

## 6. ‘Aqidah Al-Raj’ah: Between ‘Umar And ‘Ali

‘Umar b. al-Khattab, the second Sunni *khalifah*, 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 Saba. Imam al-Bukhari (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 وليبعثه الله فليقطعن أيدي رجال وأرجلهم .

Isma’il b. ‘Abd Allah – Sulayman b. Bilal – Hisham b. ‘Urwah – ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr – ‘Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, the wife of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, died while Abu Bakr was at a place called al-Sunah (i.e. al-‘Aliyah). ‘Umar stood up, saying, “I swear by Allah! The Messenger of Allah is not dead!” She (‘Aishah) narrated: ‘Umar said, “I swear by Allah! Nothing occurred to my mind except that. **Verily! Allah will RESURRECT<sup>1</sup> him and he will cut the hands and legs of some men.**”<sup>2</sup>

It is this very belief that has been attributed to ‘Abd Allah b. Saba in the *mawduh*’ (fabricated) report documented by Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310 H):

فقال لهم فيما يقول لعجب ممن يزعم أن عيسى يرجع ويكذب بأن محمدا يرجع وقد قال الله عز و جل 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 ‘Isa will return but rejects that Muhammad will return. Meanwhile, Allah the Almighty has said, ‘Verily, He Who has ordained the Qur’an upon you (O Muhammad) will surely bring you back to a place of return’ (28:85). As such, **Muhammad is more entitled to return than ‘Isa.**” So, it was accepted from him, and he created for them (the doctrine of) *al-*

*raj'ah*, and they spoke about it.[3](#)

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

Meanwhile, there is also good Sunni evidence to support a theory that Amir al-Muminin 'Ali b. Abi Talib, '*alaihi al-salam*, equally believed in his own *raj'ah* before the *Qiyamah*. Imam al-Tabari 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 فنصحته، فبعثه الله إلى قومه، فضربوه ضربتين في رأسه، فسمي ذا القرنين، وفيكم اليوم مثله.

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna – Muhammad b. Ja'far – Shu'bah – al-Qasim b. Abi Bazzah – Abu al-Tufayl:

I heard 'Ali while they asked him about Dhu al-Qarnayn: “Was he a prophet?” He replied, “He was a righteous servant. He loved Allah and Allah loved him. He sought the guidance of Allah and He guided him. Then, Allah sent him to his people. **But, they struck him twice on his head. As a result, he was named Dhu al-Qarnayn. And among you today is an example of him.**[4](#)

Commenting upon this exact *riwayah*, Prof. Ibn Yasin pronounces:

وسنده صحيح

Its chain is *sahih*.[5](#)

So , the matter is clear and undisputable.

This *sahih athar* proves the following:

1. Dhu al-Qarnayn, '*alaihi al-salam*, was not a prophet. But, he was a righteous servant loved by Allah, 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, Allah nonetheless “sent” him to his people, like a prophet. This shows that non-prophets can be given *some* qualities and jobs of prophets.

Imam al-Tabari 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 عبداً ناصح الله فناصره، فدعا قومه إلى الله، فضربوه على قرنه فمات، فأحياه الله، فدعا قومه إلى الله، فضربوه على قرنه فمات، فسمي ذا القرنين.

Muhammad b. Bashar – Yahya – Sufyan – Habib b. Abi Thabit – Abu al–Tufayl:

‘Ali, *ridhwanullah ‘alaihi*, was asked about Dhu al–Qarnayn, and he replied, “He was a servant who sought the guidance of Allah, and He guided him. He called his people to Allah. **So, they struck him on his *qarn*, AND HE DIED. But, Allah RESURRECTED him, and he (again) called his people to Allah. They (once again) struck him on his *qarn*, AND HE DIED. Therefore, he was named Dhu al–Qarnayn.**[6](#)

This report too is *sahih*. Al–Hafiz (d. 852 H) states about the first narrator:

محمد بن بشار بن عثمان العبدي البصري أبو بكر بNDAR ثقة

Muhammad b. Bashar b. ‘Uthman al–‘Abdi al–Basri, Abu Bakr Bundar: ***Thiqah* (trustworthy).**[7](#)

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

Yahya b. Sa’id b. Farrukh al–Tamimi, Abu Sa’id al–Qattan al– Basri: ***Thiqah* (trustworthy)**, extremely precise, a *hadith* scientist, **an Imam, a leader.**[8](#)

On the third narrator, al–Hafiz submits:

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

Sufyan b. Sa’id b. Masruq al–Thawri, Abu ‘Abd Allah al–Kufi: ***Thiqah* (trustworthy)**, a *hadith* scientist, a jurist, a devout worshipper of Allah, **an Imam, a *hujjah* (authority).**[9](#)

The fourth narrator is *thiqah* (trustworthy) too, as al–Hafiz declares:

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

Habib b. Abi Thabit Qays, and he is called Hind, b. Dinar al-Asadi, their freed slave, Abu Yahya al-Kufi: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a jurist, meritorious. He used to do a lot of *irsal* and *tadlis*. [10](#)

The only problem here is that Habib was a *mudalis*, and he has narrated in an ‘*an*–‘*an* manner from Abu al-Tufayl, *radhiyallahu ‘anhu*. However, this matter is resolved by the *mutaba’ah* of al-Qasim b. Abi Bazzah, which has already been examined above. Therefore, the report of Habib is *sahih* through the *mutaba’ah* of al-Qasim.

Meanwhile, Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 H) has also documented a slightly more detailed *riwayah* 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 نبياً ولا ملكاً، ولكنه كان عابداً ناصحاً 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

Yahya b. Sa’id – Sufyan – Habib b. Abi Thabit – Abu al-Tufayl:

‘Ali was asked about Dhu al-Qarnayn, and he replied, “He was neither a prophet nor an angel. Rather, he was a servant who sought the guidance of Allah, and He guided him. He called his people to Allah. **So, he was struck on his right *qarn*, AND HE DIED. But, Allah RESURRECTED him, and he (again) called his people to Allah. He was (once again) struck on his left *qarn*, AND HE DIED. Then, Allah RESURRECTED him (again). Therefore, he was named Dhu al-Qarnayn.** [11](#)

Of course, the *sanad* is *sahih* through its *mutaba’ah*, as we have already established.

Prof. Ibn Yasin quotes another report for us:

قال الضياء المقدسي: أخبرنا أبو المجد زاهر بن أحمد بن حامد بن أحمد الثقفي – بقراءتي عليه بأصبهان – 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 المخزومي، ثنا سفيان ابن عيينة عن ابن أبي حسين، عن أبي الطفيل قال: سمعت ابن الكواء يسأل علي بن أبي طالب – رضي الله عنه – عن ذي القرنين فقال علي: لم يكن نبياً ولا ملكاً، كان عبداً صالحاً، أحبَّ الله فأحبه، وناصح الله فناصحه الله، بُعث إلى قومه فضربوه على قرنه فمات فبعثه الله، فسمي ذي القرنين

Al-Dhiya al-Maqdisi said:

Abu al-Majd Zahir b. Ahmad b. Hamid b. Ahmad al-Thaqafi – Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. al-Husayn al-Khalal – Imam Abu al-Fadhl ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. Bundar al-Razi al-Muqri – Abu al-Hasan Ahmad b. Ibrahim b. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Faras – Abu Ja’far Muhammad

b. Ibrahim al-Duyali – Abu ‘Ubayd Allah Sa’id b. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Makhzumi – Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah – Ibn Abi Husayn – Abu al-Tufayl:

I heard Ibn al-Kawa asking ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, about Dhu al-Qarnayn, and ‘Ali replied, “He was not a prophet, and he was not an angel. He was rather a righteous servant. He loved Allah; so, He loved him too. He sought the guidance of Allah; and so, He guided him. He was sent to his people. **But, they struck him on his *qarn* AND HE DIED. Then, Allah RESURRECTED him, and he was thereby named Dhu al-Qarnayn.** [12](#)

Giving the source, our professor states:

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

(*Al-Mukhtarat* 2/175, # 555) and al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar declared it *sahih* after attributing it to *al-Mukhtarat* of al-Hafiz al-Dhiya (*al-Fath* 6/383) [13](#)

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

أخرجه سفيان بن عيينة 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

Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah recorded it in his *Jami’* from Ibn Abi Husayn from Abu al-Tufayl, and he added: “He sought the guidance of Allah; and so, He guided him” and in it is “He was not a prophet, and he was not an angel”. **Its chain is *sahih*.** We heard it in *al-Ahadith al-Mukhtarat* of al-Hafiz al-Dhiya. [14](#)

Obviously, al-Hafiz only declares the much shorter chain of Sufyan in his *Jami’* as *sahih*. However, he confirms that what we find in *al-Ahadith al-Mukhtarat* of al-Dhiya is the same as that which was recorded by Sufyan in his book. Meanwhile, al-Hafiz’s *tashih* actually comes *before* his mention of al-Dhiya’s book, contrary to the erroneous submission of our professor. In any case, this *sahih* report is, apparently, an additional strengthening *mutaba’ah* for the *riwayah* of Habib b. Abi Thabit.

Imam Ibn Abi Asim (d. 287 H) here presents the seal of these *athar*:

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

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah – Waki’ – Bassam – Abu al-Tufayl – ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him:

Dhu al-Qarnayn was a righteous man. He sought the guidance of Allah the Almighty, and He guided him. So, he was struck on his right *qarn*, AND HE DIED. But, Allah the Almighty RESURRECTED him. Then, he was struck on his left *qarn*, AND HE DIED, and Allah the Almighty RESURRECTED him (again). **And among you is an example of him.** [15](#)

Concerning the first narrator, al-Hafiz says:

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

Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. Abi Shaybah Ibrahim b. 'Uthman, of Wasiti origin, Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah al-Kufi: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a *hadith* scientist, author of books. [16](#)

On the second narrator, he states as well:

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

Waki' b. al-Jarah b. Malih al-Ruwasi, Abu Sufyan al-Kufi: **Thiqah (trustworthy)**, a *hadith* scientist, a devout worshipper of Allah. [17](#)

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

بسام بن عبد الله الصيرفي الكوفي أبو الحسن صدوق

Bassam b. 'Abd Allah al-Sayrafi al-Kufi, Abu al-Hasan: **Saduq (very truthful)**. [18](#)

So, the *isnad* is *hasan*, due to Bassam, and the *hadith* itself is *sahih* on account of its *mutaba'at* and *shawahid*.

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

وفيكُم اليوم مثله.

And among you today is an example of him.

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 Dhu al-Qarnayn. That person too:

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

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

Imam Ibn Salam (d. 224 H), a grand ancient Sunni *hadith* 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 وفيكم 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 *hadith* from ‘Ali himself. It (the *hadith*), in my view, explains it to us. And that is, he (‘Ali) mentioned Dhu al-Qarnayn and said, “He called his people to the worship of Allah, and they struck him on his *qarn twice*. **And among you is an example of him**”. **So, we see that he (‘Ali) 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.”<sup>19</sup>

Imam Ibn al-Athir (d. 606 H), a leading classical Sunni *hadith* linguist, also submits:

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

And from it is the *hadith* of ‘Ali. He mentioned the story of Dhu 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.[20](#)

This explanation of Ibn al-Athir is slightly misleading. Dhu al-Qarnayn was given two *fatal* blows, which resulted in his deaths twice. Since ‘Ali 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. Amir al-Muminin was, of course, martyred by Ibn Muljam, who struck him on his head. But, he has not been resurrected by Allah yet – as He did with Dhu al-Qarnayn. Therefore, the incident will definitely happen in the future. ‘Ali will come back, and will be fatally hit again on his death. He will die a second time, on the surface of this earth. Dhu al-Qarnayn was revived once more after the second death, and our *mawla*, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, will still “return” after his own second death as well.

Imam al-Nasafi (d. 710 H) has this comment about the words of ‘Ali 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 بعته الله فضرب على قرنه الأيسر فمات فبعته الله فسمي ذا القرنين وفيكم مثله أراد نفسه

It is narrated that ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said (about Dhu 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 of Allah. So, he died. Then, Allah resurrected him. But, he was (again) struck on his left *qarn* and he died. Then, Allah resurrected him (once more). As a result, he was named Dhu al-Qarnayn. And there is an example of him among you.” **He meant himself.**[21](#)

Meanwhile, there is a *shahid* from the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*, for the words of Amir al-Muminin in the *athar*. Imam Ahmad (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 و سلم قال له يا علي ان لك كنزا من الجنة وانك ذو قرنيها

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – ‘Affan – Hamad b. Salamah – Muhammad b. Ishaq – Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Taymi – Salamah b. Abi al-Tufayl – ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him:

Verily, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “O ‘Ali! Surely, you are the owner of a treasure in Paradise, **and you are its Dhu al-Qarnayn.**”[22](#)

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

حسن لغيره

### *Hasan li ghayrihi*[23](#)

‘Allamah al–Albani (d. 1420 H) too says:

حسن لغيره

### *Hasan li ghayrihi*[24](#)

Imam al–Hakim (d. 403 H) also documents:

حدثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب ثنا الحسن بن علي بن عفان العامري ثنا عبد الله بن نمير أخبرنا أحمد بن سهل الفقيه ببخارى ثنا أبو عصمة سهل بن المتوكل البخاري ثنا عفان وسليمان بن حرب قالا : 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

Abu al–‘Abbas Muhammad b. Ya’qub – al–Hasan b. ‘Ali b. ‘Affan al–‘Amiri – ‘Abd Allah b. Numayr – Ahmad b. Sahl al–Faqih – Abu ‘Ismah Sahl b. al–Mutawakil al–Bukhari – ‘Affan and Sulayman b. Harb – Hammad b. Salamah – Muhammad b. Ishaq – Muhammad b. Ibrahim al–Taymi – Salamah b. Abi al–Tufayl – perhaps his father – ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to me: “**O ‘Ali!** Verily, you are the owner of a treasure in Paradise, **and you are its Dhu al–Qarnayn.**”[25](#)

Al–Hakim declares:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This *hadith* has a *sahih* chain.[26](#)

And Imam al–Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees with him:

صحيح

### *Sahih*[27](#)

So, what does this *hadith* mean, especially the last part? The determining factor is the (ها) [“its”] in (قرنيها) [“its Dhu al–Qarnayn”]. To what does it refer. On the apparent, it refers to (الجنة) [“Paradise”] mentioned earlier in the *hadith*, especially since it also has a feminine grammar. If it is a reference to Paradise, then Amir al–Muminin will be its Dhu al–Qarnayn, and that is, its emperor. This is because the

comparison then would be about kingdom, as opposed to personal merits or qualities. Dhu al-Qarnayn was the emperor of the earth during his lifetime, as the Qur'an 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 Dhu 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.'**"[28](#)

Therefore, if Imam 'Ali is the Dhu al-Qarnayn of Paradise, then he will be its emperor. Allah will establish him over Paradise, and will give him the means of everything there. This, indeed, is an extremely great virtue of Amir al-Muminin. He will be the emperor over all the *awliya*, prophets, messengers and Imams except his own master, Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah – 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 Imam 'Ali is the Dhu al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah* only, according to the *hadith*. Imam Ibn Salam for instance states about the *riwayah*:

قد كان بعض أهل العلم يتأول هذا الحديث أنه ذو قرني الجنة – يريد طرفيها، وإنما 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 *hadith* to mean that he ('Ali) will be the Dhu 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 *hadith*. As for me, I do not think that he (the Prophet) intended that, and Allah knows best. Rather, he (the Prophet) intended that "You are the Dhu al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah*", and thereby pronounced the *Ummah*.[29](#)

Since the lifetime of the *Ummah* has exceeded that of 'Ali and his rule for more a millennium, obviously this alternative interpretation cannot be about political authority. He is the only Dhu al-Qarnayn of this *Ummah*, but not its only ruler. As such, the comparison between 'Ali and Dhu al-Qarnayn – as far as our *Ummah* is concerned – is apparently about their shared personal merits and qualities, and not about their political histories. Imam al-Mundhiri (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 شجتان في قرني رأسه إحداهما من ابن ملجم لعنه الله والأخرى من عمرو بن ود

His statement, peace be upon him, to 'Ali "and you are its Dhu al-Qarnayn", that is, the Dhu 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 Allah curse him, and the other from 'Amr b. Wudd.[30](#)

‘Ali Shiri, the annotator of *Tarikh Madinah Dimashq*, quotes a similar exegesis for the *hadith*:

جاء في الفائق للزمخشري ٣/١٧٣ 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: إحداهما يوم الخندق والثانية ضربة ابن ملجم.

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

(He, peace be upon him, said to ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him: “Verily, that is a house in Paradise, and you are its Dhu al-Qarnayn”. **The pronoun (i.e. “its”) refers to the *Ummah*** and its explanation is in what it narrated from ‘Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, that he mentioned Dhu al-Qarnayn and said, “He called his people to the worship of Allah, 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.<sup>[31](#)</sup>

This escapist diversion, however, does not help either. Dhu al-Qarnayn was so named because he received two *fatal* blows to his head. Amir al-Muminin is his example in this *Ummah*, and our own Dhu al-Qarnayn. Therefore, the non-fatal strikes on ‘Ali’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, Amir al-Muminin 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 Dhu al-Qarnayn*. This was ‘Ali’s own belief about himself.

<sup>1</sup> A Sunni 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 Sunni translator of Sahih al-Bukhari, has also rendered the word as “resurrect” (see Sahih al-Bukhari, English Translation, Volume 5, Book 57, Number 19). The alternative translation – “send” – which is offered by our Sunni brother makes no sense. For instance, ‘Umar’s words would look like this: “Verily! Allah will SEND him and he will cut the hands and legs of some men.” But, Allah has already sent His Prophet decades before that period! Or, did ‘Umar not believe, up till that moment, that Muhammad was a messenger sent by Allah? 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, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, 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 Allah once Abu Bakr arrived and spoke, we have been unable to locate any authentic Sunni evidence showing that he ever recanted his other claim about the future *raj’ah* of Muhammad.

<sup>2</sup> Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Isma’il b. Ibrahim b. Mughirah al-Bukhari al-Ju’fi, al-Jami’ al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar (Beirut:

Dar Ibn Kathir; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Dib al-Bagha], vol. 3, p. 1341, # 3467

[3.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1407 H), vol. 2, p. 647

[4.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir b. Yazid b. Kathir b. Ghalib al-Amuli al-Tabari, Jami al-Bayan fi Tawil al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: Sidqi Jamil al-'Attar], vol. 16, pp. 12-13. A Sunni opponent makes some very ridiculous claims about this riwayat. He is unable to reject its authenticity. So, he alleges that it is "very possible" that Amir al-Muminin learnt this hadith from the Israelites! Alas, Imam 'Ali was, without any doubt, NOT among those Sahabah who used to go to the Israelites to learn their religion! Mawquf reports bordering on al-ghayb – like this one – from Sahabah like 'Ali are graded marfu' (i.e. from the Prophet). Even a beginner in Sunni 'ilm al-hadith knows this! Our Sunni friend also claims that the Prophet was once asked about Dhu al-Qarnayn, and he did not know whether Dhu al-Qarnayn was a prophet or not. But, the explanation of thing is very simple. The Messenger of Allah made that statement before Allah informed him of the status of Dhu al-Qarnayn. However, when He eventually told him, he too narrated it to his Sahabah. That is the logical explanation in view of the ahadith of Amir al-Muminin.

[5.](#) Prof. Dr. Hikmat b. Bashir b. Yasin, Mawsu'at al-Sahih al-Masbur min al-Tafsir bi al-Mathur (Madinah: Dar al-Mathar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi' wa al-Taba'at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 3, p. 322

[6.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir b. Yazid b. Kathir b. Ghalib al-Amuli al-Tabari, Jami al-Bayan fi Tawil al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: Sidqi Jamil al-'Attar], vol. 16, p. 12

[7.](#) Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 58, # 5772

[8.](#) Ibid, vol. 2, p. 303, # 7584

[9.](#) Ibid, vol. 1, p. 371, # 2452

[10.](#) Ibid, vol. 1, p. 183, # 1087

[11.](#) 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. Abi Shaybah Ibrahim b. 'Uthman b. Abi Bakr b. Abi Shaybah al-Kufi al-'Ubsi, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah fi al-Ahadith wa al-Athar (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1409 H) [annotator: Prof. Sa'id al-Laham], vol. 7, p. 468, # 4

[12.](#) Prof. Dr. Hikmat b. Bashir b. Yasin, Mawsu'at al-Sahih al-Masbur min al-Tafsir bi al-Mathur (Madinah: Dar al-Mathar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi' wa al-Taba'at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 3, p. 322

[13.](#) Ibid

[14.](#) Shihab al-Din Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr; 2nd edition), vol. 6, p. 271

[15.](#) Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'Amr b. Abi 'Asim al-Dhahhak al-Shaybani, al-Ahad wa al-Mathani (Riyadh: Dar al-Rayah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Dr. Basim Faysal Ahmad al-Jawabirah], vol. 1, p. 141, # 168

[16.](#) Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 1, p. 528, # 3586

[17.](#) Ibid, vol. 2, p. pp. 283-284, # 7441

[18.](#) Ibid, vol. 1, p. 124, # 663

[19.](#) Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim b. Salam al-Harwi, Gharib al-Hadith (Haydarabad: Majlis Dairah al-Ma'arif al-'Uthmaniyyah; 1st edition, 1385 H), vol. 3, p. 80

[20.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Abu Sa'adat al-Mubarak b. Muhammad al-Jazari, al-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wa al-Athar (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah; 1399 H) [annotators: Tahir Ahmad al-Zawi and Mahmud Muhammad al-Tanahi], vol. 4, p. 52

[21.](#) Abu al-Barakat 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Mahmud al-Nasafi, Tafsir al-Nasafi (Beirut: Dar al-Nafais; 2005 CE) [annotator: Shaykh Marwan Muhammad al-Shi'ar], vol. 3, p. 40

[22.](#) Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 1, p. 159, # 1373

[23.](#) Ibid

[24.](#) Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Sahih al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif; 5th edition), vol. 2, p. 189, # 1902

[25.](#) Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub

al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 3, p. 133, # 4623

[26.](#) Ibid

[27.](#) Ibid

[28.](#) Qur'an 18:83-84

[29.](#) Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim b. Salam al-Harwi, Gharib al-Hadith (Haydarabad: Majlis Dairah al-Ma'arif al-'Uthmaniyyah; 1st edition, 1385 H), vol. 3, pp. 78-79

[30.](#) Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-'Azim b. 'Abd al-Qawi al-Mundhiri, al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhib (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1417 H) [annotator: Ibrahim Shams al-Din], vol. 3, p. 24

[31.](#) Abu al-Qasim 'Ali b. al-Hasan b. Habat Allah b. 'Abd Allah, Ibn Asakir al-Shafi'i, Tarikh Madinah Dimashq (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1417 H) [annotator: 'Ali Shiri], vol. 43, p. 324, footnote # 4

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