The claim that this is the view of the Shiites—as Imam al-Rāzī claimed—stems from a lack of induction. Most of the scholars who wrote about this topic held that Āzar was the name of Ibrāhīm’s uncle. The word “father” has been used to mean uncle in Allah’s words: ﴿Or were you witnesses when death approached Ya‘qūb. When he said unto his sons, “What will you worship after me?” They said, “We shall worship your God, the God of your fathers Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, and Ishāq—one God, and to Him we submit.”﴾ [al-Baqara: 133]. This verse uses the word father to apply to a grandfather ... some scholars supported the position that Ibrāhīm’s uncle, not his father, was a disbeliever. They buttressed their argument by citing the narration of Ibn al-Mundhir in his exegesis.²²

This adequately responds to Ustādh Aḥmad Shākir’s claim, and we have already mentioned something similar from the words of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Although there is some repetition we cited al-Ālūsī’s words for their own distinction and added benefit.



3.5 ISMĀ‘ĪL AL-ḤAQQĪ’S INTERPRETATION OF THE VERSE

﴿And your movement among those who prostrate themselves﴾

In *Rūḥ al-bayān*, under his exegesis of Allah’s words ﴿And your movement among those who prostrate themselves﴾ [al-Shu‘arā’: 219], Ismā‘īl al-Ḥaqqī said:

[Allah] lightened for him the rigor and strenuousness of worship by informing him [the Prophet ﷺ] that He sees him; and he who knows that his Master and Beloved sees him will experience no difficulty, and when one witnesses his Lord directly it is easy for him to carry the towering mountains on one of his eyelashes. It is said: “You [O Prophet ﷺ] were seen by Us as you moved in the spiritual world among those who prostrate themselves, for We created the soul of every prostrating person from your soul. ﴿Indeed, He is the All-Hearing﴾—pre-eternally hearing your statement “I am the master of the children of Ādam and that is no boast,” because their souls were created from your soul; ﴿All-Knowing﴾—knowing that you merit that virtue.

[It is narrated] from Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ that he said about this verse: “From one Prophet to another until He took you out as a Prophet.” Therefore, the verse ﴿those who prostrate themselves﴾ means the loins of the Prophets and Messengers from Ādam to Nūḥ to Ibrāhīm and to those after him until finally his mother bore him. This does not negate that there were non-Prophets among his forefathers, but it shows that there were Prophets in his lineage.

The Rafidites inferred from this verse that the forefathers of the Prophet ﷺ were all believers, arguing that someone who prostrates can not be but a believer. They said that faith was expressed here as prostration. This is a literalist interpretation; the Prophet’s statement ﷺ “I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers” does not prove they had faith as such; rather, it proves the soundness and validity of the marriages conducted during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance [*jāhiliyya*], as the Prophet ﷺ said in another hadith: “[U]ntil He bore me to parents who never once fornicated.” We spoke briefly about this when discussing the last few verses of Sūra Ibrāhīm.

A Muslim must see to it that he holds his tongue from uttering anything that disparages the noble lineage of our Prophet ﷺ, and he must be diligent and safeguard it from any imagined imperfection that comes to mind, especially the erroneous impressions of the common folk.

If you ask: “What should we believe with respect to the Prophet’s forefathers ﷺ?” I say: This issue is not theological as such, so the heart has nothing in particular to believe, but the tongue, as we mentioned, does.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī mentioned²³ that this issue is summed up by the fact that the Prophet’s ﷺ forefathers from Ādam to Murra b. Ka‘b are explicitly stated to have had faith. In other words, their faith is mentioned in the hadith reports and statements from the Salaf. Four forefathers remain between Murra and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and I have not discovered any narrations concerning them. The view that is closest to the truth is that the invitation [*da‘wa*] did not reach ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib because he died when the Prophet ﷺ was eight years old. The most popular view is that he followed the religion of Ibrāhīm ؑ and did not worship idols, as was mentioned in [my commentary upon] *Sūra Barā’a*.²⁴

It appears that al-Ḥāqqī was refuting one of the angles in this discussion when he said “The Rafidites inferred from this verse ...” His ascription of this view to the Rafidites is incorrect, as al-Ālūsī mentioned in *Rūḥ al-ma‘ānī*. It is also refuted by the quote he mentioned from al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī—a quote he supported and approved. The equivocation in his words are obvious because in the beginning he gives the impression that he rejects it, but at the conclusion it is understood that he accepts it.

It is no surprise that this inference is “a literalist interpretation,” because the revealed texts are understood according their outward meanings, as is well-known, so there is no reason to criticize it. Al-Ḥāqqī’s statement that the faith of the Prophet’s ﷺ forefathers is not proven by the hadith “I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers” gives the impression that he rejects it. But is not possible for him to deny that the hadith indicates faith, and it is not possible for him to restrict the meaning and scope of purity and argue that it refers to the validity of the marriages that took place in the pre-Islamic period of ignorance. This is tantamount to diverting

an apparent and unrestricted word from its meaning. The point of consideration is the generality of the expression and not the particular circumstance. This was explained by al-Ālūsī and al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī and others who used the hadith as a proof, and al-Ḥaqqī agreed with al-Suyūṭī.



3.6 THE INTERPRETATION OF AL-NĪSĀBŪRĪ

Al-Nīsābūrī said:

The scholars of the Shiites used this verse as a proof in support of their doctrine that the forefathers of the Prophet ﷺ were not disbelievers. They said: “[Allah] meant the movement of his soul from one prostrating person to another,” as is found in the hadith that is reliable according to them: “I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers.” Ahl al-Sunna disputed with them regarding this interpretation and the authenticity of the hadith. As I see it, the most correct course of action is to avoid discounting such claims and leave room for the possibility, with the adage that “a lack of proof does not mean the absence of that which is proven.”²⁵

We have already responded to the claim that this position is linked to the scholars of the Shiites. From all that we have presented it is clear that Ahl al-Sunna adopt this position, accept it, cite the hadith in question, and use it as a proof. Even if this hadith is weak it can be strengthened due to the support given to it by the people of knowledge—as we quoted from *al-Hād al-kāf fī aḥkām al-dīn* of Imam Aḥmad Riḍā. Al-Nīsābūrī’s concluding remark indicates that he accepted this view, as he said: “As I see it the most correct action is to avoid discounting such claims ...”



4.1 ON THE ALLEGED UNRELIABILITY
OF THE GENEALOGISTS

Aḥmad Shākir said:

As for the view of the genealogists ... these genealogies are old, contradictory, insufficiently supported, and contain incredulous differences. Ibn Saʿd narrated in his *Ṭabaqāt* with his chain from Ibn ʿAbbās who said that when the Prophet ﷺ would describe his lineage he would not go past Maʿdd b. ʿAdnān b. Udud. Stopping there, he ﷺ would say: “The genealogists lie, for Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, says: ﴿And many generations in between﴾ [al-Furqān: 38].²⁶

Ibn Saʿd mentioned various versions of his lineage up to Ismāʿīl and said: “And this disagreement regarding his lineage shows that it was not preserved and that it was merely taken from the People of the Book and translated for them and they differed over it. If there was anything authentic about this the Prophet ﷺ would have known it better than anyone. So as far as we are concerned the lineage stops at Maʿdd b. ʿAdnān and one should withhold from commenting on those who came after him up to Ismāʿīl the son of Ibrāhīm.”

This is correct with regards to that which cannot be reconciled or declared preponderant. In the event that something cannot be reconciled one should not rely on one angle at the expense of another or specify without proof. On the other hand, if there is a preponderant view, such as one being declared the view of the majority, or if it is possible to reconcile between two views—as it is in this issue here by stating that Āzar is Ibrāhīm’s ﷺ uncle and that Tāraḥ is his real father—then one must reconcile the views and declare one of them preponderant.

In addition, the Prophet’s statement ﷺ that “the genealogists lie” is ambiguous [*mujmal*] because he did not explain what they lie about. It is impermissible to take this hadith in the absolute sense whereby it is made to contradict what is authentically reported from the Prophet ﷺ, such as the numerous hadith reports cited

by Imam al-Suyūṭī,²⁷ like: “I was continually transmitted from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure mothers,” and “I am from the choicest to the choicest.”

The hadith about the genealogists must be understood to refer to their statements that contradict the Prophet’s hadith reports ﷺ and their words that can not be provided an alternative explanation. If a statement does not contradict an authentic report there is no reason to reject it solely on account of it coming from the genealogists. The report quoted by Ibn Sa’d on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās contradicts another report from Ibn ‘Abbās that we mentioned earlier, and it also contradicts the Prophet’s statement ﷺ.

Shākir’s citation of the hadith “The genealogists lie” after mentioning that the Prophet ﷺ would not go beyond Ma’d b. ‘Adnān b. Udud when describing his lineage only goes to show that the genealogists’ lies were regarding those who came after Ma’d b. ‘Adnān b. Udud. Where does Shākir get the idea that their lies in genealogy extended beyond Ibrāhīm ؑ? There is no proof for him in the statement of Ibn Sa’d, for Ibn Sa’d concludes that one “should withhold from commenting on those who came after him up to Ismā’īl the son of Ibrāhīm.” Had Shākir remained silent it would have been better for him.



4.2 ON USING THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Shākir went on to say, “As for the scriptures of the People of the Book, Allah Most High describes this Quran, saying: ﴿And We revealed unto you the Book in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it and watching over it﴾ [al-Mā’ida: 48].” This is true. Allah Most High described the Quran, saying that it confirms that which came before it and watches over it. Allah mentioned two unique but interrelated qualities here: that the Quran confirms what is

found in the other divinely revealed books and that it looks after and watches over them. If this is the case then one must affirm what is in the other books so long as it is not established that it is from the corruptions of the distorters. We mentioned earlier that the Torah mentions Ibrāhīm’s father as Terah, and that does not go against the Quran. That is due to the interpretation made necessary by the distinction between the one for whom Ibrāhīm sought forgiveness before his migration to the Levant and from whom he disassociated after the latter died upon disbelief, and the one for whom he sought forgiveness after his migration to the Levant—as mentioned by the Quran itself.



4.3 ON AL-ṬABARĪ’S STATEMENT REGARDING THE MOST CORRECT VIEW

Shākir continued, quoting al-Ṭabarī who said: “According to me, the closest of the two views to what is correct is the view of those who say that it is the name of his father, because Allah Most High informed us that he was his father, and this is the position that is recorded from the people of knowledge, unlike the second view whose adherents claim that it is a description.”²⁸ All of the responses and proofs mentioned before apply to this, and the divertive proof from the Quran has been mentioned.

Looking closely, we see that al-Ṭabarī negated the position that Āzar is a description, but said nothing about the claim that he was Ibrāhīm’s uncle and said nothing about it being recorded. We get the impression from the restrictive clause that this view is not recorded, so al-Ṭabarī’s claim about the most correct position amounts to declaring something preponderant without clarifying the determinant that tilts the balance in that favor. This is no defense against the opposing view. It seems that al-Ṭabarī was not entirely convinced of his own position, and this comes out in

his statement: “According to me, the closest of the two views to what is correct ...” By mentioning the superlative noun “closest,” al-Ṭabarī gives the impression that it is not the correct view, but that it is the most appropriate and most fitting as the correct view. Superlatives are based on a shared description between two objects, so Shākir has no proof for his claim here.



4.4 EXEGESIS THROUGH ANOMALOUS QURANIC READINGS

Aḥmad Shākir’s rejection of the various modes of recitation mentioned by many of the Quranic exegetes—despite the fact that these modes do not contradict what he specified—is a blameworthy innovation and reckless and unprecedented statement. His claim that “the interpretations and explanations that oppose it [the verse in question] are false” is a wholesale rejection and casting out the traditional practice of using anomalous readings [*al-qira’āt al-shādhā*] and other possible angles of interpretation as proof. It also amounts to a dismissal of the principle of inversion [*mafhūm al-mukhālafā*]. So it seems that everything that is different from what Shākir specified is rejected and dismissed even if it doesn’t contradict him. There is no might or power save by Allah the Most High and Magnificent!



5.1 ON THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF WORDS USED IN TECHNICAL NOMENCLATURE

Let it not be forgotten that at most, the term “authentic” according to the hadith scholars is indicative of the soundness of the chain and is a preponderantly sound speculation that the

text is established. The term “authentic” in jurisprudence and hadith mean two different things. For one to use a particular text as a proof requires that he guarantees that it is possible for him to understand a term according to its literal meaning, handle the other proofs that seem to contradict it, and utilize the other tools needed by the independent scholar [*mujtahid*]. There are many authentic hadith that can not be used as proofs and there are many of lesser status that can be used; this is based on the *mujtahid's* own conviction regarding the reliability of the narrators and the status of the source texts. In sum, “soundness” according to the jurists and hadith scholars means two different things. This was outlined in detail by the Sheikh of our Sheikhs, the Sheikh of Islam and the Muslims, our gallant grandfather Aḥmad Riḍā, in his treatise *al-Faḍl al-mūhabī fī ma'nā idhā ṣaḥḥ al-ḥadīth fa huwa madhhabī*—may the King and Giver envelop him in His mercy.

Something that is explicit according to its literal meaning can often be overridden by what is explicit according to customary usage. That is the case here. If we look at the literal meaning, the term “father” means a biological father, but that is opposed by the explicit customary usage that means a paternal uncle. Imam al-Suyūṭī stated: “This is explained linguistically by the fact that the Arabs use the word father to refer to the paternal uncle, and this is wide-spread even if it is figurative.”



CONCLUSION

AHMAD SHĀKIR concluded by mentioning a hadith narrated by al-Bukhārī in which the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that Ibrāhīm ؑ will say [on the Day of Judgment]: “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not disobey me?’ His father will say, ‘Today I shall not disobey you ...’” Shākir commented, “This is an authoritative text proving that his name is definite and it does not accept interpretation or alteration.” But this claim is rejected. If we understand the conjunction “and” to be explanatory²⁹, the apparent meaning of Shākir’s statement indicates that he sees interpretation and alteration as synonymous terms. That does not amount to a slander against a lone individual in this day and age who believes that Āzar was Ibrāhīm’s uncle, rather it is a slander and imprecation against all of the erudite scholars from the early period and the latter-day! Nay, it is a slander that reaches a group of the Companions and Followers. Allah is the source of help! This treatise concludes with absolute astonishment that must be unveiled. Shākir’s view is based upon dividing up the revealed texts, so is there a definitive text that can accept alteration?

Dictated by Muḥammad Akhtar Riḍā Khān al-Qādirī al-Azharī—may Allah forgive him and his parents.

27th RAJAB AL-MURAJJAB, 1426

NOTES

1. Ibn Kathīr, *Qīṣas al-Anbiyā'*, p. 148.
2. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 13:37.
3. Narrated by al-Bukhārī (§3461) and al-Tirmidhī (§2669).
4. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 8:499.
5. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 5:303.
6. Ibid.
7. See Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*.
8. Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Mīzān al-kubrā*, 1:68.
9. Quoting from al-Suyūṭī's *al-Taʿqībāt*. — Translator
10. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *al-Muqaddima*, p. 286.
11. Al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, p. 39.
12. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-rāwī*, 1:350.
13. And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto

Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. Genesis 11:24–32 (King James Version) — Translator

14. Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, 2:570.
15. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, 7:47.
16. Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, 2:570.
17. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥaqqī, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 6:313.
18. This is the recitation of our master Ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه. Abū Ḥayyān said in *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ* (4:163): “And Ibn ʿAbbās also read it as ‘Do you take Āzar ...’ with an interrogative *hamza* and *hamza* after it that is vowelized with a *fatha*, and a *sukūn* on the letter *z* and double enunciation of the *fatha* on the letter *r*; and the interrogative *hamza* is omitted from ‘*atattakhibu*’ [al-Anʿām: 84].
19. Jārullāh al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*.
20. A grammar term, *ishtighāl* is when “a noun is placed before the governing particle that should make it accusative, were it not ‘occupied’ [*ishtighāluhu*] by affecting its pronoun...” (Muṣṭafā al-Ghalāyīnī, *Jāmiʿ al-durūs al-ʿarabiyya*, 3:421). — Translator
21. Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*, 7:194.
22. *Ibid.*, 7:194–195.
23. alāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī li al-fatāwī*, 2:218.
24. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥaqqī, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 6:313.
25. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Nīsābūrī, *Asbāb nuzūl al-Qurʾān*, p. 82.
26. Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:56, and *Ṭabaqāt al-khalīfa*, p. 28, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 3:51–59. This report was narrated from the halted [*mawqūf*] hadith of ʿUmar رضي الله عنه by Ibn Abī Shayba in *Akbbār Madīna*, §1357.
27. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī li al-fatāwī*, 2:211.
28. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 5:304.
29. The phrase used by Ust. Aḥmad Shākir, “*wa lā al-taḥrīf*,” uses the letter “*wa*” which is normally a co-coordinating conjunction, but can be an explanatory conjunction. — Translator