

‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’

Fact not fiction

Dr. Sa‘dī al-Hāshimī

Transliteration key

أ- 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ḏ
ت - t	ع - 'a
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - w, ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

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Introduction

ان الحمد لله نحمده و نستعينه و نستغفره و نستهديه و نعوذ بالله من شرور انفسنا و سيئات اعمالنا من يهد
الله فهو المهتدى و من يضلل فلا هادى له و اشهد ان لا اله الا الله و حده لا شريك له و اشهد ان محمدا
عبده و رسوله صلى الله عليه و على آله و اصحابه و سلم تسليما كثيرا اما بعد

All praise belongs to Allah, we laud Him, seek His assistance, His forgiveness and His guidance. We seek the protection of Allah from the evil of ourselves and our misdeeds. Whoever Allah guides is surely guided and whoever He leads astray, there is no one who can guide him. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, Who is one and has no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and messenger. May Allah shower His blessings and His abundant mercy upon him, his family and Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُم.

The muḥaddithīn and scholars of various branches of Islamic learning such as *jarḥ wa ta’dīl* (scrutiny of narrators), history, study of deviant sects, biography, grammar, etc all agree on the existence of this evil cunning person. This person is none other than ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’, commonly called Ibn al-Sawdā’, who was the architect of a most grievous revolution and propagator of evil which incited the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites), defectors and all those with sinister ulterior motives against the khalīfah. He outwardly embraced Islam in the khilāfah of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, expressing love and affection for Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, and portrayed himself as an advocator for him.

He travelled through the lands of Islam, discouraging people from obeying the khalīfah. He began his efforts in Ḥijāz and then proceeded to Baṣrah, Kūfah, and finally Damascus, but was unable to influence anyone with his propaganda in Syria. The people of Syria expelled him and so he proceeded to Egypt, where he established his base of operations.

He began a series of correspondences with the *munāfiqīn* and dissenters, inciting them against the khalīfah of the Muslims. Supporters gathered around him and he began propagating his wicked beliefs to them. He sowed the seeds of dissention

and renunciation until they finally had the audacity to murder the third of the Rightly Guided Khulafā, the son-in-law of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, the compiler of the Qur’ān, Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, the martyr of the house, showing no respect to the Ḥaram of Rasūlullāh ﷺ nor any consideration to ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ reciting the noble Qur’ān or the sacred months.

This has not been denied by anyone possessing even the least amount of knowledge and a pinch of intellect, with the exception of some in this era. They are but a few, comprising of the likes of the Orientalists and those who follow them, as well as those bootlickers of our race, who speak in our tongue. They also include a group of ignorant Muslims and extremist Shī‘ah from this era. All of them have abandoned the clear truth and have grasped on to contradictory opinions, which are weaker than even the web of a spider.

The stance of the Orientalists

As far as the Orientalists are concerned, they deny his existence completely. They claim that he is a myth, invented by the muḥaddithīn of the second century. Amongst the Orientalists who deny his existence are, the British Dr. Bernard Lewis¹, J. Wellhausen², who began his learning with the study of theology, the American- Friedlaender³ and the Italian born Caetani Leone⁴.

It is well-known that one cannot depend upon the research and narrations of these enemies of Islam as far as our dīn, ‘aqīdah (beliefs), tārikh (history) and legacy is concerned. They are those who have united beneath the war-banners of

1 *Usūl al-Ismā‘īlyyīn wa l-Ismā‘īlyyah* page 86, 87

2 *Al-Khawārij wa l-Shī‘ah*

3 *‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ wa l-Shī‘ah*

4 Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismailism*. A few of the Orientalists do consider Ibn Sabā’ to be a real personality of history such as Reynold Allen Nicholson in his book, *A literary history of the Arabs*, as well as Ignaz Goldziher in his book, *Muhammedanische Studien*. One can refer to their opinions regarding ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sabā’ in the work *‘Abd Allāh Ibn Sabā’ wa Atharuhū fī Aḥdāth al-Fitnah fī Ṣadr al-Islām* by Sulaymān ibn Ḥamd al-‘Awdah, who in 1402 /1986 attained a masters degree from Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd University in Riyāḍ.

Christianity waging an ideology and propaganda war, not only a war with swords or guns. If their intentions were sincere then they would have been guided to Islam through their research, when they discovered the purity of Islam and its unstained legacy. Instead they dedicated all their efforts and their lives to create doubts, misconceptions and ultimately departure from the Qur'ān, Sunnah, 'aqā'id, Islamic system and its history. These Orientalists are mainly from amongst the Christians and Jews, whose practices and beliefs are supported by the church, intelligence agencies and foreign governments, with the exception of a few who take on such research as a hobby or pastime.

The followers of the Orientalists

The followers of the Orientalists are those who have been duped and fooled by their imaginary prowess in scholarship. They are impressed by the deductions they assert and their teachings, buzzing around their presumptions so as to draw closer to them. The leader of this group is Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn¹, who has been nourished with the ideologies of the Orientalists such that he used to say: "I think in French and I write in Arabic."²

It is sufficient as a disgrace for him that he was a servant of the Jews. In fact, at the beginning of this century all proponents of communism in Egypt, such as Henri Curiel, Raoul Curiel, and Raymond Aron, were Jews. They and others like them were involved in providing financial and material support to communists movements. They aligned themselves with Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn to establish a publishing house in Egypt. Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn publicly announced his support for Jewish Talmudic beliefs early on when he denied the existence of Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and Ismā'īl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, in addition to denying the Qur'ān and Torah. At this early stage it was impossible to fathom that this was the prelude to Zionism³ and other deviant ideologies unprecedented until the rise of Orientalism.⁴

1 'Alī wa Banūhū page. 98-100, *Al-Fitnah al-Kubrā*

2 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn by Anwar Jundī page. 43,44

3 See *Al-Mukhathathāt Al-Talmūdiyyah Al-Ṣahyūniyyah fī Ghazw al-Fikr al-Islāmī* by Anwar al-Jundī

4 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn by Anwar al-Jundī

Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's father is known to have moved to al-Minyah district in Upper Egypt from an unknown city in the west. His father was an employee of a Jewish sugar company. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is the very person who spearheaded the motion to appoint a Jewish rabbi, Chaim Nahum Effendi, when he was a member of the academy of Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, so as to spy upon the thinkers and linguists. He also imported and appointed a number of foreign professors at the Faculty of Arts. Some were Jews, but all were either antagonistic towards Islam or sowing skepticism around it. The first doctorate conferred by the Faculty of Arts under the supervision of Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was entitled "Jewish tribes in Arabia". It was submitted by Israel Wolfensohn, the current rector of Hadassah University in Tel Aviv.¹

In light of this brief overview of Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, his denial of Ibn Saba's existence is not surprising. He states:

The actions of the Saba'iyyah and their leader Ibn al-Sawdā' are fabrications invented in the course of polemical strife between the Shī'ah and other denominations. In an effort to conspire against the Shī'ah and harm their cause, their opponents inserted a Jewish element into the foundation of this sect.²

Proof of Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn

He cited as proof for his deduction the fact that the historian, al-Balādhurī, did not mention anything about Ibn Saba' or his companions, regarding what transpired with Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه. He finds it strange that the incident narrated by al-Ṭabarī on Sayyidunā 'Alī's رضي الله عنه burning those who deified him was neither mentioned nor dated by other historians; in fact they completely omitted any reference to it.³

1 See Murtaḍā al-'Askarī, *Ma'a Rijāl al-fikr fi l-Qāhirah*, page 166

2 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *'Alī wa Banūhū*, pages 98-100

3 *ibid*

Refutation of Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn

Al-Balādhurī not mentioning anything about Ibn Saba’ does not mean that he did not exist, because at times some historians will report what others have not. Thereupon when did al-Balādhurī take responsibility of reporting every single incident that transpired? Even if al-Balādhurī had reported the incident of Ibn Saba’, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn would have said: “The reports of al-Balādhurī are not relied upon, as his credibility is not a matter of consensus.”¹

Sayyidunā ‘Alī’s عليه السلام burning those who deified him will be discussed under the stance of ‘Alī عليه السلام towards Ibn Saba’ and his companions, as reported in sources second only to the Qur’ān in authenticity, whose narrations obviate the need for historical reports. **In addition, this has also been reported in the most relied upon works of the Shī’ah.**

Dr. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn

Following Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Dr. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn considers the incident of Ibn Saba’ more likely to be a myth than anything else.² He fails to produce any evidence to that effect.

Dr. Ḥāmid Ḥifnī Dāwūd

A similar view is held by Dr. Ḥāmid Ḥifnī Dāwūd, dean of the Faculty of Arabic at ‘Ayn Shams University. He believed that Ibn Saba’ was one of the greatest historical inaccuracies that slipped beyond the grasp of scholars. The resulting obfuscation led to a failure to understand and detect this fallacy. This is one of many fabrications invented against the Shī’ah. The incident of Ibn Saba’ was one

1 Refer to the biography of Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jābir ibn Dawūd al-Balādhurī (279 A.H) in *Mu’jam al-Adibbā* of Yaḥyā al-Hamawī, 5/92, also *Lisān al-Mizān* 2/ 323-332, *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Damashq* 2/109, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* 11/65,66, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* 3/83

2 *Adab Miṣr al-Fāṭimiyyah* page 7

such incident that was fabricated and thereafter considered to be a blemish upon the Shī’ah¹.

Refutation of Dr. Ḥāmid Ḥifnī Dāwūd

Dr. Ḥāmid Ḥifnī Dāwūd is amongst those who fell for the deception of the idea of sunnī-shī’ī rapprochement, and one of its promoters. Such claims from him are not strange considering that he seeks rapprochement with those who raise doubts regarding the authenticity of the Qur’ān, criticise the Ṣaḥābah and casts slurs against the Mothers of the Believers رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُنَّ, such as Murtaḍā al-‘Askarī- the author of *Khamsūn wa Mi’atah Ṣaḥābī Mukhtalaqūn* (One hundred and fifty fabricated Ṣaḥābah) and *Aḥādīth Umm al-Mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah*.

Shī’ah who deny the existence of Ibn Saba’

As far as the Shī’ah in the present era are concerned, they deny the existence of Ibn Saba’ completely. The true reason for this denial is on account of the beliefs he propagated, which filtered down through the various sects of the Shī’ah until even the latter day sects. We will mention the views and opinions of those who deny his existence and we will then prove his existence from the most relied upon Shī’ī works.

Muḥammad Jawwād Mughniyyah and Ibn Saba’

‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ in the opinion of Muḥammad Jawwād Mughniyyah is that it is a fabricated tale, relied upon by all those who attribute to the Shī’ah what they have no knowledge about and which they fallaciously ascribe to them out of ignorance and hypocrisy.²

1 *Ma’a Rijāl al-Fikr fi l-Qāhirah* page 8 of Murtaḍā al-‘Askarī page 93

2 *Al-Tashayyū’* page 18

Murtaḍā al-‘Askarī and Ibn Saba’

Murtaḍā al-‘Askarī was under the impression that he had studied all the sources regarding the existence of Ibn Saba’ from which he deduced that Ibn Saba’ is a fictional, imaginary character, conjured up by Sayf ibn ‘Umar¹. He wrote a book specifically about Ibn Saba’ entitled- ‘*Abd Allāh Ibn Saba’ wa Asāthūr al-Ukhrā*.

Dr. ‘Alī al-Wardī and Ibn Saba’

As far as Dr. ‘Alī al-Wardī is concerned, author of *Wu‘āz al-Sālātīn*; he is of the opinion that Ibn Saba’ is in actual fact Sayyidunā ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه. He cites the following as proof for his conclusion:

Ibn Saba’ was commonly called Ibn al-Soudā’ and so was ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه.

‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه was of Yemeni descent, which would mean that he too is of the children of Saba’ (a city in Yemen) and it is correct to refer to anyone from Yemen as Ibn Saba’.

In addition, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه had great affection for ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, campaigning for him and encouraging others to pledge their allegiance to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه travelled to Egypt during the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه and incited the people to rebel against him. The governor of Egypt admonished him for this and even intended to arrest him.

The following statement of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه has been attributed to Ibn Saba’: “‘Uthmān claimed the khilāfah without any right to it whereas the rightful successor to it, in light of Shari’ah, was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.”

The stance of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه in the battle of Jamal and his attachment to Abū Dhar رضي الله عنه.

¹ *Al-Tashayyu’* page 18, 19

It is from this that Al-Wardī concluded that Ibn Saba' is no one else but 'Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه and it was he who the Quraysh considered to be amongst the chief agitators against 'Uthmān ibn Affān رضي الله عنه, except that 'Ammār رضي الله عنه did not desire to use his name and thus adopted the *nom de plume* of Ibn Saba' or Ibn al-Soudā'. Those narrators who reported these accounts later, did so using the *nom de plume*, unaware of who was the actual person making these statements¹.

Dr Al-Wardī says:

It is apparent that this strange character was invented by the wealthy individuals who were the target of the revolution.²

Dr. Kāmil Muṣṭafā and Ibn Saba'

Another author arrived on the scene shortly after Al-Wardī by the name of Dr. Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, who leaned towards the research of Al-Wardī and attempted to strengthen the findings inferred to in his works from *nuṣūṣ* (reported text). He also followed the view of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn regarding the incident of Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه burning the followers of Ibn Saba' saying:

As for the alleged incident of burning the followers of Ibn Saba', it is a fabricated tale from its very inception. It has not been reported by any credible narrator in any of the reliable books of history. It is possible that the origin of this incident in reality refers to the burning by Khālid ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī and his extremist disciples. As time passed, slowly it was reported to have occurred earlier than it actually did, until finally it was said to have transpired during the khilāfah of 'Alī رضي الله عنه³.

1 *Wu'āz al-Salāṭīn* page 274-278

2 *Ibid* page 151

3 *Al-Ṣīlah bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyu'* page 41-45

Refutation of Al-Wardī and Al-Shībī

As far as the opinions of Al-Wardī and Al-Shībī are concerned that Ibn Saba’ is in actual fact Sayyidunā ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه; the most relied upon sources of scrutiny amongst the Shī’ah refutes this claim entirely. The books of the Shī’ah mention in the biography of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه that he was one of the companions of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and also of those who narrated from him. They regard ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه amongst the four faithful¹. They then discuss the biography of Ibn Saba’ separately, reporting that he was cursed by the A’immah, whereas ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه was praised by ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. How then do they reconcile between these two contradictory biographies?²

As for the incident of burning the followers of Ibn Saba’, we will soon mention the authentic reports in this regard and the stance of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه towards them.

Dr. ‘Abd Allāh Fayyāḍ and Ibn Saba’

Similarly Dr. ‘Abd Allāh Fayyāḍ has also denied his existence in his book- *Tārīkh al-Imāmiyyah wa Aslāfahum min al-Shī’ah*, which in itself is a book based entirely upon the research of the Orientalists. His chief supervisor is Dr. Constantine Zurayq Aḥmad, professor of history in the American University in Beirut.

Dr. Fayyāḍ says:

It is apparent that Ibn Saba’ was more of a fictional person than a true historical personality. His role, if he had any whatsoever, has been greatly exaggerated for political and religious motives. The proofs for the weakness of the tale of Ibn Saba’ are numerous.

1 The four faithful are ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه, Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān رضي الله عنه, Salmān al-Fārsī رضي الله عنه, and Jundub ibn Junādah al-Ghaffārī (Abū Dhar رضي الله عنه) -*Firaq al-Shī’ah* page 36, 37

2 Refer to a few of their books on narrators such as *Rijāl al-Ṭusi*- page 46 and page 51, *Rijāl al-Ḥillī*- page 255 and page 469, *Ahwāl al-Rijāl* of Al-Kashī, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl* of Al-Tastarī, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* of Al-Māmaqānī, etc.

He then quotes the same proofs as Murtaḍā al-‘Askarī, namely that these narrations have been reported only by Sayf ibn ‘Umar, who has been criticised by the scholars for fabricating narrations. He therefore rules this to be contradictory and an exaggeration. He also fortifies his stance with the opinion of Al-Wardī and Al-Shaybī’s corroboration of him.

Ṭālib Rifā’ī and Ibn Saba’

After these theorists, Ṭālib Ḥusaynī al-Rifā’ī emerged, who said in the sub-notes of Muḥammad Bāqir’s introduction to the book *History of the Imāmiyyah*, which was published by Al-Kutub al-Khanijī in Cairo (1397 A.H/ 1977) under the title- *Al-Tashayyu‘ Zāhirah Ṭab‘iyah fī Itār al-Da’wah al-Islamiyyah*, that if Ibn Saba’ was indeed a true historical personality (as we will prove later) then there is no link between what he propagated and the ‘aqīdah of the Shī‘ah regarding leadership being bequeathed to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, as this belief is established by narration, reported in the authentic books of hadīth of the Shī‘ah and Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah, as well as in their books of tafsīr, history, and ‘aqā’id. Therefore the opinion that Shī‘ism is a product of the ideologies expounded by Ibn Saba’, as is claimed, is baseless.¹

This statement is not astonishing from a person such as this, who assumes that the first person to proclaim the belief of *Raj‘ah* (resurrection) was Sayyidunā ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb رضي الله عنه because of his statement: “Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم did not die and will not die.”; in addition to his fabrications, deviation, and open denial of clear historical facts.

¹ *Al-Tashayyu‘* page 20

Refutation of these assertions and a brief overview of the sources which prove the existence of Ibn Saba’

These are the opinions of a few Shī’ī personalities, in the present era, and it seems as if they have not even glanced at their own books of ‘aqīdah, sects, narrations and their narrators, as well as their books of Jarh wa al-Ta’dīl.

The following is a short list of books considered to be most reliable amongst the Shī’ah, wherein ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’, his beliefs and fanciful notions have been reported. This in turn forced Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام and his pure family to reject Ibn Saba’ and absolve themselves from him and his followers, distancing themselves from all that he ascribed to them.

Risālat al-Irjā’ by Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah (95 A.H)¹, the reliable jurist who would say: “Whoever abandons Abu Bakr عليه السلام and ‘Umar عليه السلام has abandoned the Sunnah.” The book has been reported from him by narrators who are considered to be reliable by the Shī’ah.

Kitāb al-Ghārāt by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Sa’īd ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī al-Isfahānī (283 A.H), who was deemed reliable by Ibn Tā’ūs.

Kitāb al-Maqālāt wa l-Fīraq by Sa’īd ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash’arī al-Qummī (301 A.H.). His book was published in Tehran 1963.

Fīraq al-Shī’ah by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Noubakhtī, who was amongst the esteemed Shī’ī scholars of the third century. Published a few times by Kāzīm Al-Kutubī in Najaf and also by Mustashriq Riter in Istanbul (1963).

Rijāl al-Kashī by Abū ‘Amr Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Kashī. He is a contemporary of Ibn Qūlūwīyyah (329 A.H). Published by Mu’assasah al-‘Alamī li Maṭūbū’āt Karbalā.

1 Refer to *Khulāsah Tadhīb al-Kamāl* 1/ 220, *Risālah al-Irjā’*, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī* 1/210

Rijāl al-Ṭūsī by Al-Shaykh al-Ṭā’ifah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (460 A.H). Printed first in Najaf (1381 A.H/ 1961) by Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Kutubī.

Sharah Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd li Nahj al-Balāghah by ‘Izz al-Dīn Abī Ḥāmid ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Hibat Allāh al-Madā’inī, famous by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī al-Shīrī (656 A.H). Printed by Maymāniyyah (1326 A.H) and others.

Al-Rijāl by Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥillī (726 A.H). Printed in Tehran (1311 A.H) as well as in Najaf (1961).

Rowḍāt al-Jannāt by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khawānasārī (1315 A.H). Printed in Iran (1307 A.H).

Tanqīh al-Maqāl fi Ahwāl al-Rijāl by ‘Abd Allāh al-Māmaqānī (1351 A.H). Printed in Najaf (1350 A.H) by al-Mathba‘ah al-Murtaḍawiyyah.

Qāmūs al-Rijāl by Muḥammad Taqī al-Tastarī. Published by Markaz Nashr al-Kitāb Tehran (1382 A.H).

Rowḍat al-Ṣafā a reliable book of history to the Shī‘ah in Farsi. Printed in Iran.

Dā’irah al-Ma‘ārif also called *Muqtabas al-Athar wa Mujaddid Mādathar* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī al-Ḥā’irī (1388 A.H/ 1869). Printed by Maṭaba‘ah ‘Ilmiyyah Qum.

Al-Kunnā wa l-Alqāb by Abbās ibn Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummi (1359 A.H). Printed by Al-‘Urfān Ṣīdā.

These are a few books which we came across. In addition to them there are many others as well wherein mention of the existence of Ibn Saba’ can be found. Amongst them are:

Ḥall al-Ishkāl by Aḥmad Ibn Ṭā’ūs (673 A.H).

Al-Rijāl by Ibn Dāwūd (707 A.H).

Al-Taḥrīr al-Ṭāwūsī by Al-Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī (1011 A.H).

Majma’ al-Rijāl by Al-Qahbā’ī (1016 A.H).

Naqd al-Rijāl by Al-Tafrashī, written in 1015 A.H.

Jāmi’ al-Ruwāt by Al-Ardabīlī (1100 A.H).

Mowsū’ah al-Biḥār by Al-Majlisī (1110 A.H)¹.

As well as by Ibn Shahaḥ Ḍshūb (588 A.H)² and Ibn Muḥammad Ṭāhir Al-‘Āmilī (1138 A.H)³.

Beliefs of Ibn Saba’ and his deviation

After discussing the prominent and most trusted scholars of the Shī’ah, we will discuss the most crucial beliefs held by Ibn Saba’, which he propagated amongst his followers and called others towards as well. Thereafter these beliefs filtered down into the various sects of the Shī’ah. The reasons for discussing the beliefs of this Jewish personality in light of their own books and from the mouths of their own infallible A’immah is the following:

- Their belief regarding the ‘ismah (infallibility) of the A’immah renders all the narrations from the A’immah authentic without the proviso of it having to reach Rasūlullāh ﷺ, as is the case with the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā’ah.⁴
- They claim that since the A’immah are infallible according to them, there is no room to doubt what they say.⁵
- Al-Māmaqānī says: “Every single one of our aḥādīth have emanated from one of the infallibles.”⁶

1 Refer to *Biḥār al-Anwār al-Jāmi’ah lī Durar Akhbār al-A’immah al-Aṭḥār* Beirut 25/286-287

2 Refer to *Manāqib Āl Abī Tālib* by Ibn Shahaḥ Ḍshūb 1/227-228

3 Refer to *Muqaddamah Mir’āt al-Anwār wa Mishkāt al-Asrār fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān* page 62

4 *Tārīkh al-Imāmiyyah* page 158

5 *Tārīkh al-Imāmiyyah* page 140

6 *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* 1/177

As far as the compilation of Al-Māmaqānī is concerned, it is one of the most important books of scrutiny of narrators to the Shī‘ah.

After examining these opinions, which force them to accept the narrations from these authors, we mention the most detrimental beliefs propagated by Ibn Saba’.

1. **Wasiyah:** He was the first person to claim that Rasūlullāh ﷺ made a bequest of leadership in favour of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and that he is the khalīfah of the Ummah after him, through divine revelation.

2. He is the first person to absolve himself from the ‘enemies’ of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, as conceived by him, expressing hostility towards them and declaring them to be kāfir.

The proof of him having made these claims is not taken from *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* or from the chain of Sayf ibn ‘Umar, but from what has been narrated by Al-Noubakhtī, Al-Kashī, Al-Māmaqānī, Al-Tastarī, and other Shī‘ah historians.

Al-Noubakhtī writes:

A number of scholars, from the companions of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, have concluded that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ was a Jew, who embraced Islam and expressed love for ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. Prior to embracing Islam, he would say that Yusha’ ibn Nūn was the one to whom leadership was bequeathed after Mūsā عليه السلام, and after embracing Islam he expressed the same regarding ‘Alī رضي الله عنه after the demise of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He is the first person to voice the belief of the Imāmah being compulsory for ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, absolving himself from his enemies and showing hostility towards them.

He writes further:

It is from here that those who oppose the Shī‘ah say that the fundamental

beliefs of Shī’asm were taken from Judaism.¹

At this point, we wish to shed light on the belief of Wasiyyah, which was propagated by Ibn Saba’, in light of the Torah. It states in Isaiah: 18:

There will always be a nabī who will succeed Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ in every age.

Also:

Every nabī has a successor alongside him, who lives during his lifetime.

Al-Noubakhtī writes while discussing the followers of Ibn Saba’:

Ibn Saba’ the one who cursed Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and the Ṣaḥābah, absolving himself from them. He would say that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ has ordered him to do this.²

3. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ is the first person to proclaim divinity of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

4. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ is the first person of the extremist Shī’ah to claim nubuwwah.

Proof for the above: Al-Kashī has reported with his chain of narration from Muḥammad ibn Qūlūwiyah al-Qummī:

حدثني سعد بن عبد الله ابن ابي خلف القمي قال حدثني محمد بن عثمان العبدى عن يونس بن عبد الرحمن عن عبد الله بن سنان قال حدثني ابي عن ابي جعفر ان عبد الله بن سبا كان يدعى النبوة وزعم ان امير المؤمنين هو الله تعالى الله عن ذلك علوا كبيرا فيبلغ ذلك امير المؤمنين فدعاه و ساله فاقر بذلك و قال نعم انت هو و قد كان القى فى روعى انك انت الله و انى نبى فقال له امير المؤمنين ويليك قد سخر منك الشيطان فارجع عن هذا نكلتك امك و تب فابى فحبسه و استتابه ثلاثة ايام فلم يتب فاحرقه بالنار

1 Firaq al-Shī’ah page 44, Rijāl al-Kashī page 101, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Qāmūs al-Rijāl 5/462

2 Firaq al-Shī’ah page 44

Imām Bāqir narrates: “‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ claimed nubuwwah and believed ‘Alī عليه السلام to be Allah, Allah is higher and purer than that. His claims reached the ears of ‘Alī, who summoned him and questioned him about his beliefs. He admitted to having these beliefs, saying, “Yes! You are Him. It has been revealed to me that you are Allah and that I am a nabī.” Amīr al-Mu’minīn replied: “Woe to you! Shayṭān has deceived you. May your mother be bereaved of you! Repent!” However, he refused and ‘Alī عليه السلام had him imprisoned for three days, urging him to repent but he did not and finally ‘Alī عليه السلام had him burnt alive.”

The correct opinion however is that Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام had him exiled after intercession was sought for him, which will be discussed in detail in Sayyidunā ‘Alī’s عليه السلام stance towards him. Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام said: “Shayṭān has led him into error, coming to him and placing these thoughts in his heart.”¹

Al-Kashī has also narrated with his chain of narration from Muḥammad ibn Qūlūwiyah:

حدثني سعد بن عبد الله قال حدثني يعقوب بن يزيد و محمد بن عيسى عن ابن ابي عمير عن هشام بن سالم قال سمعت ابا عبد الله يقول و هو يحدث اصحابه بحدیث عبد الله بن سبا و ما ادعى من الربوية في امير المؤمنين على بن ابي طالب فقال انه لما ادعى ذلك استتابه امير المؤمنين فابى ان يتوب و احرقه بالنار

Hishām ibn Sālim narrates that he heard Abū ‘Abd Allāh (Imām Ja’far) saying while informing his companions of the incident of Ibn Saba’ and his claim of the divinity of ‘Alī: “When he made this claim, Amīr al-Mu’minīn urged him to repent but he refused so ‘Alī عليه السلام had him burnt alive.”²

5. Ibn Saba’ was the first person to proclaim the belief of *raġ’ah* (resurrection) of Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام and Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم in this world after their demise. The first place where he propagated this belief was in Egypt. He would say:

1 *Rijāl al-Kashī* page 98, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl* 5/461, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* 2/183-184

2 *Rijāl al-Kashī* page 99-100, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* 2/183-184

It is strange that some will believe that ‘Isā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ will return but they will deny the return of Muḥammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ when Allah has said:

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَأْدُكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ

Verily, the One Who has made the Qur’ān obligatory on you shall return you to your place of return.¹

So Muḥammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is more deserving of returning than ‘Isā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

This was accepted and he invented for them the belief of raj’ah and they began propagating it.²

If these reports of the esteemed Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-‘Asākir do not satisfy you, which he has narrated in his *Tārīkh*, as well as many other scholars besides him, then read the reply of the followers of Ibn Saba’ to the one who informed them of the martyrdom of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. They said to him:

You have lied, O enemy of Allah! Even if you were to bring his head before us, we swear by Allah, and if you brought seventy witnesses to testify to his death, we would not believe you. We know very well that he did not die nor was he killed and he will not die until he gathers the Arabs with his staff and takes control of the earth...³

This narration was reported by Sa’d ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash’arī al-Qummī, the author of *Al-Maqālāt wa l-Firaq*, which is considered to be a reliable book by the Shī’ah.

Al-Noubakhtī has also reported the following narration in *Firaq al-Shī’ah* about the followers of Ibn Saba’:

1 Sūrah al-Qasas: 85

2 *Tārīkh Damashq, Tahdhīb Tārīkh Damashq* 7/468. This can also be found in *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* as well.

3 *Al-Maqālāt wa l-Firaq* of Sa’d ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash’arī al-Qummī page 31

‘Alī عليه السلام was not killed nor did he die, neither will he be killed nor will he die until he shepherds the Arabs with his staff and he fills the earth with justice after it was filled with oppression and injustice.

At this juncture, it is incumbent upon us to shed some light on the Shī‘ah belief of raj‘ah.

Muḥammad Raḍā al-Muzaffar says:

The belief adopted by the imāmiyyah, which they derive from the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt, is that Allah Ta‘ālā will return a group of the deceased to this world, in the same form as they lived previously; some of whom will be honoured and some disgraced. Superiority will be given to the adherents of the truth over the adherents to falsehood and the oppressors. This will all take place when Al-Mahdī from the progeny of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم emerges. Only those will return who have the highest level of īmān and those who exceed all limits of oppression, after which they will die. Thereafter they will be resurrected again on the Day of Qiyyamah, where they will receive whatever they deserve of punishment or reward, just as Allah Ta‘ālā has mentioned in the Noble Qur’ān regarding those who were resurrected and did not rectify their misdeeds after being resurrected that they will desire to be resurrected a third time so that they may rectify their wrongs.

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا اِنتِمْ وَاَحْيَيْتَنَا اِنتِمْ فَاَعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ اِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ

They will say: “O our Rabb! You gave us death twice and granted us life twice. We admit our sins, so is there any way to escape?”¹

Al-Qummī, who is considered to be most reliable by the Shī‘ah, with his chain of narration to Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, explained the meaning of the following

1 Sūrah al-Mu‘min: 11

verse to refer to be raj‘ah¹:

يَوْمَ يَسْمَعُونَ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوجِ

The day when people shall hear the screech in truth, this is the day of resurrection.²

The Shī‘ah have stipulated that perfect īmān and complete kufr are preconditions for raj‘ah to occur. Al-Qummī states:

Imām Ja‘far explained in the commentary of the verse:

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا

The day when, from every nation, We will resurrect an army from every Ummah.³

There is no Mu‘min who is killed except that he will return and only he will return who has perfect īmān and he who has complete kufr.⁴

The correct commentary of this verse, which Al-Muẓaffar substantiated from, has been reported by Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه:

It is the same as the verse in Surah al-Baqarah:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ

You were once lifeless and it was He Who granted you life, thereafter He will cause you to die and then give you life again.”⁵

1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī* 2/327

2 *Sūrah Qaf*: 47

3 *Sūrah al-Naml*: 83

4 *Tafsīr al-Qummī* 2/130,131

5 *Sūrah al-Baqarah*: 28

All were dead in the loins of their fathers then they were removed and given life, then given death and then given life again after death (on the Day of Qiyāmah).

This has been reported Al-Faryābī, ‘Abd Ibn Ḥāmid, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ṭabrānī and Ḥākīm, who deemed it Ṣaḥīḥ.¹

It has also been reported by Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه:

You were all dead before you were created, so this was death, then you were given life, so this is (the first) life, then you will die and go to your grave, so this is a second death, then you will be brought back to life on the Day of Qiyāmah, and this is the second life. These are the two lives and two deaths, and it is the same as the verse:

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were once lifeless and it was He Who granted you life? Thereafter He will cause you to die and give you life and then you will return to Him.”²

6. Ibn Saba’ claimed that Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is the Dābbat al-Arḍ (creature from the earth) and it is he who created life and distributes *rizq* (sustenance).

Ibn al-‘Asākir has reported on the authority of Imām Ja‘far from his forefathers, who narrated from Jābir رضي الله عنه:

When ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was given the pledge of allegiance, he addressed the people. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ stood and said to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه: “You are the Dābbat al-Arḍ.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه exhorted him: “Fear Allah!” Ibn Saba’ said: “You are an angel.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه again remarked: “Fear Allah!” Ibn Saba’ continued: “You have created life and you distribute rizq.” On this ‘Alī رضي الله عنه ordered him to be executed

1 *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafṣīr bi l-Ma‘thūr* of Allāmah Suyūṭī 5/347

2 *ibid*

but the Rawāfiḍ gathered together and said: “Leave him be and instead exile him.”¹

If they are not satisfied with the narration of Ibn al-‘Asākir then we will quote a few reports from their most reliable (i.e. Shī‘ī) sources.

Al-Qummī reports in his *Tafsīr*, considered to be most authentic to them:

As for the verse:

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ

When the promise will be fulfilled to them, We shall bring for them a creature from the earth, which will speak to them: “People are not convinced about Our signs.”²

My father has reported to me, from Ibn Abī ‘Umayr, from Abū Baṣīr, who reported from Imām Ja‘far: “Rasūlullāh ﷺ once stood over ‘Alī رضي الله عنه while he was sleeping in the masjid. He had made a small pillow out of a heap of sand. Rasūlullāh ﷺ shook him with his foot and said: “Stand! O Dābbat al-Ard!” One of the Ṣaḥābah remarked: “O Rasūlullāh ﷺ! May we address each other with this name?” Rasūlullāh ﷺ replied: “Never, by Allah! It is only for him specifically and he is the Dābbat al-Ard mentioned by Allah in the Qur‘ān:

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ

When the promise will be fulfilled to them, We shall bring for them a creature from the earth, which will speak to them: “People are not convinced about Our signs.”

1 *Tārīkh Damashq, Tahdhīb Tārīkh Damashq* 7/430

2 *Sūrah al-Naml*: 82

Rasūlullāh ﷺ then said: “O ‘Alī ﷺ! In the final days, Allah will resurrect you in a most beautiful form, and you will have a branding iron with which you will brand your enemies.”

A person said to Imām Ja‘far: “People say it is this creature who will punish them?” Imām Ja‘far replied: “Allah will punish them in the fire of Jahannam, as for him, he will speak with them.”

Also reported by narrators considered to be reliable by the Shī‘ah from ‘Alī ﷺ:

I have been bestowed with six things: Knowledge of the death of people, trials, commandments, and the decisive judgement. I am the one who recurs, that is returns to this world, and the bringer of victory. I am the controller of the staff and controller of the branding iron and the Dābbat al-Ard.¹

‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī has reported in his *Tafsīr* from Imām Ja‘far:

A person said to ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir ﷺ: “O Abū Yaqzān! A verse from the Qur’ān perturbs me.” ‘Ammār ﷺ asked: “And which verse is that?” The person replied:

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ

When the promise will be fulfilled to them, We shall bring for them a creature from the earth, which will speak to them: “People are not convinced about Our signs.”

...The verse of Surah al-Naml, about the Dābbat al-Ard. ‘Ammār ﷺ replied: “I take an oath by Allah! I will not sit nor eat nor drink until I show him to you.” So ‘Ammār ﷺ went with this person to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, who was eating dates and butter. On seeing him, ‘Alī ﷺ said: “Come, O

1 *Baṣā‘ir al-Darajāt* of Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār 4/219, *Usūl al-Kāfi* 1/198, *Bihār al-Anwār* 26/142, 148

Abū Yakẓān (‘Ammār رضي الله عنه!)” So ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه sat and began eating with ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. The person was surprised by this and said to ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه after he stood to leave: “Subḥān Allāh! You took an oath that you will not eat nor drink until you show him to me.” ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه replied: “I have shown him to you, if you had understanding.”¹

7. The followers of Ibn Saba’ would say that the A’immah do not die but fly after their death and are called *Ṭayyārah*.

Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdasī writes:

As for the followers of Ibn Saba’, they refer to the A’immah as *Ṭayyārah*, presuming that they do not die but rather their death occurs by them flying off into the darkness.²

The scholars of the Shī’ah themselves have used this name “*Ṭayyārah*” as a term for defaming a narrator.

Al-Ṭūsī, who they consider to be a reputable scholar in the scrutiny of narrations, writes under the biography of Naṣr ibn Ṣabbāh:

Naṣr ibn Ṣabbāḥ: Commonly called Abū al-Qāsim, from the people of Balkh, which is in Afghanistan; he has met a number of *mashā’ikh* and ‘ulamā of his time and narrated from them except that it has been said that he is an extremist *Ṭayyārah*.³

This very Naṣr ibn Ṣabbāḥ, was included by Al-Māmaqānī amongst those A’immah who wrote works about the recognition of narrators amongst the Shī’ah. He adds in his comments about him:

1 *Majma’ al-Bayān fi Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān* by Abū ‘Alī al-Faḍl ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭabrasī 4/234, *Tafṣīr al-Qummī* 2/131

2 *Al-Bad’ wa al-Tārīkh* 5/129

3 *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* page 515

Whoever studies the narrators closely will deduce that the mashā'ikh have narrated from him abundantly, relying on his narrations, and the narrations from him have attained such a level that nothing more can be said.

Al-Māmaqānī has mentioned him to have written *Ma'rifah al-Nāqilīn* and *Kitāb Firaq al-Shī'ah*.¹

8. A group of the followers of Ibn Saba' claim that the *Ruḥ al-Quds* transferred from one imām to the next, thus believing in reincarnation.

Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maḡdasī writes:

A group of the Ṭayyārah (followers of Ibn Saba') assume that the *Ruḥ al-Quds* was in Rasūlullāh ﷺ just as it was in 'Īsā عليه السلام, it then transferred to 'Alī عليه السلام, then Ḥasan عليه السلام, then Ḥusayn عليه السلام and then in turn to each of the A'immaḥ. The majority of them believe in reincarnation and raj'ah.²

It is possible that the book written by Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Noubakhtī- *Al-Radd 'alā Aṣḥāb al-Tanāsukh*, was written in refutation of them.³

9. The followers of Ibn Saba' would say:

We have been guided to such revelation whihc others have not recieved and to such knowledge which is hidden from them.

10. They would also say:

Rasūlullāh ﷺ concealed nine tenths of revelation.

These statements of theirs were refuted by one of the A'immaḥ of the Ahl al-

1 *Tanqīḥ al-Maḡāl* page 121

2 *Al-Bad' wa al-Tārīkh* 5/129

3 *Firaq al-Shī'ah* page 17

Bayt- Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah in his treatise entitled *Al-Irjā’*, which has been reported from him by a number of narrators, all considered to be reliable by the Shī’ah. He writes:

Amongst the claims of the followers of Ibn Saba’: “We have been guided to such revelation which others have not received and to such knowledge which is hidden from them.” They assume that Rasūlullāh ﷺ concealed nine tenths of revelation. If Nabī ﷺ were to have concealed any verse of revelation then he would have concealed the revelation regarding the wife of Zayd ﷺ as well as the following verse:

تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ

In seeking the pleasure of your wives.¹

Ḥāfiẓ Al-Juzjānī has said regarding Ibn Saba’:

He assumed that the Qur’ān is but a tenth of the revelation that is with ‘Alī ﷺ, ‘Alī ﷺ prohibited him from this when he learnt of it.

11. They also claim that ‘Alī ﷺ is in the clouds and the thunder is his voice and the lighting, his whip. Whoever of them would hear the thunder would say: “Peace be upon you, O Amīr al-Mu’minīn!”²

Ishāq ibn Sūwayd al-‘Adwī hinted towards this belief in his poem, wherein he absolved himself from the Khawārij, Rawāfiḍ, and Qadariyyah. He writes:

منهم من الغزال منهم و ابن باب
يردون السلام على السحاب

برئت من الخوارج لست منهم
و من قوم اذا ذكروا عليا

I absolve myself from the Khawārij- I am not of them nor of Ghazzāl or Ibn Bāb.

1 Sūrah al-Tahrīm, *Sharah Ibn al-Ḥadīd* 2/309

2 *Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* page 234, *Sharah Nahj al-Balāghah* of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 2/309

And from those, who when they remember ‘Alī, send salutations upon the clouds.

Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd mentioned after this belief:

I continued seeing the children of Cairo hurrying along whenever it would rain calling out loudly: “O blessing of ‘Alī.”¹

I say it is not only the children but the poets as well, regarding whom Allah has said:

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ

Only deviant people follow the poets.²

Amongst whom is the poet- Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when he wrote in the rendition- *Al-‘Alawiyyah*, that he recited in Jāmi‘ah al-Misriyyah (1919), comprising of more than four hundred stanzas. He says in his rendition:

اجدك ما النياق و ما سراها	تحوض بها المهامه و الاكاما
و ما قطر الدخان اذا استقلت	بها النيران تضطرم اضطراما
فهب لى ذات اجنهة لعلى	بها القى على السحب الاماما

I find you riding into battlefields and high hills so what of the camels and their night journeys?

What is a line of smoke, if it is no longer fuelled by a blazing flame?

Please grant me a winged conveyance for ‘Alī عليه السلام, so that I can reach the Imām in the clouds.³

As well as many other deviant and blasphemous poems and statements.

1 *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* page 85

2 *Sūrah al-Shu‘arā*: 224

3 *Al-Adab al-Ḥadīth* of ‘Umar Daswiqī 2/405. The poet Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Wāsil of Juhaynah. He was born in Bāsūnah, a village of Jarjā in Egypt. He studied in Al-Aḏhar Cairo and qualified as a teacher. He later became a professor of Arabic studies in Al-Aḏhar He died in Cairo in 1931. He was celebrated in an elegy by more than thirty poets.

The stance of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and the Ahl al-Bayt

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said:

Two groups will be destroyed on account of me; those who will be extreme in their love for me, which will lead them to ascribe to me what I do not possess and others who will be extreme in their hatred towards me, which will lead them to ascribe to me what I do not possess. The best of people with regards to me are those who tread the middle path. Attach yourself to them and attach yourself to the majority, for verily the help of Allah is with the Jamā‘ah.¹

This is how Allah Ta‘ālā intended to divide the people regarding Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه; that is into three groups. The first group are those who harbour hatred and malice for him, they are those who criticise him and in fact so me of them transgress the limits by declaring him to be a kāfir, such as the Khawārij.

The second group are those who are so intense in their love for him that their love leads them to exaggeration until they equate him to a nabī. In fact, some even surpass this and ascribe divinity to him.

As for the majority, they are the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah, from the pious predecessors to the present day. They love ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and the Ahl al-Bayt in line with Sharī‘ah and do so because of their nearness to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه replied to the accusations of the first group and fought them, after debating with them bore no fruits, the details of which are well-known and can be found in the books of history. We now wish to study closely the position of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and his Ahl al-Bayt towards Ibn Saba’ and his followers.

After Ibn Saba’ announced his acceptance of Islam, outwardly portraying himself to be calling towards good and forbidding evil, winning the admiration of a few;

¹ *Sharah Nahj al-Balāghah* 2/306

he sought to draw closer to Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, expressing great love for him. After he gained confidence, he began fabricating and ascribing falsehood to 'Alī رضي الله عنه. Imām 'Āmir al-Sha'bī (103 A.H) of the senior Tābi'n reports:

The first to begin fabricating narrations was 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba'. He would ascribe falsehood to Allah and Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. 'Alī رضي الله عنه would say, "What relation do I have with this wicked black man (referring to Ibn Saba')." He would speak ill of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and 'Umar رضي الله عنه as well.¹

Ibn al-'Asākir has also reported that when Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه learnt of Ibn Saba' belittling Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, he summoned him and then called for his sword so that he could behead him. However, others intervened and 'Alī رضي الله عنه said: "I swear by Allah, he cannot live in the same city as I." So he exiled him to Al-Madā'in.²

Ibn al-'Asākir has also reported from Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (83-148 A.H), who is considered to be the sixth Imām by the Shī'ah, who reported from his pious forefathers on the authority of Jābir رضي الله عنه:

When 'Alī رضي الله عنه was given the pledge of allegiance he addressed the people. 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba' stood and said to 'Alī رضي الله عنه: "You are the Dābbat al-Ard." 'Alī رضي الله عنه exhorted him: "Fear Allah!" Ibn Saba' said: "You are an angel." 'Alī رضي الله عنه again remarked: "Fear Allah!" Ibn Saba' continued: "You have created life and you distribute rizq." On this 'Alī رضي الله عنه ordered him to be executed but the Rawāfiḍ gathered together and said: "Leave him be and instead exile him to Al-Madā'in; because if you kill him in Kūfah then his companions will march against us." So 'Alī رضي الله عنه exiled him to Al-Madā'in, from where the Qarāmitah and Rawāfiḍ later emerged.

On account of the tireless efforts of Ibn Saba', a headquarters for the movement was finally established.

1 *Tārīkh Damashq, Tahdhīb Tārīkh Damashq* 7/430

2 *ibid*

Jābir رضي الله عنه then said:

A group, comprising of eleven men, then confronted ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and they were the followers of Ibn Saba’. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said to them: “Retract! Because I am ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, my father and my mother are well-known and I am the cousin of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.” They replied: “We will not retract, you abandon these demands.” So ‘Alī رضي الله عنه had them all burnt and their graves are in the desert. Those of them who remained alive, who did not reveal themselves to us, began saying ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is Allah.

They substantiated their claim from the narration of Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه: “Only the creator of the fire may punish with it.”¹

This is the stance of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه towards ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ and his followers, exiling him to Al-Madā’in and burning a group of his followers.

Whoever is not satisfied with these narrations, some of which have been reported by the ‘infallible’ A’immah, choosing to deny them audaciously and obstinately, we will quote for them the reports of this incident as has been recorded in authentic books of the Ahl al-Sunnah and thereafter those reported by the Shī’ah as well.

Imām al-Bukhārī has reported in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Chapter of Jihād/ section entitled: “Do not punish with the punishment of Allah”), with his chain of narration from ‘Ikramah:

‘Alī رضي الله عنه burnt a group of people as punishment. The news of this reached Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه who said: “Had it been me then I would not have burnt them, as Nabī صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: “Do not punish with the punishment of Allah.” But I would have definitely executed them because Nabī صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: “Whoever forsakes his religion, execute him.”

1 ibid

Imām al-Bukhārī has also reported in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Chapter of urging those who forsake their religion to repent and fighting against them) with his chain of narration to ‘Ikramah, similar to the above with a slight variation:

A group of heretics were brought to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and he had them burnt alive.¹

The same has been reported by Imām Abū Dāwūd in his *Sunan* (Chapter of punishments/ section: the ruling for those who forsake Islam) with his chain of narration to ‘Ikramah with a slight variation in wording and in the end of the narration it is reported that the statement of Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reached ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and he said: “May Allah have mercy on Ibn Abbās.”

The same has been reported by Imām al-Nasā’ī in his *Sunan*.²

Imām al-Tirmidhī reports this in his *Jāmi’* (Chapter of punishments/ section: what has been reported regarding those who forsake Islam) and in the end of the narration he reports:

News of this reached ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and he said: “Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه is correct.”

He then comments on its authenticity saying it is *ṣaḥīḥ ḥasan* (authentic and reliable) and that it is practiced upon by the scholars.³

Imām al-Bukhārī has narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Chapter of urging those who forsake Islam to repent) with his chain of narration to ‘Ikramah similar to the above, stating that a group of heretics were brought to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and he had them all burnt alive.⁴

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī ma’ Fath al-Bārī* 6/151

2 *Sunan al-Nasā’ī* 5/105

3 *Tirmidhī* 4/59

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī ma’ Fath al-Bārī* 12/268, *Al-Nukt al-Zarāf* 5/108, *Tārīkh al-Nisabur* by Al-Ḥākim

Ṭabrānī has reported in his *Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ* on the authority of Suwayd ibn Ghafilah:

‘Alī عليه السلام learnt of a group who had forsaken Islam and he summoned them before him. He fed them and invited them to return to Islam but they refused. He had a trench dug and brought them forward, he then severed their heads and threw them inside. He ordered wood to be thrown on top of their bodies and they were all burnt. He then said: “Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم have spoken the truth.”¹

In the third part of the ḥadīth of Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhlis, on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sharīk al-‘Āmirī from his father, it is reported:

‘Alī عليه السلام was told about a group of people standing at the door of the masjid, claiming that he was their Rabb. ‘Alī عليه السلام summoned them and said: “Woe to you! What are you saying?” They replied: “You are our Rabb, our creator and our sustainer.” ‘Alī عليه السلام remarked: “Woe to you! I am but a slave like yourselves, I eat as you do and I drink as you do. If I obey Allah then He will reward me if He wishes and if I disobey Him then I fear that He will punish me. Fear Allah and return (to Islam).” They refused to repent. The following day they came to him again and Qanbar arrived, who said: “By Allah they have returned, saying the same.” ‘Alī عليه السلام ordered them to sit before him and he spoke to them as he had the previous day. On the third day he told them: “If you make these claims again, I will kill you all in a most ruthless manner.” However, they still refused to repent. ‘Alī عليه السلام then ordered: “O Qanbar! Summon for me a few labourers with their shovels and dig for them a trench between the door of the masjid and the palace.” ‘Alī عليه السلام said: “Dig and dig deep into the earth.” Wood was then brought and a fire lit in the trench. ‘Alī عليه السلام threatened them: “Return (to Islam) or I will throw you into it.”, but they still refused and they were all thrown into it and burnt to death, upon which ‘Alī عليه السلام said:

1 *Fatḥ al-Bārī* 12/270

اوقدت نارى و دعوت قنبرا

انى اذا رايت امرا منكرا

When I saw an evil act being carried out

I lit a fire and called upon Qanbar

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar has said that this ḥadīth is *ḥasan* (reliable).¹

In addition to the above mentioned narrations, Al-Kulaynī has reported in his *Al-Kāfi*, which is the equivalent of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to the Shī‘ah (in the chapter of punishments-under the section of the punishment for those who forsake Islam) with his chain of narration to Imām Ja‘far:

A group of people came to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn and said to him: “Peace be upon you, O our Rabb!” So ‘Alī عليه السلام urged them to repent but they did not. ‘Alī عليه السلام then had a trench dug and a fire lit in it. He then had another dug adjacent to it, linking the two. When they did not repent, he threw them into the trench and lit a fire in it as well, until they died.²

Al-Māmaqānī, who is above all scrutiny to the Shī‘ah, has also reported a few narrations defaming the extremists, amongst whom are the followers of Ibn Saba’.

When ‘Alī عليه السلام was with his wife, the mother of ‘Umar, Qanbar arrived and said: “There are ten people at the door who claim that you are their Rabb.” ‘Alī عليه السلام instructed him to allow them to enter. When they entered, ‘Alī عليه السلام questioned them about what they had been saying and they replied: “We say that you are our Rabb and it is you who has created us and it is you who sustains us.” ‘Alī عليه السلام replied: “Woe to you all! Do not say this; I am but a creation and the same as you all.” They refused to listen and ‘Alī عليه السلام again said: “My Rabb and your Rabb is Allah. Woe to you! Repent and

1 *Fath al-Bārī* 12/270

2 *Al-Kāfi* 7/257-259

return (to Islam).” They said: “We will not return, You are our Rabb, who sustains us and who has created us.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه called for Qanbar and said to him: “Summon for me a few labourers.” So Qanbar left and returned with ten men carrying their shovels. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه ordered them to dig into the earth and once they had completed digging a few trenches, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه ordered them to fill it with wood and light a fire in it. Once the fire was ablaze, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said to them: “Repent!” but they replied: “We will not!” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه threw them one after the other into the fire, after which he recited:

او قدت نارا و دعوت قنبرا

انى اذا بصرت امرا منكرا

When I saw an evil act being carried out

I lit a fire and called upon Qanbar¹

It appears that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه issued this punishment to others as well, namely the people of Zaṭ.

Imām al-Nasā’ī has reported in his *Sunan* on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه:

A few people from Zaṭ, who worshipped idols, were brought to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and he had them burnt alive. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه narrated that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Whoever forsakes Islam, execute him.”²

Ibn Abī Shaybah has reported on the authority of Qatādah (the same ḥadīth), regarding which Ḥafīẓ Ibn Ḥajar remarked: “There is a break in its chain.” He also adds:

If this is proven then it will refer to another incident.

1 *Maqābis al-Hidāyah* 89, 90, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl*

2 *Sunan al-Nasā’ī* 7/104

Ibn Abī Shaybah has also reported from Ayyūb, who reported from Nu‘mān, who said to ‘Alī عليه السلام:

There are a few people in this house who worship an idol that they have placed there. So ‘Alī عليه السلام went to the house and discovered that it was true. ‘Alī عليه السلام ordered the house to be burnt over them.¹

Al-Kashī has reported in his book- *Ma‘rifah Akhbār al-Rijāl*, after the biography of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’, under the heading: “Seventy people of Zaṭ who claimed divinity for ‘Alī”, with his chain of narration to Imām al-Bāqir:

After ‘Alī عليه السلام completed fighting against the people of Baṣrah, seventy people from Zaṭ came to him, they greeted him and spoke to him in their tongue and he replied to them in their own tongue. He said to them: “I am not what you claim me to be, I am a servant of Allah, whom He has created.” However, they refused to accept his argument and said: “You are indeed Him.” ‘Alī عليه السلام warned them: “If you do not refrain from what you say about me and repent to Allah, I will have you all executed.” They still refused to refrain from this and repent so ‘Alī عليه السلام had a number of trenches dug, linking one to the other and flung them into it. He sealed the top of it and a lit a fire at the end of one of the trenches in which none of them were, causing the smoke to fill the other trench and suffocate all of them.

It is reported in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, quoting the book *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*:

So ‘Alī عليه السلام had trenches dug and a fire lit in it. Qanbar lifted each of them by their shoulders and flung them into the fire. ‘Alī عليه السلام said:

او قدت نارى و دعوت قنبرا
وقنبر يحطم حطما منكرا

انى اذا رايت امرا منكرا
ثم احترقت حفرا فحفرا

When I saw an evil act being carried out

¹ *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* 12/270

I lit a fire and called upon Qanbar
I then set each of the trenches alight
And Qanbar threw firewood upon it

Ibn Shahaḥ Ḍshūb commented on this narration:

These beliefs were later revived by Muḥammad ibn Nusayr al-Namīrī al-Baḥrī, who claimed that Allah did not manifest Himself except in that era and He is none other than ‘Alī عليه السلام. This is the person that the Nusayriyyah sect ascribes themselves to. The Nusayriyyah are a sect who permit everything, discard ‘ibādah (worship) and the laws of Sharīah, and legitimise that which is prohibited and unlawful in Sharīah. They also say: “The Jews are upon the truth but we are not with them and the Christians are on the truth but we are not with them.”¹

It is only appropriate for us to mention another incident while discussing ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام burning the followers of Ibn Saba’ and those who forsook Islam, which has been reported by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd in his commentary on *Naḥj al-Balāghah*:

وروى ابو العباس احمد بن عبيد عمار الثقفي عن محمد بن سليمان بن حبيب المصيصي المعروف بنون:
وروى ايضا عن علي بن محمد النوفلي عن مشيخته ”ان على عليه السلام مر يقوم وهم ياكلون في شهر
رمضان نهارا فقال اسفر ام مرضى قالوا لا ولا واحدة منها قال فمن اهل الكتاب انتم فتعصمكم الذمة
والجزية قالوا لا قال فما بال الاكل في نهار رمضان فقاموا اليه فقالوا: انت انت يومئون الى ربوية فنزل
عليه السلام عن فرسه فالصق خده بالارض وقال: ويلكم انما انا عبد من عبيد الله فاتقوا الله وارجعوا
الى الاسلام فابوا فدعاهم مرارا فاقاموا على كفرهم فنهض اليه وقال: شدوهم وثاقا وعلى بالفعلة و
النار والحطب ثم امر بحفر بئرين فحفرتا فجعل احدهما سريا والاخرى مكشوفة والقى الحطب فى
المكشوفة وفتح بينهما فتحا والقى النار فى الحطب فدخن عليهم وجعل يهتف بهم ويناشدهم ليرجعوا
الى الاسلام فابوا فامر بالحطب والنار فالقى عليهم فاحرقوا فقال الشاعر:

اذا لم ترمنى فى الحفرتين

لترم بى المنية حيث شانت

1 *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* of Ibn Shahaḥ Ḍshūb 1/227, *Bihār al-Anwār* 25/285

فذاك الموت نقدا غير دين

إذا ما حشنا حطبنا بنار

فلم يبرح عليه السلام حتى صاروا حمما

'Alī عليه السلام passed by a group of people who were eating in the month of Ramaḍān and asked them: "Are you travellers or ill?" They replied that they were neither of the two, so he asked them if they were from the Ahl al-Kitāb, under the protection of Jizyah and again they replied that they were not. 'Alī عليه السلام then enquired: "So then what has permitted you to eat in the days of Ramaḍān?" They walked towards him and said: "You are, you are." Suggesting that he was their Rabb. So 'Alī عليه السلام dismounted and placed his cheek on the ground. He then said: "Woe to you! I am but a servant from the servants of Allah. Fear Allah and return to Islam." They refused to do so and 'Alī عليه السلام repeated this a number of times but they remained adamant upon their kufr. 'Alī عليه السلام went towards them and ordered: "Bind them in shackles and bring for me labourers, fire and wood." He then ordered two trenches to be dug; one closed and the other open. Wood was thrown into the open one and a tunnel dug, linking the two. The wood was then set alight, causing the smoke to engulf them. 'Alī عليه السلام called out to them, advising them to return to Islam but they refused. So 'Alī عليه السلام ordered wood to be thrown upon them also and they were burnt. A poet said:

Fate may cast at me whatever it desires.

AS long as it does not cast me in the two trenches.

Where we set alight the firewood.

That will be instant death with no respite.

'Alī عليه السلام did not leave from there until they were burnt to ash.¹

These are the narrations that we find reported from amongst the authentic and reliable reports and historical narrations as well as from the books of the Shī'ah, whether they be 'aqā'id, fiqh, narrators or history; all of which prove with

1 *Sharah Nahj al-Balāghah* 2/308,309

certainty that ‘Alī عليه السلام had a group of renegades who believed him to be Allah burnt alive, amongst whom were the followers of the cursed Ibn Saba’.

As for Ibn Saba’, the narrations of both the Ahl al-Sunnah and of the Shī’ah confirm that ‘Alī عليه السلام sufficed with exiling him to Al-Madā’in after the Rawāfiq interceded for him.

Al-Noubakhtī writes in his book- *Firaq al-Shī’ah*, under the biography of Ibn Saba’:

He was amongst those who expressed hatred towards Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and the Ṣaḥābah; absolving himself from them. He would say that he has been commanded to do so by ‘Alī عليه السلام. ‘Alī عليه السلام captured him and interrogated him about his beliefs, to which he confessed. ‘Alī عليه السلام ordered him to be killed but people objected: “O Amīr al-Mu’minīn! Will you kill a person who calls towards loving you, the Ahl al-Bayt, and towards your authority, as well as absolvment from your enemies?” So ‘Alī عليه السلام exiled him to Al-Madā’in.¹

Ibn Saba’ propagates his beliefs in Al-Madā’in

‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ found a fertile ground for the propagation of his beliefs and deviation after being exiled, as now he was at a safe distance from the sword of Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام. He now began positioning his followers and propagating his beliefs amongst the soldiers of ‘Alī عليه السلام in Al-Madā’in. When they received news of the martyrdom of ‘Alī عليه السلام; he and his followers refused to accept it. Let us now read through these events as has been narrated by Al-Khatīb Al-Baghdādī, who reports with his chain of narration to Zuhar ibn Qays Al-Ju’fī, regarding whom ‘Alī عليه السلام has said that whoever wishes to see a living martyr should look at him. He narrates:

‘Alī عليه السلام dispatched four hundred men of Iraq under my command to Al-

¹ *Firaq al-Shī’ah* page 44, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl* 5/463

Madā’in. I swear by Allah, we were resting at sunset on the road when a person came to us, his steed worn out. We asked him from where he had come and he replied that he had come from Kūfah. We asked him when he had left and he replied that very day. We asked him if there was any important news and he replied: “Amīr al-Mu’minīn came out to perform the fajr ṣalāh and he was attacked by Ibn Bajrah and Ibn Muġjim. One of them stabbed him. People survive even worse attacks than this and others die of even less.” He then left. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahab al-Saba’ then raised his head towards the sky and said: “Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar!” We asked him what was wrong and he replied: “Even if he had informed us that he had seen the brains of Amīr al-Mu’minīn coming out of his head, I would still be certain that he will not die until he shepherds the Arabs with his staff.”

In the narration from Al-Jāhir in *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabayīn* it is reported that he said:

If you bring before us his head in a hundred bags, we will still not be convinced that he has died. He cannot die until he gathers them with his staff.

Returning to the narration of Al-Khatīb Al-Baghdādī:

We had only slept the night, when the letter of Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام reached us, which read: “From the servant of Allah- Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام, Amīr al-Mu’minīn, to Zuhar ibn Qays, Take the pledge from those before you.” We then said to him (i.e. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahab): “Now what do you have to say about your claim?” He replied: “I believed that he will not dies.”¹

Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Noubakhtī reports:

When ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ heard the news of the death of ‘Alī عليه السلام in Al-Madā’in, he said to those who brought him the news: “You have spoken a

1 *Tārīkh Baghdād* 8/488

lie, even if you came with his head in seventy bags and you bring seventy witnesses testifying to his death, we still know that he is not dead nor was he killed and he will not die until he controls the world.”¹

The narration of ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Ḥamdānī regarding the standpoint of Ibn Saba’ and his followers

‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Ḥamdānī al-Mu‘tazilī comments while discussing the standpoint of ‘Alī عليه السلام towards Ibn Saba’:

He urged them to repent but they did not, so he had them burnt alive. They were a small group. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ was exiled from Kūfah to Al-Madā’in. When ‘Alī عليه السلام was martyred, Ibn Saba’ was asked: “‘Alī عليه السلام has been killed and he is dead and he has been buried; what is it you used to say regarding him going to Syria?” Ibn Saba’ replied: “I heard him say: ‘I will not die until I stretch my legs in the vast expanse of Kūfah and establish peace in it, and I travel to Damascus and destroy every brick of its Masjid...’ Thus, even if you were to bring his severed head before me, I will still not believe that he has died.” When he was disgraced (by the truth being revealed) he was baffled (and could not reply).

He would ascribe to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn untrue statements. At the present moment there are many Shī‘ah in Kūfah who say the same as he did. Amongst them and amongst those of Iraq; all say that Amīr al-Mu‘minīn approved of his statements and of those whom he had burnt, and he only had them executed because they revealed his secret but he brought them back to life thereafter. They say: “If what you say is indeed true (that ‘Alī عليه السلام disapproved of these beliefs) then inform us why he did not execute Ibn Saba’ as well?” We reply that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ did not admit to the same beliefs as they did but rather was accused of it and was therefore exiled. Then too if he had burnt him with the rest, it still would not help as then you would say that he did so only because he disclosed his secret.”²

1 *Firaq al-Shī‘ah* page 53, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl* 5/463

2 *Tathbīt Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah* 2/539-550

The reaction of Ibn Saba’s followers when they learnt of ‘Alī’s ﷺ martyrdom

As for the followers of Ibn Saba’; they did not content themselves with denial only but proceeded to Kūfah openly declaring the baseless beliefs of their mentor and guide Ibn Saba’.

Sa’d ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qummī; who is considered to be reliable by the Shī‘ah, has reported in *Al-Maqālāt wa l-Firaq*:

The followers of Ibn Saba’ said to those who brought the news of ‘Alī’s ﷺ demise: “You have spoken a lie, O enemy of Allah! Even if you were to bring, by Allah, his severed head and seventy reliable witnesses to testify to his death, we would still not believe you. We know that he has not died nor was he killed and that he will not die until he shepherds the Arabs with his staff and takes control of the earth.” They then proceeded to the door of ‘Alī ﷺ, calling out to him and seeking permission to enter as one convinced of him being in the house would. Those present in the house, from his family and companions, said to them: “Subḥān Allāh! Do you not know that Amīr al-Mu’minīn has been martyred?” They replied: “We know full-well that he has not been killed nor has he died and he will not die until he shepherds the Arabs with his sword and whip, just as he led them with his arguments and proofs. He hears our supplications and knows what lies beneath the heavy veils and he gleams in the darkness just as a polished sword.”¹

From amongst them was a man named Rashīd al-Hijrī, who exposed his beliefs before Imām ‘Āmir al-Sha’bī, who narrates:

I went to him one day and he related to me: “I left with the intention to perform ḥajj and I said to myself that I will take a vow to do so in the presence of Amīr al-Mu’minīn. So I went to his house and called out: “Give me permission to enter, O Amīr al-Mu’minīn!” Someone replied:

1 *Al-Maqālāt wa l-Firaq* page 21

“Has he not passed away?” I replied: “He might be dead to you but I take an oath by Allah, he is breathing at this very moment.” A reply came: “If that is the case then you are aware of the secret of the family of Muḥammad ﷺ.” I was then permitted to enter and I entered upon Amīr al-Mu’minīn, who informed me of events that were going to transpire.” Al-Sha’bī said to him: “If you are lying then may the curse of Allah be upon you.” News of this reached Ziyād, who had him arrested, his tongue cut out and hanged at the door of ‘Amr ibn Ḥurayth.¹

Ḥafīẓ al-Dhahabī has narrated this in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, where he reports that Rashīd said:

I asked a person there to permit me to see Sayyid al-Mursalīn. The reply came that he is asleep. He thought I was referring to Ḥasan ﷺ so I said to him: “I do not refer to Ḥasan ﷺ but to the Amīr al-Mu’minīn, the Imām of the pious and the leader of the radiant steeds.” They said: “Has he not passed away?” I replied: “By Allah! He is breathing at this very moment and he knows what lies beneath the heavy veils.”²

This is why Imām Sha’bī would say:

Falsehood has not been ascribed to anyone else in this Ummah as it has been ascribed to ‘Alī ﷺ.³

Ibn Ḥabbān has said about this very same Rashīd:

He believed in raj’ah.⁴

Al-Ṭūsī has mentioned him amongst the companions of ‘Alī ﷺ and said his full name to be Rashīd al-Hijrī al-Rayyāsh ibn ‘Adī al-Ṭā’ī.⁵

1 *Al-Majrūhīn* 1/298, *Al-Mīzān al-ī-tidāl* 2/52

2 *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* 1/84

3 *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* 1/82

4 *Al-Majrūhīn* 1/298, *Al-Mīzān al-ī-tidāl* 2/53

5 *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* page 41

Rashīd is considered to be amongst the lieutenants of the A’immah, and specifically a lieutenant of Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.¹

The stance of the Ahl al-Bayt towards Ibn Saba’

The Ahl al-Bayt of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم opposed ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ in the same manner that Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib رضي الله عنه opposed him; they refuted him and absolved themselves from his propaganda and falsehood.

Al-Kashī has reported with his chain of narration from Abān ibn ‘Uthmān:

I heard Imām Ja’far say: “May the curse of Allah be upon Ibn Saba’. He claimed divinity for Amīr al-Mu’minīn and I swear by Allah, he was only a servant (of Allah). Destruction be upon those who fabricate in our names. People attribute to us qualities that we do not attribute to ourselves. We absolve ourselves from them and surrender to Allah.”²

Al-Kashī has also reported with his chain of narration from Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī:

‘Alī Ibn Ḥusayn said: “May the curse of Allah be upon those who fabricate in our names. When I think of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’, every hair of my body stands on end. He propagated a most heinous belief, what is wrong with him, May Allah curse him. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was a pious slave of Allah, a brother of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. He only achieved honour from Allah on account of his obedience to Allah, and Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم did not achieve honour except on account of his obedience to Allah.”³

1 Al-‘Alawiyūn Fidā’iyu al-Shī’ah al-Majhūlūn of ‘Alī ‘Azīz Al-‘Alawī page 31, Lieutenant used here is a translation of the Arabic word “Bāb”, which is a term used to refer to one who liaises with the Imām.

2 Rijāl al-Kashī page 100, Tanqīh al-Maqāl 2/183, Qāmūs al-Rijāl 5/461

3 Rijāl al-Kashī page 100, Tanqīh al-Maqāl 2/183, Qāmūs al-Rijāl 5/461

Al-Kashī has also narrated with his chain of narration from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sinān:

Imam Ja‘far said: “We the Ahl al-Bayt are all truthful and have not been spared from liars who fabricated against us and tarnish our honesty with their falsehood. Rasūlullāh ﷺ was the most truthful of people in his speech and the most truthful of all creation but Musaylamah would fabricate against him. Amīr al-Mu‘minīn was the most truthful of those who were created after Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the one who would fabricate against him and belied his honesty, fabricating against Allah was ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’. May Allah’s curse be upon him.”¹

These are the narrations of Al-Kashī from the A‘immah of the Ahl al-Bayt. What is certain is that the book of Al-Kashī- *Ma‘rifat al-Nāqilīn ‘an al-A‘immah al-Ṣādiqīn* has been thoroughly investigated by one of the esteemed and respected scholars of the Shī‘ah, whom they awarded the title of “Shaykh al-Ṭā‘ifah”- Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭūsī (460 A.H). He then revised it and corrected it. He named this revised version *Ikhtiyār al-Rijāl*, which he then dictated to his students in Mashhad. He began dictating this book on Wednesday 26 Safar 456 A.H. This has been clarified by Al-Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Ṭā‘ūs in *Faraj al-Mahmūm*, who quoted from the copy of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, which clearly states that it is a summary of the book written by Abū ‘Amr Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Kashī. The copy present today was printed in Bombay 1317 A.H. In fact, the copy used by Allāmah al-Ḥillī too was the summary of the narrators of Al-Ṭūsī, as the original was not available.²

It is with these reports and clear narrations of the Shī‘ah that the reality of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ becomes apparent to us. Whoever of the Shī‘ah will contest this will in actual fact be contesting his own books, which report the curses these A‘immah heaped out upon this Jew.

1 *Rijāl al-Kashī* page 100, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl* 2/183, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl* 5/462

2 *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* page 62

It is impermissible and in fact impossible to fathom that the 'infallible' A'imma were cursing a fictional character. Similarly it is impossible for the Shī'ah to accuse the A'imma of lying.

This is what has become apparent to us in proving the existence of this wicked personality. As far as his involvement in the murder of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه is concerned and his propaganda during the khilāfah of 'Alī رضي الله عنه, as well as his impression upon the beliefs of the Shī'ah; this requires a separate discussion and an entirely different treatise.

ربنا لا تزغ قلوبنا بعد اذ هديتنا و هب لنا من لدنك رحمة انك انت الوهاب
ربنا آمنا بما انزلت و اتبعنا الرسول فاكتبنا مع الشاهدين



