

# Classification of Abrogation in the Qur'an: A Critical Analysis

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## **Abstract**

Most classical-era Qur'anic studies scholars, among them Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam (d. 224 AH), Makki ibn Abi Talib (d. 437 AH), Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH), Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi (d. 794 AH), and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH) were enthusiastic supporters of the theory of abrogation. They claimed that the Qur'an contains three types of abrogation<sup>1</sup>: suspension of certain verses' practical dimension only, expurgation of both the verses and their rulings, and exclusion of the verses even though their rulings are still valid. To substantiate their approach, they advanced hadiths comprising statements supposedly made by both the Companions (Sahabah) and the Followers (Tabi'un). A rational and critical scrutiny of these hadiths will reveal whether they can form the basis of such arguments.

I will check the nature of these hadiths' chains of narrators and weigh the views attributed to early Muslim scholars against reason. As regards the first category, several of my articles on these arguments have been published elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> This article, which examines the remaining two categories, consists of two dimensions: applying the hadith criticism principle to these hadiths and checking their information in a rational manner.

## **The Orientalists' Review of Abrogation: A Clarification**

Several western scholars have made great contributions to the discussion of abrogation in the Qur'an. The most respectable one is John Burton, author

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of several valuable works, such as *Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh University Press: 1990) and *The Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge University Press: 1977), and editor and commentator on Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam's *Kitab al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh* (Istanbul: 1987). While not everyone agrees with his ideas, his discussion remains within the general boundaries drawn by such traditional Muslim scholars as Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim.

Daniel W. Brown's *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge University Press: 1996) analyzes matters related to abrogation, but not as a full-fledged discussion. Christopher Melchert's *The Formation of Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* deals at length with abrogation as well as its types, particularly the stands of al-Shafi'i, Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim, Ibn Qutaybah, and other Sunni legal schools that hold that the Sunnah can abrogate Qur'anic verses. Daniel Madigam's *The Qur'an's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton University Press: 2001) represents the latest attempt to analyze the Qur'an's position. Its first chapter, "The Qur'an as a Book," accommodates, among other things, the issue of abrogation and criticizes Burton's stand.

Although these western scholars have furthered the discussion on abrogation from various angles, none of them have looked at the hadiths concerned or the classification of abrogation in an attempt to determine whether they are authentic or not.

## **Expurgating the Verses and Their Rulings**

Al-Suyuti posits three types of abrogation. The first one comprises those verses whose recitation and practice were annulled.<sup>3</sup> Al-Zarkashi rules that reciting and practicing such abrogated passages is unlawful.<sup>4</sup> According to Ibn al-Jawzi, the first category of abrogated verses consists of those verses that have had their documentation and practical implication canceled.<sup>5</sup> Makki ibn Abi Talib modifies this category slightly: This type is constituted by what Allah had lifted up in terms of writing and practicing as well as what had disappeared from people's memory.<sup>6</sup> Abu 'Ubayd refers to this category as those abrogated verses that were lifted up after their revelation and omitted from people's memory and writing.<sup>7</sup> These scholars used seven hadiths to validate their views. A critical analysis of these hadiths is given below.

*Hadith No. 1:* 'A'ishah reported that a verse prohibited ten foster relatives and that this was abrogated by a later verse that prohibited five foster relatives. When the Prophet (saw [peace be upon him]) died, this verse was still being recited.<sup>8</sup>

Based upon the chain of narrators, this is an authentic hadith. However, there is an obvious flaw in the text: Two revelations concerning foster relatives came down, the first one comprising ten relations and the second one, comprising only five relations, that replaced the first verse. Therefore, the second verse should be present in the Qur'an as we know it today, since this Qur'an is the same Qur'an that was used by the Prophet (saw) and his pious political successors. But it contains no such verse. As such, despite its strong chain of transmission, the hadith is unacceptable because it contradicts the Qur'an and places its integrity in doubt.

Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani (d. 852 AH) states that this hadith is unsuitable as evidence because what is claimed therein as part of the Qur'an was never found in the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> Malik ibn Anas is said to have ignored the practical viability of the information given in this hadith.<sup>10</sup>

*Hadith No. 2:* Some people wanted to recite a certain surah during the night prayer, but they could not remember it. When they mentioned this to the Prophet (saw), he said: "It was abrogated last night."<sup>11</sup>

Abu Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf (d. 100 AH), who belonged to the Followers and was born two years before the Prophet's (saw) death, reported this hadith. However, scholars have shown that he never heard any hadiths from the Prophet (saw).<sup>12</sup> In other words, he learned about this event from another source(s). Since he did not disclose his source(s), his hadith is considered to be disconnected (*munqati`*) and, hence, unreliable. Ibn al-Athir (d. 630 AH) writes that Abu Umamah reported no hadith from the Prophet<sup>13</sup>: The above hadith is from the Prophet (saw).

Based on the above hadith, this event appears to be of an extraordinary nature. Yet only Abu Umamah reports it. Since a solitary hadith cannot be used as an argument concerning the Qur'an's content, it may not be a strong hadith. In addition, its text clearly states that many Companions could not remember a particular surah. If this were true, it would have been reported through many sources and thus would have been considered continuous (*mutawatir*) and reliable. But in the absence of such continuity, it may not be a strong hadith.

This hadith has three chains of transmission: Yunus, al-Zuhri, Abu Umamah; `Uqayl, al-Zuhri, Abu Umamah; and Shu`ayb, al-Zuhri, Abu Umamah. The text given by the first two chains is almost the same. However, it differs slightly as reported by the third chain. This difference does not seem to be negative; rather, it seems that the hadith through Yunus (d. 159 AH) and `Uqayl (d. 141 AH) is brief and that the one through Shu`ayb (d. 162 AH) is a bit more detailed. According to Shu`ayb, after listening to these Compan-

ions, the Prophet (saw) remained silent and replied only after a while. This delay shows that he learned of this surah's abrogation only after the Companions told him what had happened. Logically, this is rather strange. As the sole recipient of the Revelation, he should have known of any such modification before anyone else. The above hadith negates this hypothesis. In addition, it is hard to accept that the Prophet (saw) was unaware of such an abrogation until its erasure from other peoples' memory was reported to him.

*Hadith No. 3:* Abu Musa al-Ash`ari says: A surah like Surat al-Bara'ah came down but was lifted up later. Its verse ("Verily, Allah will soon help this religion through such people as have no interest in the good. If the son of Adam possessed two valleys of wealth, he would crave for the third one. The stomach of Adam's son cannot be filled but with clay. Allah forgives one who repents") remained in the people's memory.<sup>14</sup>

Its chain (Hammad ibn Salmah, `Ali ibn Zayd, Abu Harb ibn Abi al-Aswad, Abu Musa) is weak and unreliable. Yahya ibn Sa'id (d. 144 AH), Wuhayb (d. 165 AH), al-Nasa'i (d. 203 AH), Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 AH), Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH), al-Juzjani (d. 259 AH), al-'Ajali, (d. 261 AH), and al-Duri (d. 271 AH) all consider `Ali ibn Zayd (d. 108 AH) to be a weak reporter and his hadiths as insufficient to form the basis of an argument.<sup>15</sup> Yahya ibn Sa'id always avoided his hadiths.<sup>16</sup> According to Ibn Hibban (d. 354 AH), `Ali ibn Zayd deserves to be abandoned because his hadiths contain too many errors.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311 AH) says: "I do not use his hadith due to his weak memory."<sup>18</sup> Abu Hatim (d. 277 AH) says: "He is not strong; his hadith is written but not used as an argument."<sup>19</sup> Hammad ibn Zayd (d. 179 AH) had very strange experiences with him: "What `Ali ibn Zayd reported one day was contradicted by him the following day."<sup>20</sup> Obviously, the hadith's authenticity is doubtful.

*Hadith No. 4:* Mujahid ibn Jabr (d. 104 AH) reported that Surat al-Ahzab was like Surat al-Baqarah or longer.<sup>21</sup>

Its chain (Ibn Abi Da'ud and Muhammad ibn `Uthman al-'Ajli, Abu Nu'aym, `Asim ibn Bahdalah, Sayf ibn Sulayman, Mujahid) is strong. Although all of its narrators are considered highly authentic, in technical terms it is a disconnected hadith. Mujahid, one of the Followers, is a great scholar, but his source for this hadith is unclear. Moreover, the above hadith does not explain why Surat al-Ahzab was shortened, and Mujahid does not spell out whether this was due to abrogation.

*Hadith No. 5:* Ubayy ibn Ka'b asked Zirr ibn Hubaysh (d. 83 AH) how he recited Surat al-Ahzab. He answered: "Seventy or seventy-one verses." Ubayy said: "By God, it came down to the Prophet (saw); it was like al-Baqarah or longer than it."<sup>22</sup>

This hadith has two different chains – `Abbad ibn Ya`qub, Sharik al-Nakha'i, `Asim, Zirr ibn Hubaysh, Ubayy ibn Ka'b<sup>23</sup>; and Isma'il ibn Ja'far, Mubarak ibn Fudalah, `Asim, Zirr, Ubayy<sup>24</sup> – both of which are defective. The first chain's problem lies with Sharik al-Nakha'i (d. 177 AH) and `Abbad ibn Ya`qub (d. 250 AH). Sharik's reports are divided into categories: "early" (when he lived in Wasit) and "later" (when he lived in Kufah).<sup>25</sup> Scholars are almost unanimous over the first category's authenticity, whereas they view the second category as doubtful, weak, and unreliable. Ibn Hibban included Sharik's name in the list of authentic reporters, but with the following clarification: "During his stay in Kufah, Sharik would err in his hadiths due to his weak memory. Hence, those who learned from him during this period learned things full of delusion."<sup>26</sup> In the above hadith, the narrator citing Sharik as an authority is `Abbad ibn Ya`qub of Kufah, who studied under him in Kufah. As this hadith was related during the last stage of Sharik's life, it is both weak and unreliable.

`Abbad ibn Ya`qub was another controversial figure. Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311 AH) ultimately abandoned his hadiths.<sup>27</sup> `Abbad is accused of narrating, strangely enough, hadiths praising certain people and condemning others, including `Uthman ibn `Affan.<sup>28</sup> Ibn Hibban wrote that `Abbad's hadiths are to be avoided, because he used to narrate strange and unknown statements (*manakir*) from well-known authorities.<sup>29</sup> Although such scholars as Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 AH) and al-Darqutni (d. 385 AH) favored accepting his hadiths,<sup>30</sup> `Abbad's overall image seems to be reprehensible. He wrongly attributes to the Prophet (saw) such statements as "If you see Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan on my pulpit, kill him."<sup>31</sup> In addition, he cites a false hadith, based upon `Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud's authority, concerning Qur'an 33:25, which differed from the original: "... and enough is Allah for the believers in their fight..." But according to `Abbad, it reads: "And Allah makes `Ali enough for the believers in their fight."<sup>32</sup> Someone who falsely attributes such statements to the Prophet (saw) and asserts that the Qur'an has been changed deserves to be condemned as unreliable.

The second chain's defect is Mubarak ibn Fudalah. Such scholars as al-Nasa'i, Ibn Sa'd, and al-Saji declared him to be weak (*da'if*)<sup>33</sup>; others, like Ibn Ma'in, al-`Ajli, al-Darqutni, and Abu Da'ud, considered him to be either acceptable or weak, depending upon the circumstances.<sup>34</sup> This is not a conflicting situation, for it represents two categories of hadiths. If he reports

something from his immediate source with the phrase “he reported to us (*haddathana*),” it is reliable. But if he uses the term reflecting his indirect taking (e.g., *`an* [from]), his hadith may not be taken for granted. Abu Zur`ah and al-Ajurri deem him as reliable only when he says “*haddathana*”.<sup>35</sup> In the hadith mentioned above, he uses *`an* to refer to his immediate [and therefore indirect] source: Asim ibn Bahdalah. But biographical dictionaries do not mention `Asim as one of Mubarak’s sources. Thus, what Mubarak reported from `Asim may not be authentic.

Apart from these defects, the texts of the two hadiths conflict with each other. In Sharik’s hadith, Surat al-Ahzab, as disclosed by Zirr ibn Hubaysh (d. 83 AH), has seventy or seventy-one verses. But in Mubarak’s hadith, Zirr says it has seventy-two or seventy-three verses. This indicates that Zirr was not sure of the exact number. Given that Zirr was a highly recognized Qur’anic scholar<sup>36</sup> who had learned the Qur’an from `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud,<sup>37</sup> whose authority had been verified by the Prophet (saw) himself, how could he not know this surah’s length?<sup>38</sup> If the above hadith is accepted as genuine, it would mean that Zirr did not know how many verses this surah contained and that he had not memorized the Qur’an. Thus, he could not have been a scholar of the Qur’an. But if the historical information about him is accepted as genuine, the above hadith will automatically be considered false.

There is another textual problem. In one hadith, Ubayy ibn Ka`b describes the original Surat al-Ahzab as having been as long as Surat al-Baqarah. But in the same vein, he refers to the possibility of the former having been longer than the latter. In the other hadith, he equates Surat al-Ahzab with Surat al-Baqarah in terms of their length. This hadith also calls Ubayy’s authenticity as a Qur’anic scholar into question. However, the Prophet (saw) had included his name in the list of four scholars of the Qur’an.<sup>39</sup> Keeping this certification in view, Ubayy could not have forgotten the surah’s precise length. These discrepancies render the hadith doubtful.

*Hadith No. 6:* `A’ishah said: “Surat al-Ahzab, as recited during the Prophet’s (saw) life, consisted of 200 verses. When `Uthman [ibn `Affan] prepared [the official] copies of the Qur’an, he wrote it only with the current number of verses.”<sup>40</sup>

This hadith’s chain (Sa`id ibn Abi Maryam, Ibn Lahi`ah, Abu al-Aswad, `Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, `A’ishah) is weak because of Ibn Lahi`ah, whom the majority of hadith scholars consider to be weak. Yahya ibn Sa`id, `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Ma`in, `Amr ibn `Ali, Abu Hatim, and Abu Zur`ah state that he is both weak and unreliable.<sup>41</sup> Others, among them al-Azdi and al-Saji, consider his hadiths acceptable if they

come through `Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, `Abd Allah ibn Wahb, `Abd Allah ibn Yazid al-Muqri, and `Abd Allah ibn Maslamah al-Qa`anbi.<sup>42</sup>

The above hadith comes through Ibn Abi Maryam, who did not say that he heard this news directly from Ibn Lahi`ah. Ibn Abi Maryam met Ibn Lahi`ah during the last stage of the latter's life.<sup>43</sup> The scholars' general impression is that what Ibn Lahi`ah reported during the first part of his academic life may be accepted as authentic; however, the hadiths narrated by him during the later stage of his life may not be reliable.<sup>44</sup> Ibn Abi Maryam, who reports this hadith from Ibn Lahi`ah, also believes that Ibn Lahi`ah was unreliable.<sup>45</sup>

The hadith's text also has a serious defect. According to the text, `Uthman shortened Surat al-Ahzab's original length of 200 verses to only seventy-three. However, we know that `Uthman had many copies of the Qur'an made from the copy prepared during Abu Bakr's reign. Thus, there was no difference between the two Qur'ans. Al-Bukhari records `Uthman's contribution to preserving the Qur'an in the following words:

When Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, an army commander at the battle of Armenia and Azerbaijan, found that the people recited the Qur'an differently, he became concerned and shared his feelings with `Uthman: "Check this ummah before it falls prey to differences over the Qur'an, just as the Jews and the Christians did [with the revelations given to them]. Then, `Uthman sent a message to Hafsa (the Prophet's wife): "Give us the copy of the Qur'an. We shall prepare other copies on its basis and then return it to you." Hafsa sent the Qur'an to `Uthman, who asked Zayd ibn Thabit, `Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, Sa'id ibn al-`As, and `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham to prepare several copies. They did so.<sup>46</sup>

If this hadith is considered authentic, it means that Surat al-Ahzab consisted of 200 verses in Abu Bakr's copy and that `Uthman reduced them to seventy-three. Rationally, this is unacceptable because Abu Bakr's copy was the same as the Qur'an that the Prophet had memorized, documented, recited, and communicated to the ummah. This was also the case with `Uthman's copy. To say that such a change took place during `Uthman's time places the Qur'an's authenticity in doubt. If any such change had been made, it would have had to occur before its revelation ended. The Qur'an's length, as communicated to the ummah by the Prophet (saw), was the final length. Therefore, no changes could have been made in it at a later date.

*Hadith No. 7:* `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud says: "A verse was revealed to the Prophet (saw), and I wrote it down in my copy of the Qur'an (*mushaf*). One

morning, I found the space where I had written it down wiped clean. When I told the Prophet (saw) about it, he asked: ‘Did you not know that it was lifted up the previous day?’<sup>47</sup>

This hadith’s chain is technically suspended (*mu`allaq*), for only the final narrator’s name mentioned. According to the scholars, any gap at the beginning of a chain means that the hadith is considered suspended and, therefore, unreliable.<sup>48</sup> In this hadith, only `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud is mentioned. I checked almost all of the available sources on CD ROM and found no source that provided a detailed chain for this hadith, which was first recorded (without a chain) in Hibat Allah ibn Salamah al-Muqri’s (d. 410 AH) *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh*.<sup>49</sup> It seems that other scholars, including Ibn al-Jawzi, just borrowed and quoted it without a chain.

A natural question arises: Did other Companions known to have been very regular in documenting the Qur’an, such as `Ali, Ubayy ibn Ka`b, Mu`adh ibn Jabal, and Zayd ibn Thabit, have the same experience as Ibn Mas`ud did? If the verse, was wiped from Ibn Mas`ud’s document, was it wiped from all of their documents as well? We have no information about this. Moreover, such an event is totally unnatural and illogical.

*Hadith No. 8:* Once the Prophet (saw) led the morning prayer and omitted a verse from his recitation. Afterward, Ubayy ibn Ka`b asked him: “O Prophet of Allah. Was that particular verse abrogated, or you were caused to forget it?” The Prophet (saw) answered: “I was caused to forget it.”<sup>50</sup>

There is no problem with this hadith’s chain (Yahya ibn Da`ud al-Wasti, Ishaq ibn Yusuf al-Azraq, Sufyan al-Thawri, Salmah ibn Kuhayl, Dharr ibn `Abd Allah, Sa`id ibn `Abd al-Rahman, `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abza), for all of the narrators are highly reliable (*thiqah*). But its text does not appear to serve the purpose for which Abu `Ubayd has used it. This learned scholar quotes this hadith to prove the total abrogation of a revealed verse. The Prophet’s (saw) answer is obvious: He had forgotten to recite it. In other words, leaving it out was not due to its abrogation, but rather to a slip of the mind. Therefore, that verse was still part of the Qur’an.

One more thing makes this hadith doubtful. Ibn Abza, who was praying behind the Prophet (saw) on this occasion, simply said: “The Prophet led the morning prayer and left out a verse.” He realized this because he knew the verse. But he does not refer to it precisely in his hadith at all. Why did the sources not provide an accurate reference to the verse in question? Half of the information reported therein may be construed as the basis for considering the hadith as not so strong.



## Abrogating Verses But Keeping Their Practical Validity

Supporters of abrogation claim that certain verses were revealed, written in the Qur'an, recited by the ummah and then, sometime later, were removed from the Qur'an. However, their practical application remains in place.

*Hadith No. 1:* `Abd Allah ibn `Umar said: "No one should say that he has the Qur'an in full. He may not know what constitutes full Qur'an, for a considerable part of it is gone. Rather, he should say: 'I have therefrom only what appeared.'"<sup>51</sup>

This hadith's chain (Isma`il ibn Ibrahim, Ayyub ibn Khawt, Nafi`, and `Abd Allah ibn `Umar) is defective, for Ayyub is unreliable. Hadith scholars state unanimously that his hadiths should not be accepted. Ibn Ma'in decrees: "His hadiths are not written."<sup>52</sup> Al-Nasa'i and al-Darqutni considers him forsaken (*matruk*),<sup>53</sup> and al-Azdi declares him to be a liar (*kadhhab*).<sup>54</sup> Abu Hatim finds him weak, unsound, and invalid in matters of hadith,<sup>55</sup> and al-Saji opines that Ayyub narrated unfounded hadiths (*ahadith bawatil*).<sup>56</sup> In fact, he is said to have fabricated hadiths and transmitted them by using well-known reporters' names.<sup>57</sup>

Its text is also highly objectionable, for it places the Qur'an's authenticity in doubt. It seems that this text was fabricated to support the belief of some deviationist movements that a certain part of the Qur'an is hidden and beyond the believers' access.<sup>58</sup> The above hadith is thus unreliable from both angles: its chain and its text.

*Hadith No. 2:* Hamidah bint Abi Yunus claims that before `Uthman made changes in the Qur'anic documents (*masahif*) her father would recite to her from `A'ishah's copy: "Verily, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. O believers, bless him and give yourselves up in utter self-surrender, and also bless those praying in the first rows."<sup>59</sup>

This hadith's chain (Hajjaj ibn Muhammad al-Masisi, Ibn Jurayj, Muhammad ibn Abi Humayd, Hamidah bint Abi Yunus) is defective due to the presence of Muhammad ibn Abi Humayd, who is considered weak. Almost all hadith scholars, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Duri, al-Juzjani, al-Nasa'i, al-Bukhari, Ibn Ma'in, al-Saji, al-Darqutni, Abu Da'ud, and Ibn Hibban, express doubt about his authenticity.<sup>60</sup> For example, one statement in the hadith, "before `Uthman made changes in the Qur'anic documents," contrasts with the history of the Qur'an's compilation: `Uthman did not make any changes in the Qur'an; he simply established a committee to make

ten to fifteen copies of the Qur'an, which had been codified during Abu Bakr's reign.<sup>61</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi records the same hadith, but with a slight different text: "Hamidah reports that `A'ishah bequeathed to us some of her articles, including her copy of the Qur'an, in which the statement 'Verily, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet and also those who pray in the first rows' appears."<sup>62</sup> Its chain is the same, and Muhammad ibn Abi Humayd is the one who reports from Hamidah. From the angle of its chain, this hadith is weak. Moreover, the verse as reported by Hamidah is slightly different from what she states in the other hadith.

*Hadith No. 3:* Abu Waqid al-Laythi says: "We would go to the Prophet (saw) whenever he received revelation, and he would teach it to us. One day I went to him, and he said that Allah says: 'Verily, We granted wealth to establish prayer and pay in charity. If a son of Adam possessed a valley, he would love to have the second one; if he possessed the second one, he would love to have the third one. The stomach of Adam's son cannot fill but with dust, and Allah accepts the repentance of the one who repents.'"<sup>63</sup>

This hadith's chain is as follows: `Abd Allah ibn Salih, Hisham ibn Sa`d, Zayd ibn Aslam, `Ata ibn Yasar, Abu Waqid al-Laythi. Hisham is controversial. Yahya ibn Sa`id avoids his hadiths,<sup>64</sup> Ibn Ma`in considers him weak,<sup>65</sup> and Abu Hatim opines that his hadiths are untrustworthy.<sup>66</sup>

Even if this hadith is considered acceptable, it cannot be claimed with certainty that what the Prophet (saw) recited as Allah's statement was part of the Qur'an. The Prophet (saw) only said: "Allah says." Thus, it does not necessarily indicate that this was a Qur'anic verse. In a *hadith qudsi*, defined as one in which Allah speaks, the Prophet (saw) also used the same phrase to attribute the statement to Allah. It is most probable that the Prophet's (saw) above teaching is a *hadith qudsi* and not a Qur'anic verse.

*Hadith No. 4:* According to Ubayy ibn Ka`b, the Prophet (saw) told him that Allah commanded him to recite the Qur'an to him (Ubayy), so he recited Surat al-Bayyinah, which included the verses "If Adam's son asked for a valley of wealth and I granted it to him, he would ask for the second one. If he asked two and I gave it to him, he would ask for the third one. There is no way to fill the stomach of Adam's son except with dust, and Allah accepts the repentance of the one who repents. The religion in the eyes of Allah is *Hanifiyah* (true and orthodox), and not Judaism nor Christianity. One who does a good deed, He will never let it go to waste."<sup>67</sup>

Apparently, there is no problem with this hadith's chain (Adam ibn Abi Iyas, Shu`bah ibn al-Hajjaj, `Asim ibn Bahdalah, Zirr ibn Hubaysh, and Ubayy ibn Ka`b). But a minute examination of each reporter will show some defect in it; hence, the hadith turns out to be weak. The problem lies with `Asim, who reports from Zirr. Although his general identity is considered acceptable and reliable (*thiqah*),<sup>68</sup> this recognition is accompanied by the following comment: "He made too many errors in his reporting (*kana kathir al-khata' fi hadithihi*)."<sup>69</sup> Technically, this observation signifies that his erroneous hadiths are far more numerous than his accurate hadiths.<sup>70</sup> In addition, `Asim's memory was defective. Ibn `Ulayyah, al-Nasa'i, al-Darqutni, and Abu Bakr al-Bazzar consider his memory weak.<sup>71</sup> Ya`qub ibn Sufyan describes him as a reliable reporter, but makes it clear that his hadiths contain some discrepancies (*idtirab*).<sup>72</sup>

Its text contains several objectionable things. The Prophet's (saw) statement to Ubayy, "Allah has commanded me to recite the Qur'an to you," raises several questions. What was so special about Ubayy that Allah commanded His Prophet to recite the Revelation to him first? In response, al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH) quotes two general observations. First, the Prophet (saw) recited to Ubayy because he wanted to teach the people humility by making it clear that no one should refrain from teaching and reciting to any person in an inferior position. Second, since Ubayy was swifter in memorizing the Prophet's words than others, the Prophet (saw) wanted him to take his words, recite them precisely just as he had heard them, and then teach them to the others.<sup>73</sup>

However, these reasons are so general that they cannot be considered specific to any particular Companion. To teach people humility, the Prophet (saw) would have done better to choose Bilal, a freed black African slave. To say that Ubayy had the most infallible and sharpest memory cannot be accepted as true, for many others (e.g., `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud, Mu`adh ibn Jabal, Abu Darda', and Zayd ibn Thabit) had highly accurate memories and were fully capable of receiving the Qur'an from the Prophet (saw) and teaching it to other people correctly. It seems that "Allah has commanded me to recite the Qur'an to you" is a later insertion.

Moreover, why was this hadith only reported by `Asim from Zirr? Zirr was a great Qur'anic scholar, and a number of people benefited from his knowledge, the most prominent being Ibrahim al-Nakha'i (d. 96 AH), `Adi ibn Thabit (d. 116 AH), Amir al-Sha`bi (d. 103 AH), and Abu Ishaq al-Shaybani (d. 141 AH). But only `Asim mentions this hadith concerning Surat al-Bayyinah. This situation makes it solitary (*gharib*), and if a solitary hadith contrasts with a well-known hadith, it must be rejected as unreliable. Abu

Bakr al-Anbari (d. 328 AH) considers `Asim's hadith to be contrary to Ubayy's authentically reported recitation of Surat al-Bayyinah, which contains no reference to the verses other than those in the Qur'an, and thus classifies it as false (*batil*).<sup>74</sup>

What this hadith presents as the Qur'an has been recorded by other sources, including al-Bukhari and Muslim, as the Prophet's (saw) statement and not as a part of the Qur'an. The former has recorded it as a hadith on the authority of three Companions (Ibn `Abbas, Ibn al-Zubayr, and Anas ibn Malik) who say very clearly that they heard the Prophet (saw) say it. However, they do not say that he recited it to them as part of the Qur'an.<sup>75</sup> After quoting it from the Prophet (saw), Ibn `Abbas said: "I do not know whether it is from the Qur'an or not."<sup>76</sup> Since he heard it directly from the Prophet (saw), who certainly did not mention that it was from the Qur'an, the question of whether it belongs to the Qur'an does not arise. Had the Prophet (saw) indicated that it was a Qur'anic verse, Ibn `Abbas would not have doubted its status.

Muslim records the same hadith as a hadith of the Prophet (saw) only through Anas ibn Malik and Ibn `Abbas.<sup>77</sup> But he also records a hadith, on Abu Musa al-Ash`ari's authority, according to which the above-mentioned statement was part of a long surah that Allah had caused to be forgotten.<sup>78</sup> This hadith in Muslim is unacceptable, because his direct source for it is Suwayd ibn Sa`id (d. 240 AH) who, according to al-Bukhari and al-Nasa'i, is weak.<sup>79</sup> There is also a conflict between `Asim's statement and that of Suwayd. The former says these verses were from Surat al-Bayyinah, a small surah; the latter reports them as part of a long surah, one that was as long as Surat al-Tawbah.

Al-Bukhari records a statement made by Ubayy ibn Ka`b through Anas ibn Malik: "We considered it (the above verses) part of the Qur'an until Surat al-Takathur came down."<sup>80</sup> This statement is ambiguous, because there is no apparent connection between the revelation of those verses in Surat al-Bayyinah and that of Surat al-Takathur. Also, there is no strong evidence that other Companions considered these verses as part of the Qur'an. As shown above, it is in clear conflict with several hadiths in which these sentences are stated to be the Prophet's (saw) own observation.

*Hadith No. 5:* Abu Musa al-Ash`ari said: "We used to recite a surah that we likened to a surah from the category of *musabbihat* (surahs that begin with *sabbaha* or *yusabbihu*). Later on we forgot it, except for this verse: "O believers, do not say what you do not do. Evidence will be written on your necks, so you will be asked about it on the Day of Judgment."<sup>81</sup>

All of the narrators in its chain (Farwah ibn Abi al-Maghra', `Ali ibn Mushir, Da'ud ibn Abi Hind, Abu Harb, his father), as given by Ibn Abi Hatim in his *Tafsir*, are reliable. But from the detailed hadith, several questions emerge. According to Abu Musa, Allah caused this surah to be forgotten by lifting it up. Hence, it was no longer part of the Qur'an. So, why did the Companions recite part of it to the people of Basrah? What Allah had removed from the Qur'an should not have been recited. As the hadith spells out, Abu Musa, despite the fact that the Companions had "forgotten" this surah, managed to retain in his memory some part thereof. What Allah has removed from one's memory cannot be remembered. This hadith is another example of an extremely solitary hadith (*gharib jiddan*). No other Companion reported it, which is very strange.

*Hadith No. 6:* One day, Maslamah ibn Makhlad al-Ansari (d. 60 AH) asked some people whether they were aware of two verses that were not included in the official copy of the Qur'an (*mushaf*). When they said that they were not, he recited them: "Verily, those who attained to faith, made hijrah, and fought in the path of Allah with their wealth and lives – there is good news for you: You are successful. And those who sheltered them, helped them, and fought for them against those upon whom was the wrath of Allah do not know what blissful delights, as yet hidden, await them as a reward for all that they did."<sup>82</sup>

This hadith's chain (Sa'id ibn Abi Maryam, `Abd Allah ibn Lahi`ah, Yazid ibn `Amr al-Mu`afriy, Abi Sufyan al-Kila`i) appears to be defective due to the presence of `Abd Allah. As stated above, he is considered unreliable. Most hadith scholars consider him weak and avoid his hadiths.<sup>83</sup>

Its text is also objectionable. As Maslamah ibn Makhlad points out, asserting that two verses were not written down in the *mushaf* is a serious accusation against Abu Bakr, who formed a committee to compile the Qur'an in a book form, and against `Uthman, who assigned the task of preparing several copies of the Qur'an to a committee. Does the reporter want to say that Abu Bakr or `Uthman excluded the two above-mentioned verses from the Qur'an? History attests to the extra care taken by the committee members appointed by Abu Bakr, the most prominent of which were `Umar and Zayd ibn Thabit, both of whom had memorized the Qur'an. All hadiths suggesting that these two honest men made any changes in the Qur'an seem to have been fabricated to malign their good names and to create doubt about the Qur'an's authenticity.

*Hadith No. 7:* `Umar once asked `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf: “Do you find what had been revealed about us: ‘You continue making the utmost endeavor, as you did the first time’?”? When the latter said that he did not, the former said: “It is one of those verses that were dropped from the Qur’an.”<sup>84</sup>

All of the reporters in this hadith’s chain (Sa`id ibn Abi Maryam, Nafi` ibn `Umar al-Jumhi, Ibn Abi Mulaykah, al-Miswar ibn Makhramah) are highly reliable. However, its text may not easily be accepted as correct. `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf’s statement shows that he was not aware of such a revelation. It is strange that a revelation should come down concerning prominent Companions and then be excluded from the Qur’an, and that such a great Companion as `Abd al-Rahman would be totally ignorant of this incident – especially since he was one of the ten Companions to whom the Prophet (saw) promised Paradise. Moreover, the Prophet (saw) even prayed behind him.<sup>85</sup> Keeping his important status in mind, it is hard to imagine that he could have been unaware of a revelation that came down in praise of people like him. This would suggest that no such revelation took place.

The text also gives rise to another question about excluding certain verses. For instance, `Umar refers to this verse as one of those revelations that were dropped from the Qur’an. He does not use “lifted up” (*rufi`at*) “abrogated,” (*nusikhat*), or “caused to be forgotten” (*unsiyat*), but “dropped” (*usqitat*), which seems to be a human – as opposed to a divine – act. If this is the case, then he is referring to the Qur’an’s compilation undertaken during Abu Bakr’s reign. This committee included `Umar. Nothing in the historical record suggests that `Umar and other committee members were free to include or drop Qur’anic verses as they wished. Rather, their task was to prepare a copy of the Qur’an that the Prophet (saw) had delivered to the ummah. Therefore, such people as `Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit, and others could not modify the Book of Allah. It seems that some unknown person used `Umar’s name to create doubt about the Qur’an.

*Hadith No. 8:* Anas ibn Malik says: “Allah revealed a verse to His Prophet (saw) about those killed at Bi`r Ma`unah, and we recited it until it was abrogated. The verse was: ‘Convey to our people that we reached our Lord, and that He was pleased with us and we were pleased with Him.’”<sup>86</sup>

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim, among others, include this hadith in their works.<sup>87</sup> All of the reporters in the chains used by these two hadith scholars are reliable. The last source in each chain is Anas ibn Malik, who says that the verse was revealed about the martyrs of Bi`r Ma`unah. `A`ishah’s hadith about this event which is recorded in al-Bukhari’s work, sheds a great deal

of light on the nature of this verse. It is a rather long hadith. I relate its relevant portion, as narrated by `Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, here:

So when the news about the martyrdom of his Companions at Bi'r Ma'unah reached the Prophet (saw), he informed the people: "Your people have been killed. They said to their Lord: 'O our Lord. Tell our brothers about us, that we are pleased with You and that You are pleased with us.' Upon this, He informed them about their status."<sup>88</sup>

Based on this narration, it appears that Allah revealed the martyrs' fate to the Prophet (saw). When the Prophet (saw) relayed this incident to his people, Anas ibn Malik, who was only fourteen at that time,<sup>89</sup> took it to be part of the Qur'an. Thus, when it was not included in the Qur'an, he concluded that it had been abrogated.

Al-Bukhari recorded four hadiths related to this event; Muslim recorded one. It is strange that this verse, as quoted, was reported differently in these two sources. While these differences do not change the meaning, this is a very serious matter, for the Qur'an is being quoted. Such a situation is not logical. According to these hadiths, people recited this before it was annulled. Therefore, Anas and others had also memorized it. But when it was reported, its preciseness was, for some reason, lost. This suggests that what has been referred to as the Qur'an is not actually the Qur'an.

In each of these five hadiths, two sources quote Anas' statement: Qatadah ibn Di'amah (d. 117 AH) and Ishaq ibn `Abd Allah ibn Abi Talhah (d. 132 AH). Both of them use the term "from Anas" (*an Anas*), which suggests that they did not receive this information directly from Anas. Had this been the case, they would certainly have used *haddathani* (he told me) or *akhbarani* (he informed me). Most hadith scholars have no problem with "from" (*an*), for they consider this word as suggesting a direct taking, provided that the reporter's meeting with his source on some occasion has been established and that the reporter is not considered *mudallis* (one who deliberately changes his or her source's name).<sup>90</sup> This view, held by a majority of scholars, might be deemed valid only when the matter reported is not about the revelation of a Qur'anic verse. Such a revelation needs to be reported in a very precise manner.

*Hadith No. 9:* One verse, known as the *ayat al-rajm* ("If the old man and woman commit adultery, stone them both to death as an exemplary punishment prescribed by Allah. Allah is all-powerful, all-wise"), was revealed.<sup>91</sup> Makki ibn Abi Talib says: "This verse was lifted up from the Qur'an. Its recitation was not made permanent. Its practical applicability remained in

place, and its words were not forgotten.”<sup>92</sup> This hadith was recorded on the authority of four Companions: Abu Umamah ibn Sahl’s aunt, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ubayy ibn Ka’b, and ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Its chain and text are given below.

#### **ABU UMAMAH IBN SAHL’S AUNT**

*THE CHAIN:* Al-Layth ibn Sa’d, Khalid ibn Yazid, Sa’id ibn Abi Hilal, Marwan ibn ‘Uthman, Abu Umamah ibn Sahl, his aunt.

*THE TEXT:* “She says: ‘The Prophet (saw) taught us the *ayat al-rajm*: The old man and old woman, stone them both for satisfying their pleasure (*Al-shaykh wa al-shaykhah, farjumūhuma al-battah bima qadiya min al-ladhdhah*).”<sup>93</sup>

Its chain is not reliable, for Marwan’s presence makes it defective and doubtful. Abu Hatim declares him to be weak (*da`if*).<sup>94</sup> The text also seems to be dubious, because it does not contain the word “adultery” (*zina*’); it simply refers to satisfying one’s pleasure, which is a very general and abstract phrase that does not necessarily signify sexual intercourse.

#### **ZAYD IBN THABIT**

*THE CHAIN:* Shu`bah ibn Hajjaj, Qatadah ibn Di`amah, Yunus ibn Jubayr, Kathir ibn al-Salt, Zayd ibn Thabit.

*THE TEXT:* Zayd ibn Thabit says that he heard the Prophet (saw) say: “The old man and the old woman: If they commit adultery, stone them both certainly to death.”<sup>95</sup>

There is no problem in its chain, for all of its reporters are considered highly authentic. In the text, Zayd is not reported to have said that the Prophet (saw) recited the Qur’an. He says: “I heard the Prophet (saw) say this or that.” Such phraseology suggests that the Prophet (saw) might have uttered it as his own hadith.

The same hadith’s detailed text, as recorded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Hakim, is: “Kathir ibn al-Salt reports: ‘When Sa’id ibn al-`As and Zayd ibn Thabit, while making the copies of the Qur’an, reached this verse, Zayd said: ‘I heard the Prophet (saw) say it’ (here he quotes the Prophet’s statement, as mentioned above). ‘Umar said: ‘When it was revealed, I went to the Prophet and asked him to recite it to me. But it seemed that the Prophet (saw) disliked it. Do not you see that an old man, if unmarried, was flogged with lashes, and a young married man, if committed adultery, was stoned to death?’”<sup>96</sup>

There is a certain discrepancy in this text from the historical angle: The hadith claims that Sa’id ibn al-`As and Zayd ibn Thabit came across this



verse while copying the Qur'an, an undertaking that took place during the reign of `Uthman,<sup>97</sup> who had formed a committee for that specific purpose. Both men were members of this committee. These scribes were entrusted not with editing the Qur'an, but with making several copies of the first official copy, which had been codified during Abu Bakr's reign.<sup>98</sup> Thus, this incident suggests that this verse was in the first copy of the Qur'an. If this was the case, then why did they not include it? Today's copy of the Qur'an is the same as the copies made during `Uthman's reign. As it does not appear in today's Qur'an, and given the fact the first copy of the Qur'an precisely represented the Qur'an that the Prophet (saw) delivered to the ummah, this can only mean that this verse never appeared in the Qur'an. So, how did the two scribes come across it?

Another discrepancy is `Umar's statement. The hadith states that `Umar shared his own experience concerning the *ayat al-rajm* only when Zayd mentioned it. This cannot be accepted, for `Umar died before Zayd and Sa'id were entrusted with this task. (`Umar died in 23 AH; Zayd and Sa'id copied the Qur'an after the conquest of Armenia and Azerbaijan in 24 AH.<sup>99</sup>) Perhaps this task, as stated in the hadith, took place during Abu Bakr's reign, for `Umar had been a member of that committee. But this is impossible for two reasons: First, the Qur'an was compiled, not written down, into a single copy during Abu Bakr's reign with the help of already available documents of the Qur'an. Second, Sa'id was not a member of Abu Bakr's compilation committee.

This hadith says that upon `Umar's request, the Prophet (saw) did not like to recite the *ayat al-rajm*. If it was part of the Qur'an, why did the Prophet (saw) disapprove? This disapproval suggests that it was not a verse, but rather a non-Qur'anic judgment made by the Prophet (saw). Here, it may be proposed that the Prophet (saw) did not like to recite this verse because it had already been abrogated. But this might not be tenable, because the hadith says that `Umar approached the Prophet almost immediately after the verse's revelation. It is ridiculous to imagine that a verse would be annulled immediately after its revelation.

Due to these problems, the hadith is doubtful and so cannot form the basis of any argument pertaining to the Qur'an's revelation.

#### **UBAYY IBN KA`B**

*THE CHAIN:* Qatadah ibn Di`amah or Sufyan al-Thawri or Hammad ibn Zayd or Mansur ibn al-Mu`tamar or Shu`bah ibn al-Hajjaj or Isra'il ibn Yunus or Hammad ibn Salmah or Zayd ibn Abi Unaysah or Mis`ar ibn Kidam – all from `Asim ibn Bahdalah, Zirr ibn Hubaysh, Ubayy ibn Ka`b.

*THE TEXT:* According to Zirr, Ubayy asked him about the length of Surat al-Ahzab. When he said that it contained seventy-three verses, Ubayy said: “It was equal to Surat al-Baqarah in length, and it contained *ayat al-rajm*: ‘The old man and the old woman: stone them both certainly, as an exemplary punishment from Allah, and Allah is All-Powerful and All-Wise.’”<sup>100</sup>

The chain is almost free from major defects. However, there is a minor problem with `Asim. As stated above, he had a fallible memory, his hadiths contained discrepancies, and he made too many mistakes while reporting.<sup>101</sup> Despite these problems, `Asim is considered authentic. This is very strange, and reflects on the hadith scholars’ double standards.

A question arises: Why does only Zirr report this important news from Ubayy, who was a major figure in Madinah? Many people learned the Qur’an and its related knowledge from him, the most prominent being his three sons (Muhammad, al-Tufayl, and `Abd Allah<sup>102</sup>), Abu al-`Aliyah, Zayd ibn Aslam, and Muhammad ibn Ka`b al-Quradi.<sup>103</sup> None of them report from him what Zirr does. Moreover, only `Asim reports from Zirr, who was another great Qur’anic scholar frequently visited by people who wanted to learn about the Qur’an. How could only one person have heard the above information from him?

The most prominent scholars who benefited from Zirr were Ibrahim al-Nakha`i, al-Minhal ibn `Amr, `Isa ibn `Asim, `Amir al-Sha`bi, and `Adi ibn Thabit.<sup>104</sup> None of them reported anything from Zirr about the *ayat al-rajm*’s presence in Surat al-Ahzab. Although this verse is mentioned in several hadiths through different chains, `Asim’s hadith is considered solitary due to his assertion that the verse was revealed in Surat al-Ahzab. Thus, his hadith is strange not only from the angle of its chain, but also from that of its text. Abu Yusuf warns against such strange (*gharib*) hadiths: “He who follows strange hadiths (*gharib al-hadith*) utters a lie.” Ahmad ibn Hanbal also told students “not [to] write these strange hadiths (*al-ahadith al-ghara`ib*).”<sup>105</sup>

#### **`UMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB**

*THE CHAIN:* The sources have generally used two chains of narrators to report `Umar’s assertion: that of Malik ibn Anas, Yahya ibn Sa`id, Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib, `Umar ibn al-Khattab; and that of Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah, Muhammad ibn Shahab al-Zuhri, `Ubayd Allah ibn `Abd Allah ibn `Utbah ibn Mas`ud, `Abd Allah ibn `Abbas, `Umar ibn al-Khattab.

*THE TEXT:* `Umar ibn al-Khattab delivered the Friday sermon from the pulpit of Madinah’s mosque. He said: “I am afraid that after a long period of time, people will say: ‘We do not find “stoning to death” (*al-rajm*) in the Book of Allah’ and will thus deviate from the right path by abandoning an

obligation Allah had revealed. Remember that if the offence is established through evidence or pregnancy or confession, stoning to death is prescribed for a married adulterer. We recite the verse: 'The old man and old the woman: if they commit adultery, stone them both certainly.' The Prophet (saw) enforced this sentence, and after him we continued it."<sup>106</sup>

The chains contain no problems, except for a minor and negligible controversy. All the hadiths of `Umar's statement that have been recorded through any chain and in any source are derived from the speech he delivered in Madinah a few days before he died. Only al-Bukhari recorded that particular speech in detail. In order to determine the nature of `Umar's statement, it is enough to check and analyze al-Bukhari's hadith, as follows:

After `Umar performed hajj, someone told him that somebody had stated: "If `Umar died, I would pledge allegiance to so-and-so (probably Talhah ibn `Ubayd Allah<sup>107</sup>). By God, Abu Bakr's election was merely an unexpected incident that soon came to an end." `Umar became so angry that he decided to address the people in order to caution them against those who wanted to usurp the leadership. But `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf advised him to postpone his plan until he returned to Madinah, on the grounds that the masses might not take it seriously. `Umar agreed. On Friday, he delivered the following sermon: "Verily, Allah raised Prophet Muhammad (saw) with truth and revealed to him the Book, in which was contained the *ayat al-rajm* (stoning to death). We recited it, understood it, and memorized it. The Prophet (saw) enforced it, and we followed his example after he died. I am afraid that after a long period of time, someone will say: 'By God, we do not find the *ayat al-rajm* in the Book of Allah' and deviate from the right path by abandoning an obligation that Allah has revealed. Stoning to death is prescribed in the Book of Allah for the married adulterer, whether male or female, provided that the offence has been established through evidence or pregnancy or confession. We also used to recite in the Book of Allah: 'Do not associate your biological link with any [person] other than your ancestors. It is blasphemy to do so.' Remember, the Prophet (saw) said: 'Do not extol me as `Isa, the son of Mary, was extolled, and say a servant of Allah and His Prophet.' (After this, he touched on the main issue, namely, the nature of Abu Bakr's election, and related how he had been elected and how the impending chaos had been averted.) `Umar ended his speech with this advice: 'He who pledges allegiance to a person without consulting the Muslims, as well as the one who accepts the pledge by trick, should not be followed. Rather, they should both be killed."<sup>108</sup>

The first question that arises here is the relevance of the *ayat al-rajm*. Moreover, this verse and Abu Bakr's election have nothing to do with each other. From the angle of the Arabs' eloquence and rhetoric, it seems ridicu-

lous to speak on these two issues at the same time. Ibn Hajar tried to explain this anomaly by quoting al-Muhallab, who said that `Umar had mentioned the *ayat al-rajm* and another verse at the beginning to remind the audience that no one has the right to speak in an absolute manner about something that the Qur'an and the Sunnah do not mention, and that no one had right to speak independently on his/her own accord or to do something in accordance with his/her wish and whim, such as commenting on Abu Bakr's election.<sup>109</sup>

This is a rather far-fetched explanation. If `Umar really wanted to do this, why did he not do so directly? By referring to two abrogated verses, the speaker weakened his case. Given that a contextual link is an intrinsic part of eloquence and that `Umar had been a man of eloquence and rhetoric even before embracing Islam, it seems that he did not actually mention this abrogated verse. Perhaps it was tactfully inserted later on by someone with a vested interest. Since `Umar had selected his topic, he devoted it to explaining how Abu Bakr had been elected and how the ummah had been saved from an unseen crisis. Given that his main focus was the collective approach to solving the ummah's problems, including the caliph's election, he warned the audience that individual dissent would lead to chaos.

Claiming that the Book of Allah mandates that married adulterers be stoned to death does not seem to be rational. If a verse has already been excluded from the Qur'an, it has no significance for Muslims. It should have been enough for `Umar to remind the audience that such a punishment was part of the Prophet's Sunnah. Muslims of that period were not supposed to have any doubt about the Sunnah's role in their life. Interestingly, no hadith quotes the Prophet as having said that a revealed verse had ever prescribed the death penalty for adulterers.

#### THE VIEW OF IMAM MALIK AND AMIN AHSAN ISLAHI

The words of the *ayat al-rajm* do not appear to be eloquent. *Al-shaykh wa al-shaykhah* (old man and old woman) are interpreted as a married man and a married woman. But this may not be correct. Did the pre-Islamic Arabs use these words in the sense of married couples? Sources explain *al-shaykh* as a man who is somewhere between fifty and eighty years old.<sup>110</sup> *Al-shaykhah* is clearly the feminine of *al-shaykh*. But an old person is not necessarily married. A person with a good mastery of Arabic, particularly Qur'anic Arabic, may find that *al-shaykh wa al-shaykhah* violate the Qur'anic diction and the principle of eloquence. Imam Malik opined that *al-shaykh wa al-shaykhah* signifies *al-thayyib wa al-thayyibah* (married man and married woman).<sup>111</sup> This interpretation shows that even he was a bit uncertain about these words' legitimacy and so had to clarify their given meaning.

In his *Tafsir*, Amin Ahsan Islahi (d. 1997 C.E.) commented:

This hadith, from every angle, seems to be a fabrication of some hypocrite. The objective behind it is to render the authenticity of the Qur'an doubtful and cast suspicion into the hearts of the unsuspecting people that some verses have been excluded from the Qur'an. Consider, first of all, its linguistic dimension. Can anyone with [a] right taste of Arabic accept it as a verse of the Qur'an? This cannot be attributed even to the Prophet (saw). Where will you, then, put this patch in the velvet of the Qur'an? There is no link between this reported verse and the supernatural language and the most eloquent style of the Qur'an."<sup>112</sup>

*Hadith No. 10:* `Umar said: "We recite from the Qur'an: 'Do not associate your biological link with any [one] other than your ancestors. It is blasphemy to do so."<sup>113</sup>

This statement is part of his sermon, as mentioned above. We have already seen that the reference to this verse, which does not appear in the Qur'an, seems to be a later interpolation. In this sermon, `Umar wanted to enlighten the people as to how Abu Bakr was elected as caliph, and did so. If this is the case, then why did he mention this so-called abrogated verse? A man as eloquent as `Umar would not have done such an anomalous thing, for it seems to be entirely irrelevant to the sermon's theme. Reason says that `Umar did not say it. Therefore, it must be a fabrication.

*Hadith No. 11:* `A'ishah says: "The *ayat al-rajm* and the verses on ten foster relations were revealed, and these were available in the document kept under the bed in my house. When the Prophet fell sick and we were busy with him, the goat entered and ate it."<sup>114</sup>

The sources provide two chains for this hadith: Muhammad ibn Ishaq, `Abd Allah ibn Abi Bakr ibn `Amr ibn Hazm, `Amrah bint `Abd al-Rahman, `A'ishah<sup>115</sup>; and Muhammad ibn Ishaq, `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Qasim, his father, `A'ishah.<sup>116</sup>

Although both chains are acceptable as good, the text seems highly objectionable: How could a pet goat have been allowed to eat part of the Qur'an? Al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH) decrees that the supposed presence of these extra verses in `A'ishah's document and their loss was fabricated by atheists and deviationists.<sup>117</sup> Al-Alusi (d. 1270 AH) also refers to the above hadith as a concoction and a lie spread by infidels.<sup>118</sup> Any hadith concerning the Qur'an's loss is rejected as a lie. In fact, Allah makes it crystal clear that the Qur'an cannot be lost because He has guaranteed its safety: "Verily, We revealed the Reminder (*al-Dhikr* [al-Qur'an]) and shall safeguard it" (15:9).

*Hadith No. 12:* Al-Husayn ibn al-Munadi claims that two surahs, Surat al-Khal' and Surat al-Hafd were revealed and then lifted up in terms of writing, but remained safe in the Muslims' memory.<sup>119</sup>

The reference here is to what the Hanafis say is to be recited during *salat al-witr*, as regards a special invocation known as *qunūt*. In his *Tafsir*, al-Suyuti recorded several hadiths on this matter.<sup>120</sup> According to him, the reasons for considering the *qunūt* as part of the Qur'an are four: `Ali's and Anas' statements to that effect; the presence of the word *qunūt* in the copies of the Qur'an made by Ubayy ibn Ka'b, `Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, and Ibn `Abbas; the Prophet's (saw) and the Companions' (including `Umar and `Ali) recitation of *qunūt* during *salat al-witr*; and the Companions' teaching *qunūt* to others.

The statement attributed to `Ali and Anas may not be considered authentic, because their chains are weak. In `Ali's case, `Abd Allah ibn Abi Razin's presence makes the chain defective because he is an unknown person.<sup>121</sup> In the chain transmitting Anas' statement, the person who reports from Anas is Aban ibn Abi `Ayyash, whom the hadith scholars state is totally unreliable.<sup>122</sup>

Some people have claimed that Ubayy ibn Ka'b, `Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, and Ibn `Abbas had written the above-mentioned *qunūt* in their Qur'anic documents. This does not necessarily mean that they wrote it as part of the Revelation; they might have written it as *du'a* (supplication). Those who considered *qunūt* to be part of the Qur'an merely because of its inclusion in some copies of the Qur'an were deluded (*wahm*).

The Prophet's (saw) and his Companions' recitation of *qunūt* during *salat al-witr* may not be used as evidence to support the above-mentioned claim, for not everything recited in that particular *salat* is invariably part of the Qur'an. *Qunūt* is a well-known *du'a* that Archangel Gabriel taught to the Prophet (saw). In his *Sunan*, al-Bayhaqi recorded an authentic hadith according to which Gabriel once taught the Prophet the *qunūt* that he should recite regularly during *salat al-witr*.<sup>123</sup> If the Companions taught the *qunūt* to others, it does not necessarily mean that it was part of the Qur'an, for they taught both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. And, as al-Bayhaqi's hadith makes clear, *qunūt* is part of the Sunnah.

## Conclusion

The various claims that certain Qur'anic verses and chapters were revealed but then removed later on is based on certain hadiths that quote some of the Companions' and the Followers' statements to that effect. When checked and analyzed, these hadiths are shown to be weak either from the angle of

their chains or from that of their texts. Most of these hadiths seem to have been fabricated by people with vested interests. In certain cases, errors occurred due to one or the other reporter's delusion (*wahm*).

The theory of abrogation and its classification seem to be very dangerous, for they affect the Qur'an's authenticity and safety. Anything that negatively affects the Qur'an's originality and authenticity is to be rejected as totally baseless. Scholars today are advised to be extra careful when reading and explaining any material related to abrogation. It is their pious duty to thoroughly scrutinize the hadiths concerned before they take any stand on the matter. In addition, the discipline of *'ulūm al-Qur'an* (the sciences of the Qur'an) needs a thorough refurbishing, and textbooks on this subject should include discussions from new angles, as I have attempted to do here.

## Endnotes

1. Makki ibn Abi Talib divided the abrogated verses into seven categories. However, his divisions can easily be readjusted into three categories. For details, see his *Al-'Udah li Nasikh al-Qur'an wa Mansūkhīhi* (Jeddah: Dar al-Minarah, 1986), 67-71.
2. See my "A Critique of the Theory of Al-Naskh in the Qur'an," *Law Journal IIUM* 11, no. 1 (2003) and "Al-Suyuti's Selection of Abrogated Ayat: A Critical Evaluation," *Journal of Islam in Asia*, no. 1 (2004).
3. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000), 2:42.
4. Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi, *Al-Burhan fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1994), 2:170.
5. Abu al-Farj 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 33.
6. Makki ibn Abi Talib, *Al-'Udah li Nasikh al-Qur'an*, 68.
7. Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam, *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh fi al-Qur'an al-'Aziz* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd, 1990), 14.
8. Makki ibn Abi Talib, *Al-'Udah li Nasikh al-Qur'an*, 69; al-Zarkashi, *Al-Burhan*, 2:170; al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:42. This hadith was originally recorded in Malik ibn Anas, "Kitab al-Rida'," in *Al-Muwatta'* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1985), 2:608, serial no. 17; and Muslim, *Sahih* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1997), vol. 5, hadith no. 3582. Al-Suyuti says that both al-Bukhari and Muslim recorded this hadith. He is mistaken, because it does not appear in al-Bukhari.
9. Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari* (Riyadh: Dar al-Salam, 2000), 9:184.
10. Malik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta'*, 2:608.
11. Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim, *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh*, 14-15; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 33-34.

12. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifah, 1996), 1:228.
13. `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghabah fi Ma`rifat al-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifah, 1997), 1:85.
14. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur`an*, 34; al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49.
15. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 4:195.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta`dil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 2002), 6:241, under serial no. 10271.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur`an*, 34.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:48.
25. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 2493.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 3:71.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahbi, *Mizan al-I`tidal* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifah, n.d.), 2:380, serial no. 4149.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 5:342-43.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Yusuf ibn `Abd Allah ibn `Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti`ab fi Ma`rifat al-Ashab* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1995), 2:131, serial no. 873.
37. Ibid.
38. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an," in *Al-Jami` al-Sahih*, vol. 3, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-`Arabi, 1400 ah), hadith no. 4999.
39. Ibid. The four authorities of the Qur'an, as certified by the Prophet (saw), were `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud (d. 33 AH), Salim ibn Mi`qal (d. 12 AH), Mu`adh ibn Jabal (d. 18 AH), and Ubayy ibn Ka`b (d. 32 AH).
40. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:48.
41. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta`dil*, 5:180-81, serial no. 8016.
42. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:229; Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahbi, *Mizan al-I`tidal*, 2:482, serial no. 4530.
43. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta`dil*, 5:180, serial no. 8016.
44. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:230.
45. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta`dil*, 5:180, serial no. 8016.
46. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an," in *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith no. 4987.
47. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur`an*, 34.



48. `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jurjani, *Al-Ta`rifat* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-`Arabi, 1405 AH), 2:283.
49. Hibat Allah ibn Salamah, *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1404 AH), 21.
50. Abu `Ubayd, *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansūkh*, 15-16. This hadith is not available in full in this source. The editor of Abu `Ubayd's work, Muhammad ibn Salih, identified the full text of this hadith from Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-`Arabi, 1994), vol. 6, hadith no. 20637.
51. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:48.
52. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 1:312.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahbi, *Al-Tafsir wa al-Mufassirūn* (n.p.: n.d.), 2:35.
59. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:48.
60. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 581.
61. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an," in *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith no. 4987.
62. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 36.
63. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 248.
64. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 6:28.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta`dil*, 9:78, serial no. 15896.
67. Al-Suyuti quoted this hadith from al-Hakim, "Kitab al-Tafsir," in *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1990), hadith no. 2889. The same hadith appears in Ahmad ibn Hanbal, "Zirr ibn Hubaysh `an Ubayy ibn Ka'b," in *Musnad*, vol. 7, hadith nos. 20697-98. But there are differences in wordings between al-Hakim's and Ibn Hanbal's hadiths.
68. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:28-29.
69. Ibid. This is basically Ibn Sa'd's comment.
70. Mohamed Abullais al-Khayrabadi, *Mu`jam al-Mustalahat al-Hadithiyah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dar al-Shakir, 2004), 67.
71. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:29.
72. Ibid.
73. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami` li Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 2000), vol. 10, part 20, 94.
74. Ibid., 94-95.
75. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab al-Riqaq," in *Sahih*, vol. 4, hadith nos. 6436-39.
76. Ibid., hadith no. 6437.
77. Muslim, "Kitab al-Zakat," *Sahih*, vol. 4, (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifah, 1997), hadith nos. 2412-15.
78. Ibid., hadith no. 2416.

79. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahbi, *Mizan al-I'tidal*, 2:248, serial no. 3621.
80. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab al-Riqaq," in *Sahih*, vol. 4, hadith no. 6440.
81. Al-Suyuti has quoted it from Ibn Abi Hatim, *Tafsir*, 10:3353, hadith no. 18881.
82. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49.
83. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:227-30.
84. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 36.
85. Ibn `Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti'ab*, 2:388, serial no. 1455.
86. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 36-37.
87. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab al-Maghazi," *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith nos. 4090, 4091, and 4095, also vol. 2, *Kitab al-Jihad*, hadith no. 2801; Muslim, in "Kitab al-Masajid," *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith no.1547.
88. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab al-Maghazi," in *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith no. 4093.
89. When the Prophet entered, Anas was only ten years old. The Bi'r Ma'unah incident occurred during 4 AH; hence, he was fourteen years old at that time. For Anas ibn Malik, see Ibn `Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti'ab*, 1:198-99, serial no. 84. For this incident, also see Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1997), 3:204.
90. Nur al-Din `Atar, *Manhaj al-Naqd fi `Ulum al-Hadith* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr 1992), 351.
91. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:48; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 35-36.
92. Makki ibn Abi Talib, *Al-'Udah li Nasikh al-Qur'an*, 65.
93. Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasa'i, "Kitab al-Rajm," in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991), vol. 4, hadith nos. 7146-47; Al-Hakim, "Kitab al-Hudud," in *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 4, hadith no. 8070.
94. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*, 8:310, serial no. 14551.
95. Al-Nasa'i, "Kitab al-Hudud," *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 4, hadith no. 7145; `Abd Allah ibn `Abd al-Rahman al-Darmi, "Kitab al-Hudud," in *Sunan* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), vol. 2, hadith no.2323; Ibn Hanbal, "Hadith Zayd ibn Thabit," in *Musnad*, vol. 6, hadith no. 21086.
96. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, hadith no. 21086; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, hadith no. 8071.
97. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an," in *Sahih*, vol. 3, hadith no. 4987.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid. For the date of the conquest of Armenia and Azerbaijan, see Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 2:591.
100. Al-Nasa'i, "Kitab al-Rajm," in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 4, hadith no. 7150; al-Hakim, "Kitab al-Tafsir," in *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, hadith no. 3554 and "Kitab Hudud," vol. 4, hadith no. 8068; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, "Kitab al-Hudud," part 8 (Makkah: Dar al-Baz, 1994), hadith no. 16688.
101. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 3:28-29.
102. Ibid., 1:182.
103. Al-Dhahbi, *Al-Tafsir* (n.p.: n.d.), 1:114.

104. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 2:194.
105. `Atar, *Manhaj al-Naqd*, 402.
106. Al-Nasa'i, "Kitab al-Rajm," in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 4, hadith no. 7156; Malik ibn Anas, "Kitab al-Hudūd," in *Al-Muwatta'*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1985), hadith no. 10; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, part 8, hadith nos. 16687 & 16697.
107. Ibn Hajar, "Kitab al-Hudūd," in *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 12 (Riyadh: Dar al-Salam, 2000), 180.
108. Al-Bukhari, "Kitab al-Hudūd," in *Sahih*, vol. 4, hadith no. 6830.
109. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, 12:192.
110. Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Firozabadi, *Al-Qamūs al-Muhit* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1997), 1:378.
111. Malik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta'*, 2:41.
112. Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* (Delhi: Taj Company, 1997), 5:366-67.
113. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49.
114. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Nawasikh al-Qur'an*, 37.
115. Ibn Hanbal, "Hadith al-Sayyidah `A'ishah," in *Musnad*, vol. 7, hadith no. 25784.
116. Al-Darqutni, `Ali ibn `Umar, "Kitab al-Rida'," in *Sunan*, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), part 4, hadith no. 4330; Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Majah, "Kitab al-Nikah," in *Sunan*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1997), hadith no. 1944.
117. Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami'*, vol. 7, part 14, p. 76.
118. Al-Sayyid Mahmud al-Alusi, *Rūh al-Ma`ani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999), vol. 16, part 1, p. 191.
119. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan*, 2:49.
120. Al-Suyuti, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), 6:722-24.
121. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahbi, *Mizan al-I'tidal*, 2:422, serial no. 4313.
122. *Ibid.*, 1:10-15.
123. Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 2, hadith no. 2961.