

آن بت نزد قریش بدان پایه بود که درهای از وادی «خِراض» را که «سِقام» نام داشت، محلّ بت و پناهگاه آن ساخته بودند و آنرا با حرم کعبه برابر می‌نهادند و آن بت قربانگاهی داشت که ذبیح را در آن سر می‌بردند و نام آن قربانگاه «عُتْبَب» بود. می‌گویند مُنْذِر سوم چهارصد اسیر را برای عُزَى قربانی کرده است.

بت شکنی پیامبر(ص)، پس از فتح مکه پیامبر(ص) خالد بن ولید را مأمور ساخت تا به طرف بتکده عُزَى رهسپار شود و آنرا ویران کند. خالد درختی را که در کنار بتکده مورد تقدیس بود، قطع کرد و آخرین متولّی عُزَى را کشت و بت را شکست. در مورد این که عُزَى از سنگ یا فلز بوده نظرات مختلفی است. بعضی احتمال داده‌اند: بت عُزَى درختی بوده که قبیله غَطَفان به آن عبادت می‌کردند و برای آن خانه‌ای بنا کرده بودند. در دایرة المعارف و جلدی درخت بودن عُزَى را نسبت به قول داده است. در مجمع‌البیان نیز این قول نقل شده است. و به قولی دیگر: لات و منات و عُزَى هر سه از سنگ بودند که آنها را در کعبه گذاشته و عبادت می‌کردند.

منابع: قرآن؛ قاموس قرآن، ۳۴۳/۴؛ ترجمه تفسیر المیزان، ۷۴/۱۳۷؛ کتاب الاصنام، ابن کلبی، ۱۷ تا ۲۷؛ دانشنامه قرآن، ۱۴۵۲/۲  
خدیجه بوترابی

**عُزَيْر**، اسم شخصی از بنی اسرائیل که یهود او را به زیان عبیری «عُزْرَا» می‌خوانند. عُزیر در قرن پنجم قبل از میلاد می‌زیست. نام عُزیر یکبار در قرآن مجید به کار رفته است. «و قَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ» این آیه تصریح می‌کند که: یهودیان می‌گویند عُزیر پسر خدا است (توبه، ۳۰). بعضی از مفسرین گفته‌اند اینکه: عُزیر پسر خدا است، کلام پاره‌ای یهودیان معاصر رسول خدا (ص) بوده، تمام یهودیان چنین اعتقادی ندارند. شاید آنان عُزیر را فرزند تشریحی خدا می‌دانستند؛ مانند نامگذاری مسیحیان. بعضی از یهود در حق عُزیر غلو کردند که او کل تورات و شاید عهد عتیق را از حفظ بوده و در زمانی که نسخه‌ای از تورات موجود نبود، آن را از حافظه نقل و املاء کرده است. بعدها که نسخه اصلی یا نسخه‌هایی از تورات (عهد عتیق) به دست آمد آن را با نقل و املائی عُزیر مطابقت کردند، دیدند که کوچکترین اختلافی با آنها ندارد. این امر را معجزه او شمردند و گفتند او پسر خدا است. در تورات به این عقیده تصریح نشده است. گاه عُزیر را با عزرا که در کتاب مقدس کتابی به نام او هست یکی انگاشته‌اند. روایات بسیاری را مفسرین در احیاء عُزیر (یا اِزْمِیایا خضر) و حمار او نقل کرده‌اند

استغراق در لوائح مشاهدات و استجماع قوای استقامت به حکم: فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ = وقتی (در انجام امور) تصمیم گرفتی پس بخدا توکل نما.

عزیمت در اصطلاح: نزد اصولیان مقابل رخصت است و شامل فرض و واجب و سنت و تذب و حرام و مکروه. عزیمت در اصطلاح فلسفه عبارت از اراده مؤکد است که اجماع نامیده‌اند. منابع: قرآن کریم، سوره‌های یاد شده؛ فرهنگ و معارف اسلامی؛ دکتر سجادی، ۲۸۶/۳؛ مسبوط، دکتر جعفری لنگرودی، ۹۴۶/۴؛ لسان‌العرب، ابن منظور، ۱۹۳/۹؛ فرهنگ جامع، سیاح، ۱۱۵/۳؛ فرهنگ علوم عقلی؛ اقرب الموارد؛ کشاف اصطلاحات الفنون؛ تاج المصادر، بیهقی؛ منتهی الارباب، ماده عزم؛ قاموس قرآن، قرشی، ۳۴۴/۴.  
عبدالعلی صاحبی شاهرودی

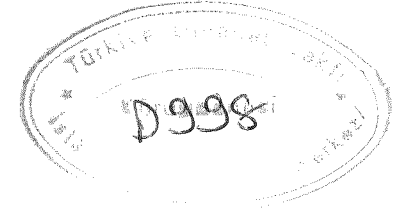
**عُزَى**، یکی از بزرگترین بت‌های سه‌گانه عرب که نزد قریش پرستیده می‌شد. نام این بت (عزى) در قرآن مجید (نجم، ۱۹ تا ۲۳) همراه با دو بت دیگر، لات و منات آمده است: أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ. وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ = آیا شما لات و عُزَى را نگریده‌اید و آن دیگری منات را که سومی است (نجم، ۱۹، ۲۰). «لات و عُزَى و منات» بت‌های مشرکین بودند و مشرکین آنها را مثالی از ملانکه می‌پنداشتند، و ادعا می‌کردند که: ملانکه به طور کلی از جنس زنانند.

عرب ۳ بت فوق را دختران خدا می‌دانستند. در کتاب الاصنام ابن کلبی آمده است که: عُزَى بزرگترین بت نزد قریش بود: كَانَتْ أَعْظَمَ الْأَصْنَامِ عِنْدَ قُرَيْشٍ. و در همین کتاب مذکور است که: چون رسول خدا (ص) عبادت عُزَى را نهی کرد این مطلب بر قریش گران آمد ابواصیححه (سعید بن عاص بن امیه) که لحظات آخر عمر خویش را می‌گذراند، ابو لهب به عبادت وی آمد و دید که او گریه می‌کند گفت: علت گریهات چیست؟ آیا از مرگ می‌ترسی؟ ابواصیححه گفت نه، می‌ترسم پس از من عُزَى را عبادت نکنند. ابولهب به خاطر دلداری به او گفت: به خدا در حیات تو به خاطر تو عُزَى را عبادت نکرده‌اند تا به سبب مرگ تو دست از عبادت بکشند. ابواصیححه گفت: اکنون دانستم که جانشین دارم و جایم خالی نخواهد ماند و از ثبات ابولهب در عبادت عُزَى شگفت زده شد. در کتاب الاصنام آمده که: «در هیچ یک از پنج بت که عمرو بن لُحَیْ به قریش داده بود به آن عظمت قائل نبودند که درباره عُزَى بودند.» عُزَى در عربستان دارای معابد متعدد بوده است که معبد اصلی آن در وادی نخلة شامیه بر سر راه طائف به مکه قرار داشت. و احترام

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
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ESDRAS

## UN PROPHÈTE DESTITUÉ?

*par*

Jean-Louis DÉCLAIS

ESDRAS DANS LA BIBLE

Le personnage d'Esdras est central dans la mémoire juive. Son nom suffit pour évoquer le retour des exilés et la reconstitution de la communauté autour de son temple et de sa Loi.

Curieusement, il est absent de la galerie des grands ancêtres mise en place par le sage Jésus ben Sirac au II<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère (Si 44-49). Pour la période du retour d'exil, celui-ci célèbre la mémoire de trois autres personnages: Zorobabel, Josué fils de Yosadaq et Néhémie (49, 11-13). Zorobabel était de famille royale (1 Ch 3, 17-19); poussé par des prophètes comme Aggée, il travailla à rebâtir le temple et à rétablir le culte (Esd 3, 2-8; 5, 2); c'était vers 518, sous Darius, soit une vingtaine d'années après l'édit de Cyrus. Certains mirent en lui des espoirs messianiques (Ag 2, 21-23; Za 4, 6-10). Sa trace se perd. Peut-être a-t-il été éliminé. Josué fils de Yosadaq, son contemporain, était de famille sacerdotale; il assuma une fonction de premier plan après la disparition de Zorobabel (Za 3, 8-10). Néhémie vint quatre-vingts ans plus tard, de 445 à 430. Personnage important à la cour perse, il reçut d'Artaxerxès I la mission de refaire de Jérusalem une ville fortifiée, munie de remparts.

Esdras reçut sa mission la septième année du souverain perse Artaxerxès, soit Artaxerxès I (465-424), soit plus probablement Artaxerxès II (405-359). Il arriverait donc à Jérusalem en 398, soit presque un siècle et demi après le décret de Cyrus

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## Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah? Re-Assessing Ibn Ḥazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea

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### Abstract

This article explores the originality, quality and influence on non-Muslims of a particular aspect of the work of the Andalusī Muslim Ibn Ḥazm (b. 384/994, d. 456/1064). The focus is the use of the motif of Ezra as corrupter of the Torah, and is examined by means of sustained engagement with the portrayal of Ibn Ḥazm by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh in her influential study, *Intertwined Worlds*. Building on but also questioning her work, the article examines positive and negative portrayals of Ezra, and explores possible Muslim predecessors of Ibn Ḥazm as a critic of Ezra. The originality and quality of Ibn Ḥazm's work is questioned, through piecing together often familiar evidence so as to form a new picture of Ibn Ḥazm's contribution. Lazarus-Yafeh's suggestion that Ibn Ḥazm directly influenced non-Muslim thought, and therefore the rise of European sceptical Biblical scholarship, via the rabbi Ibn Ezra (b. 1094. d. c. 1167), is also shown to be unlikely.

### Keywords

Ibn Ḥazm, Ezra, Ibn Ezra, Torah, corruption, 4 Ezra

### Introduction

It is commonly accepted by Muslims that the biblical text is corrupted. An obvious question follows—according to Muslim sources, who is responsible? Where an individual is named, the most likely corrupter of the New Testament is cited as Paul.<sup>1</sup> For the Hebrew Scriptures, the name that recurs is Ezra. The task of tracing the rise, development and influence of the idea of Ezra as corrupter has been tackled in various ways by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh<sup>2</sup> and Noel Malcolm.<sup>3</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh's influential study, *Intertwined Worlds*, often cited in relation to Muslims and the Bible, makes three important points about the

<sup>1</sup> See for example Anthony, “Composition of Sayf b. 'Umar's Account”.

<sup>2</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*.

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, pp. 383–431.

'ÜZEYR (A.S.)

297.9  
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'ÜZEYR (A.S.)

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Et-Weörif - (i. Kut) - 49 v.d

Uzeyr A.S.

KLM

Alusi, Rulmul-Meāni, III, 21-22

DIA Ktp 297.211

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Uzeyr Hz  
Makdisi, el-Bed 3/115-116

Uzeyr Hz.

KLM

Alusi, Rulmul-Meāni, X, 81

DIA Ktp 297-211 ALLR

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عزير عليه السلام  
5/151 Azir (as)

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1771

~~5, 151~~

Uzeyr

Razi, Tefsir, XVI, 33.

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114 HAZIHAN 1993

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12 KASIM 991

made: E209

A. Br. : c.VIII, s. 413-414

B. L. : c.VII, s. 3941

F. A. : c. , s.

M. L. : c.VI, s. 476

T. A. : c.XVI, s. 71-72

# قَصَصُ الْقُرْآنِ

تأليف

محمد أبو الفضل إبراهيم

محمد أحمد جاد المولى

السيد شحاتة

على محمد البجاوي

١٤٠٥ هـ - ١٩٨٤ م

الطبعة الثالثة عشر

Uzayr

213-216

فيها زيادة قصص وضبط، وشرح، وتعليق  
حقوق الطبع محفوظة للمؤلفين

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi Kütüphaneleri	
Kitap No. :	1525
Emel No. :	892.7 KAS.K

مكتبة  
دار الشراة  
٢٢ شارع الجمهورية - القاهرة

- ٢١٢ -

## عزيز<sup>(١)</sup>

دخل حديقته فإذا هي مخضرة العود، وارفئة الظلال، دانية التطوف، تصدح فيها البلابل، وتطرب الأطيوار، ففضى ساعته متملياً<sup>(١)</sup> بما فيها من جلال، مستمتعاً بما تحويه من شيات<sup>(٢)</sup> الجمال، ثم ملأ سلة من العنب، وأخرى من التين، واصطحب مقداراً من الخبز، وامطى حمارة، وأخذ طريقه إلى المنزل.

وبينا هو يفكر في سر الكون، وعظمة الوجود، ضل به السير، واضطرب أمامه الطريق، واشتبهت معالم الجهات، وإذا هو في قرية خربة تُحدث عن قوم فرقهم عدواء الدار<sup>(٣)</sup>، واحتببتهم حبول المنايا : رسوم دارة، وأطلال عافية، وعظام نخرة، وأجساد بالية.

فزل عن حمارة، وأقى بالسلتين إلى جواره، وربط الحمار، وأسند ظهره إلى جدار حتى يجمع نفسه، ويسترجع قوته وفكره، ثم طاب له السكن، واستراح إلى النسيم، وأطلق العنان لعقابه يفكر في هذه الأموات وكيف تنشر، وتلك الأجساد وأنى تبعث، بعد أن أصبحت أديمًا للأرض، وتراباً يهود عليها كل أسحم<sup>(٤)</sup> هطال، ثم استحال هذا التفكير إلى سهوم ووجوم، ثم أغضت عيناه، وتخاذلت ركبتاه، ودخل في نوم مشتمل، وكأنه لحق بمن في القبور.

ومرت مائة عام مجرمات<sup>(٥)</sup>، وهربت أطفال، وفنيت أعمار، وأمحت

(\*) سورة البقرة: ١٥٩، سورة التوبة: ٣٠.

(١) متملياً: متمتماً. (٢) شيات: علامات. (٣) عدواء الدار: بدها.

(٤) أسحم: سحاب. (٥) مجرمات: كالمات.

وأني لسلائل القوم الذين تماثلوا على يوسف، وأذوا موسى من بعده، أن تأنس نفوسهم إلى الاطمئنان، أو تنسى العبدوان؛ فإنهم ما عثموا أن رجعوا أدرانهم إلى الشر، وأخذوا يحطبون في حبال الظلم والبنى، حتى إذا قام فيهم زكريا ويحيى نبيين رحيمين، ورسولين كريمين، سفكوا دمهما، كأن بنفوسهم عطشاً إلى الدماء، وكان وترأ<sup>(١)</sup> بينهم وبين الأنبياء، وعادوا إلى الشر والعدوان، وعاد الله بهم إلى المسكر والانتقام، وسلط عليهم جودرز، كما سلط على من قبلهم بختنصر، وأعاد الكفرة عليهم من ذهاب ملكهم، وتخريب معابدهم، وهكذا مرقوا كل ممزق، وتفترقوا تحت كل كوكب، وضرب الله عليهم أبد الدهر الذلة والمسكنة، وبأوا بغضب من الله: (ذلك بأنهم كانوا يكفرون بآيات الله ويقتلون الأنبياء بغير حق، ذلك بما عصوا وكانوا يعتدون)<sup>(٢)</sup>.

stroyed after a lengthy siege by Nebuchadnezzar's forces. In both debacles, and indeed again in 582, large numbers from the best elements of the surviving population were forcibly deported to Babylonia.

Before the first surrender of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was a functioning priest probably attached to the Jerusalem Temple staff. He was among those deported to Babylonia in 597 where he was located at Tel-abib on the Kebar canal (near Nippur). He lived with his wife in his own house until, apparently very suddenly, she died. Quite apart from his professional status as prophet-priest, it is evident that he was, among his fellow exiles, a person of uncommon stature.

The Book of Ezekiel opens with what remains a standing puzzle:

On the fifth day of the fourth month in the thirtieth year, while I was among the exiles by the river Kebar, the heavens were opened and I saw a vision of God. (Alternative translation, The New English Bible.)

To what or to whom the reference to the thirtieth year applies is not known. But in the next verse, the vision that inaugurated Ezekiel's career as a prophet is unambiguously dated in "the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin"; that is, about 592 BC. His latest datable utterance ("in the twenty-seventh year") would be, then, about 570 BC, 22 years later.

On several matters, interpreters of the Book of Ezekiel have been unable to come to agreement. Repeatedly the prophet addresses himself to those who remain in Judah and Jerusalem, a fact that has led some historians to conclude that the Babylonian setting must be a later fiction, and that Ezekiel in fact fulfilled his career in Jerusalem. This, however, remains a minority judgment. More striking is the conflict in assessment of the person of the prophet. By some he has been read in a strongly negative light—hard and insensitive to the point of being almost inhuman; a fanatic, and in the way of fanatics, arrogant and aggressively intolerant; and even (because in fact the prophet is more given to strange visions and extraordinary acts than any other biblical prophet) as a psychopath. On the other hand, he has been described as having a well-endowed, versatile mind, aware of the problems and doubts of the people he addresses and sensitive to the life about him. It is said that he devoted all his mental powers, his heart, and his imagination to his ministry, and there is wide agreement that he profoundly shaped the Judaism that was reformed in the centuries that followed, especially in the influence of chapters 40–48 upon the postexilic reconstruction and reorganization of Judaism.

With the possible exception of the closing section of the Book of Ezekiel, scholars are reasonably confident that it is the prophet himself who is revealed in the writing that bears his name. The first 24 chapters were written in the years immediately before Jerusalem's destruction and carry the message of violence and destruction. Chapters 33 to 35 bridge the chasm to the articulation of hope and the assurance of restoration in chapters 36 to 39, with a phenomenal vision in chapter 37 of the valley of dry bones—representing the moribund people of Israel—coming alive again.

More than any of the classical biblical prophets—such as Isaiah and Amos and Jeremiah—Ezekiel is given to symbolic actions, strange visions, and even trances (although it is quite gratuitous to deduce from these, and from his words "I fell upon my face" (1:28) that Ezekiel was a cataleptic). He eats a scroll on which words of prophecy are written, to symbolize his appropriation of the message (3:1–3). He lies down for an extended time to symbolize the length of Israel's punishment (4:4ff). He is apparently struck dumb on one occasion for an unspecified length of time (3:26). As other prophets had done before him, he sees the God–People relationship as analogous to the relationship of husband to unfaithful wife, and therefore understands the collapse of the life of Judah as a judgment for essential infidelity. Ezekiel depicts the relationship in chapters 16 and 23 with consummate skill and passion.

There are other distinguished accounts of a prophet's

calling (e.g., in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah). But Ezekiel's vision, which constitutes his call in chapter 1, is the most sensitive and sophisticated. Ezekiel does not suppose that he has seen Yahweh (God) or even Yahweh's throne. He punctuates his account with repeated qualifying phrases and concludes the vision: such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. These images of the divine glory were the basis of Mer-kava ("chariot") mysticism in later Judaism.

Finally, it is the majesty of Ezekiel's faith that is his most distinctive quality. Ezekiel is unshakably persuaded of Yahweh's purposeful impingement upon history, of the ultimate redemption of the life of his (the prophet's) people, and implicitly, of their fulfillment of destiny in the eventual blessing of all the peoples of the earth.

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FZRA 127 (E.D.N.)

## Ezra

Ezra was a religious leader from among the Jewish exiles in Babylon, who, at some time in the 5th century BC or at the beginning of the 4th, went to Jerusalem, where he was instrumental in bringing about a great religious reform that resulted in the reconstitution of the Jewish community on the basis of Pentateuchal law—which was regarded as divinely revealed Torah, or Law; i.e., religious and social regulations laid down in the first five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch). Since his efforts did much to give Jewish religion the form that was to characterize it for centuries after, Ezra has with some justice been called the father of Judaism; i.e., the specific form the Jewish religion took after the Babylonian Exile. So important was he in the eyes of his people that later tradition regarded him as no less than a second Moses.

By courtesy of the Photographic Archive of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, Frank J. Darmstadter



Ezra showing the Law to the people, detail of an engraving by Gustave Doré (1832–83).

Knowledge of Ezra is derived from the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, supplemented by the Apocryphal (not included in the Jewish and Protestant canons of the

Problem of dating of Ezra

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# Prophets in the Quran

An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis

Selected and translated by  
**BRANNON M. WHEELER**

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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## Ezra and Jeremiah

**Q 9:30** The Jews say that Ezra is the son of God and the Christians call Christ the son of God. This is what they say from their own mouths. They imitate the sayings of those who did not believe before them. God battles them for they are deluded.

### Ezra the Prophet

**Ibn Asakir:** He was Ezra b. Jarwah. It is also said he was son of Surayq b. Amariah [Adiya] b. Ayyub b. Zerahiah [Darzana] b. Uzzi [Uri] b. Bukki [Taqi] b. Abishua [Asbu] b. Phinehas b. Eleazar b. Aaron b. Imran. It is said that he was Ezra b. Sarukha. Some reports say that his grave is in Damascus. Ibn Abbas and Abu Hurayrah report: "I do not know if Ezra was a prophet or not."

**Ibn Abbas:** Ezra was one of those Nebuchadnezzar led into exile when he was a boy. When he reached the age of 40 years God gave him wisdom. There was no one who had memorized more or had more knowledge of the Torah than he. He is mentioned among the prophets but God erased his name when he asked his Lord about his fate.

**Ibn Kathir:** It is well known that Ezra was one of the Israelite prophets, that he was between David and Solomon and between Zechariah and John, that he was the only one who remained among the Israelites who memorized the Torah. He related all of it to the Israelites just as Wahb b. Munabbih says: God commanded an angel to bring down a scoop of fire and to throw it at Ezra so that he transcribed the Torah piece by piece until he had done all of it.

**Ibn Kathir:** Ezra was not a prophet. Ata b. Abi Rabah says there were nine things in that time period: Nebuchadnezzar, the garden of Sana'a, the garden of Sheba, the people of the al-Ajdud, the command of

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quest of Mecca, but his listing among the *mu'allafa kulū-buhum* [q.v.] indicates that at Hunayn he was still an unbeliever. In Muḥarram 9/April-May 630, ‘Uyayna—carrying out Muḥammad's order—attacked a subdivision of the Tamīm [q.v.] temporarily living amongst the *Khuzā'a* [q.v.]. Some said that he was one of Muḥammad's tax-collectors.

In the *ridda* he swore allegiance to the false prophet Ṭulayḥa al-Asadī, but later he returned to Islam. He lived at least to the days of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, who was his son-in-law.

Islamic historiography is generally hostile to ‘Uyayna, ascribing to him haughtiness coupled with the coarseness of desert dwellers (*ḡafā' sukkan al-bawādī*) and foolishness. ‘Uyayna referred to Muḥammad's wife, ‘Ā'isha bt. Abī Bakr [q.v.], as “this little woman of light complexion (*humayrā'*)”, and suggested an exchange between her and one of his own wives. Following this episode, Muḥammad told ‘Ā'isha that ‘Uyayna was “a fool obeyed [by his people]” (*al-aḥmaḳ al-muṭā'*). ‘Uyayna accused ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb of being ungenerous and unjust and told ‘Uthmān that fasting at night was for him easier than during the day.

There is a dissenting voice, though, which is probably that of a Fazārī source: ‘Uyayna told ‘Umar to beware of the Persians (*adḡam*), showing him the place in his body where he would be stabbed. “Verily, there is counsel (*ra'y*) there”, the fatally-wounded ‘Umar later said, referring to ‘Uyayna's place of dwelling.

*Bibliography:* Ibn Ḥazm, *Ḍjamharat ansāb al-'arab*, ed. Hārūn, Cairo 1382/1962, 256-7; Ṭabarī; Wākīdī, *Maghāzī*, ed. M. Jones, London 1966; Balādḥurī, *Ansāb*, i, index, s.v.; *ibid.*, ms. Reisülküttap Mustafa Efendi 598, 1097b-1099a; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta'riḫ madīnat Dimashḳ* (‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb), ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī, Beirut 1414/1994, 348-9; W.M. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford 1956, index.

(M. LECKER)

‘UYŪN MŪSĀ [see ‘AYN MŪSĀ].

‘UYŪNIDS, a minor dynasty of mediaeval Arabia, whose capital was al-Ḳaṭīf [q.v.], ruling over al-Aḥsā/al-Ḥasā [q.v.] in eastern Arabia from the 5th-7th/11th-13th centuries. They destroyed the Ḳarāmiṭa [q.v.] there in 467/1076, though little is known of their history. They are reputed to be of Āl Ibrāhīm of Murra [q.v.], a *kaḅīla* of ‘Abd al-Ḳays [q.v.]. Their influence rapidly declined in the 7th/13th century, when about the middle of the century the ‘Uṣfūrīds [q.v.] assumed control of the region.

*Bibliography:* ‘Umar Riḏā Kaḥḥāla, *Muḏḡam kaḅā'il al-'Arab*, iii, Beirut 1982, 1071; see also AL-BAHRAYN. (G.R. SMITH)

‘UZAYR, a figure mentioned enigmatically in *Kur'ān*, IX, 30, as being called by the Jews “the son of Allāh” and usually identified by Muslim commentators with Ezra, or sometimes with the man who slept for a hundred years (II, 259). Modern scholars have suggested identifications also with the Biblical Enoch (Newby), Azazel (Casanova) and, fantastically, Osiris (Madḡdi Bey).

Later Muslim authors who heard from Jews or Christians (see e.g. al-Dḡaḥiḡ, *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Naṣārā*, ed. J. Finkel, 27, 33) that this accusation of sonship had no basis, explained that only one Jew (Finḥās) said this about ‘Uzayr (al-Ṭabarī); only a small group of Jews worshipped ‘Uzayr in some past period (Ibn Ḥazm); or that the verse—like v. 31—refers to the extreme admiration of Jews for their doctors of law (‘Abd al-Dḡabbār, al-Ḳurṭubī, etc.).

Muslim Sunnī and Shī'ī authors (Ḳur'ān commentators, historians and authors of *Kiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*)

tell, mostly on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih [q.v.], the story of pious ‘Uzayr who miraculously remembered or recovered the lost Torah. The Children of Israel were so grateful to him that they worshipped him as the Son of God. Some also mention his questioning predestination (the story of the ants), whereupon God removed him from the list of prophets. Ibn Ḳutayba mentions in this context a *Munādḡāt 'Uzayr* (see *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Y.A. Ṭawīl, Cairo 1973, ii, 76). Many details of these stories show great similarity to the *Vision of Ezra* (or the *Apocalypse of Ezra* usually referred to as “*II Esdras*” or “*Fourth Ezra*”), excerpts of which seem to have been known in Muslim circles from Christian Arabic translations (see A. Drint, *The Mount Sinai Arabic version of IV Ezra. Text, translation and introduction*, diss., Groningen University 1995, esp. introd. §§ 8-9, with a list on pp. 51-2 of Muslim authors who tell the story, and bibl.).

A negative image of ‘Uzayr was developed by the Andalusī Ibn Ḥazm [q.v.], who took ‘Azrā-‘Uzayr the Scribe (*al-Warāk*) to be the person who falsified the Hebrew Bible [see ṬAḤRĪF] and accused him of being a liar and a heretic who ridiculed the faith (see his *Fasl*, i, 116-224). The later Jewish convert to Islam al-Samaw'al al-Maghribī (d. 1175) explained that Ezra interpolated into the Bible stories that sully David's origins (e.g. Gen. xix. 30-8) so as to prevent the rule of the Davidic dynasty during the second Temple (see his *Iṣḥām al-Yahūd*, ed. and tr. M. Perlmann, 1964, text 62-63, tr. 60).

General accusations of falsification of the Scriptures by ‘Uzayr, or by one of his disciples, can be found already with Muṭahhar al-Maḳḍīsī (*K. al-Bad' wa 'l-ta'riḫ*, ed. Cl. Huart, v, 29 ff.) and al-Dḡuwaynī (*Textes apologetiques de Ḡuwaimī* ed. M. Allard, Beirut 1968, 44, 47). They seem to echo various pre-Islamic sources, and were well-known and refuted by Christians and Jews (see e.g. A. Jeffery, *Ghevond's text of the correspondence between Umar II and Leo III*, in *Harvard Theol. Review*, xxxvii [1944], 269-332 and *Ibn Kammūna's examination of the three faiths*, ed. and tr. Perlmann, Berkeley 1967-71, text 90, tr. 53 ff.).

Through Ibn Ḥazm and al-Samaw'al, these accusations became the standard argument of mediaeval Muslim polemics against the Bible up to contemporary times (see *Tafsīr al-Manār*<sup>2</sup>, x, 326).

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AL-‘UZAYYIM [see AL-‘ADAYM].

UZBEK, ŪZBAK, ŪZBĪK [see ŪZBEG].

UZBEKISTAN, the name for a region of Central Asia, literally “land of the Uzbeks/Ūzbegs”, adopted after the imposition of Bolshevik rule in Central Asia as the designation of one of the component republics of the U.S.S.R., now a republic within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

1. In the pre-Soviet period

For the history of the region and its towns in these times, see BUKHĀRĀ; FARGHĀNA; KH'ĀRAZM; KHĪWA;

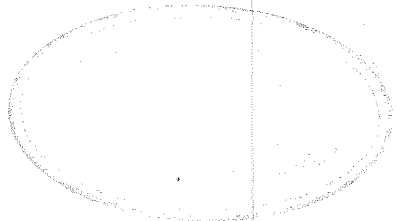


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## 'Uzayr in the Qur'an and Muslim Tradition

Mahmoud Ayoub

Long before the rise of Islam, Arabia was permeated with Jewish and Christian ideas. In general, the relationship of the Arabs to Christianity and Christians was a cultic one. Both nomadic Bedouins and town dwellers sought blessings and healing from Christian holy men in their desert hermitages. When they accepted the Christian faith, they did so more because of its concern for piety than its theological niceties.<sup>1</sup> This special relationship continued after Islam, when early Muslim ascetics sought the same monks for mystical knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Arab-Jewish relations were both cultural and social. Before Islam there were Jews in Yemen and Madīna who continued to play an important role in forming the Islamic faith and world view. The formative period of early Islam was particularly crucial because it set the tone for a symbiotic relationship between Jews and Arabs that was to last for many centuries. It produced the golden age of Jewish learning and greatly aided in the development of Muslim philosophy, science, and religious thought.<sup>3</sup>

Muhammad's attitude toward the People of the Book, and notably the Jews, was ambivalent, and remained so in spite of the sharp conflicts between the two communities in Madīna. This ambivalence, moreover, tended to be benign. The Qur'an generally distinguishes between the Jews (*al-Yahūd*) of Madīna and the children of Israel. It presents Muslim history as continuous with the prophetic history of the children of Israel, the house (*āl*) of Abraham. Yet even the Jews of Madīna were necessary witnesses to the Qur'anic claims to scriptural authenticity and the claims of Muhammad to be "the gentile prophet whom they find written for them in the Torah and the Gospel."<sup>4</sup>

It is, I believe, in this context that the Qur'anic passages dealing with Muslim-Jewish relations must be read. This essay first examines some of the verses reflecting the Qur'anic attitude toward the children of Israel and toward the Jews of the Prophet's society. Then it will be possible to study in some detail the personality of 'Uzayr (Ezra) in the Qur'an and Muslim *ḥadīth* and hagiographical tradition. It will become clear that the Qur'anic assertion that the Jews considered 'Uzayr to be the son of God is not an isolated claim, but one of a number made concerning the Jews of Madīna. Whatever juristic and theological significance this accusation came to have, it was the result of Muslim-Jewish interaction and the gradual crystallization of Islamic lay theology and popular piety with its tales and legends.

In reconstructing the personality of 'Uzayr, several genres of literature will be used. The most important sources are, of course, the works of *tafsīr* that deal directly with the subject. Within this vast literature, we will distinguish between Shī'ī and Sunnī tradition and between classical and more recent *tafsīr* works. Another genre which to some extent comes out of the hagiographical *tafsīr* tradition, but which is far less bound by the rules of this science,<sup>5</sup> is that

avec Dieu. D'où la scrupuleuse vénération dont il est entouré, d'où la valeur inégalable et la richesse insondable de ses expressions, d'où l'énorme influx qu'il a exercé sur tous les aspects de la religion, de la civilisation et la culture musulmanes. Les écrits sur les religions ne font pas exception. Le Coran y est parfois cité, parfois il ne l'est pas, mais il est toujours présent. Il est immanquablement présent parce qu'il modèle l'esprit et l'intelligence de l'auteur musulman. Celui-ci est façonné par l'enseignement coranique, qui fixe les grands articles de la foi. Même des versets isolés et apparemment secondaires peuvent prendre une grande importance doctrinale. Ainsi, Coran 21, 22 : « S'il y avait dans les cieux et sur la terre des dieux en dehors de Dieu, cieux et terre se décomposeraient », mis en relation à Coran 23, 91, n'est sans doute pas étranger à l'argument de « l'empêchement réciproque » (*tamānu'*) : s'il y avait en dehors de Dieu un autre Dieu et qu'ils voulussent deux choses contraires, il faudrait, ou bien qu'elles se réalisent toutes deux (ce qui est impossible), ou bien que *chacun empêche l'autre* de réaliser son dessein (ce qui prouverait leur faiblesse à tous deux) ; un seul donc réalisera sa volonté, et c'est lui le Dieu unique. 'Abd al-Jabbār fait grand usage de cet argument (8), mais ne cite pas le verset, sans doute par principe général de méthode, pour vaincre par la seule raison ses adversaires qui n'admettent pas la Révélation coranique. Comme on voit donc, le Coran domine le *naẓar*. Mais il ne faut pas oublier, de plus, son interférence dans le *khābar*. Les affirmations coraniques sur les Gens du Livre, sur leurs croyances et leurs prophètes, s'imposent d'elles-mêmes dans la description des religions correspondantes. Lorsque le Coran, *khābar* de Dieu, parle d'autres religions, la vérité historique sur elles est fixée pour le croyant, et ne peut être infirmée par aucun autre *khābar*. Jacques Jomier n'hésite pas à écrire : « Pour l'ensemble des musulmans, un fait ne peut être exact dans sa formulation s'il va contre une affirmation du Coran. Le Coran prime sur tout, même sur un fait. Et l'on doit chercher des explications conciliantes. L'autorité de la révélation est absolue » (9). L'auteur prend ensuite chez Rāzī plusieurs exemples. Le dernier porte sur le début de Coran 9, 30 : « Et les juifs ont dit : 'Uzayr est le fils de Dieu, et les chrétiens ont dit : le Christ est le fils de Dieu ». Le nom arabe de 'Uzayr vient probablement de l'hébreu 'Ezra, c'est-à-dire Esdras. Mais l'affirmation du Coran à son sujet est tout à fait insolite. Les

(8) Cf. Monnot, *Penseurs*, 133.

(9) Jacques Jomier, « L'autorité de la révélation et de la raison dans le commentaire du Coran de Fahr al-Dīn al-Rāzī », *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Âge : Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Colloque international de La Napoule, oct. 1978), Paris 1982, 245-261. Nous citons la p. 256.

musulmans en ont été avertis très tôt, et ont proposé diverses explications. Rāzī en relate trois. Après la troisième, il ajoute péremptoirement : « Dieu a rapporté cela sur eux, et les dénégations des juifs à ce sujet ne signifient rien. Car ce que Dieu a rapporté sur eux est plus vrai » (10).

Bien sûr, en matière historique et surtout dans le comportement des hommes individuels, on peut toujours trouver des exceptions à une règle. Les affirmations coraniques sur les autres religions ont parfois reçu une interprétation très souple et positive, surtout quant au salut des infidèles, problème qui se pose à l'islam comme il se pose ou s'est posé au christianisme. On est heureux de pouvoir renvoyer ici à l'article de A. Charfi, M. Borrmans, R. Caspar et J. Jomier, « L'islam et les religions non musulmanes : quelques textes positifs » (11). Mais ces cas isolés n'infirmant pas la règle générale, à savoir l'alignement automatique sur le diktat du Coran. Même un auteur aussi ouvert et aussi lucide que Maḥmūd Abū Rayya (shaykh et penseur égyptien, 1889-1970) n'y échappe pas lorsqu'il sépare les juifs « fidèles » des juifs réels (12) ou lorsqu'il retombe plus ou moins dans la distinction entre les religions issues des Livres révélés et les religions vécues par les juifs et les chrétiens effectifs (13). En définitive, le texte coranique continue d'exercer massivement une influence prépondérante sur le regard musulman vers les autres religions. La cause profonde en est une considération univoque : celle qui attache une égale valeur éternelle à chaque verset du Coran. Ce postulat, qui bloque tout progrès possible, commence heureusement à être contesté par des voix courageuses à l'intérieur même de l'islam, comme par exemple celle d'al-Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād (14).

Quoi qu'il en soit, le Coran ne peut évidemment cesser d'être la référence principale d'un musulman et, pour la quasi totalité de nos auteurs, l'islam est la seule valeur.

Du coup, les autres religions n'ont pas de véritable intérêt : la conséquence la plus simple est de n'en pas parler. C'est ce qu'ont fait les auteurs qui sortent ainsi de notre champ d'investigation.

(10) Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, Le Caire 1352 H./1933, offset Téhéran s. d., t. 16, 33.

(11) *Islamochristiana*, t. 3, Roma 1977, 39-63. Ce sont essentiellement des extraits annotés des *Rasā'il Mkhwān al-Safā'*, du *Fayṣal al-tafrīqā* d'al-Ghazālī, du *Tafsīr al-Manār*, et d'*al-Wādī l-Muqaddas* du regretté D<sup>r</sup> Kāmil Ḥusayn.

(12) Cf. Ali Merad, « Un penseur musulman à l'heure de l'œcuménisme : Maḥmūd Abū Rayya (1889-1970) », *Islamochristiana*, t. 4, 1978, 151-163, notamment 160.

(13) *Ibid.*, 163.

(14) Cf. son livre *Imra'atunā fi l-sharī'a wa-l-mujtama'*, 1930, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Tunis 1972, 22 s., traduites en annexe à son article par R. Caspar, « Parole de Dieu et langage humain », *Islamochristiana*, t. 6, 1980, 33-60. Voir aussi M. Arkoun, *Pour une critique de la raison islamique*, Paris 1984, en part. pp. 77 s.

listeners (see CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY) to the qur'anic revelation "overflowing with tears" (*a'yunahum tafidu min al-dam'*) in recognition of the truth of the message. Those who reject faith (*kafarū*, see BELIEF AND UNBELIEF; FAITH; GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE) will have their eyes veiled (*wa-'alā absārihim ghishāwatun*) by God as part of their punishment (Q 2:7; see CHASTISEMENT AND PUNISHMENT).

Reference to God having eyes, in the sense of sight, is found in Q 23:27, where God commands Noah (q.v.) to "construct the ark (q.v.) under our eyes (*bi-a'yuninā*)." There are numerous passages that tell of God's ability to see all things, e.g. Q 25:20: "Your lord is all-seeing" (*baṣīran*, cf. Q 17:1). God's seeing is not principally a passive activity but is rooted in his just and beneficent purposes for creation (q.v.; see also BLESSING; JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE), as in Q 67:19, where God asks whether birds can fly on their own: "None can uphold them except the most merciful, truly it is he that watches over all things" (*innahu bi-kulli shay'in baṣīrun*, see GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES).

The human eye as romantic/sensuous fetish is linked with the houris (q.v.; *hūr*), beautiful, wide-eyed damsels who, according to several Meccan passages, will be wed to the righteous males in heaven (q.v.; Q 44:54; 52:20; 55:72; 56:22). The term *hūr*, pl. of *ḥaurā'*, refers to whiteness as in the large eye of the gazelle. The heavenly houris possess the ideal of feminine beauty with large, lustrous eyes that charm through a juxtaposition of white background — comprised of the eyeball and skin — and black pupil, lashes and eyebrows (see ANATOMY; COLORS). The houri's eye is not deployed so much for seeing as for being seen and enjoyed as a sign of affection, delight and bidding to blissful union (see PARADISE).

Despite its wide influence in ancient Arabia during the genesis of Islam (see PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA AND THE QUR'AN), the notion of the evil eye (e.g. *al-'ayn*) does not occur in the Qur'an, although believers are instructed (in Q 113:5) to fend off envy (q.v.; *ḥasad*) which is at the core of the concept of eye as malignant glance. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), in his exegesis of this passage, quotes the well-known prophetic ḥadīth which begins: "The evil eye is real" (*al-'ayn ḥaqqun*, Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*; see ḤADĪTH AND THE QUR'AN).

Frederick Mathewson Denny

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#### Ezekiel

Biblical prophet who figures in Islamic tradition. Ezekiel is not mentioned in the Qur'an but exegetical literature claims a qur'anic allusion to him at Q 2:243 as follows: "Have you not considered those who went forth from their homes in the thousands for fear of death (see DEATH AND THE DEAD)? God said to them, 'Die!' Then he gave them life (q.v)."

Qur'anic exegesis and extra-canonical traditions of various origins have given a vivid description of the events to which this verse alludes, in connection with the story of the vision of the dry bones (cf. *Ezek* 37:1-14). According to some reports (see, in particular, Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ii, 585-91), a great many Israelites (see CHILDREN OF ISRAEL) — between three and ninety thousand — fled a plague out of fear of

death and sought refuge outside their city, but God let them die. Other traditions state that these Israelites were so badly afflicted by a calamity that they sought the peace of death; or that death struck them when they disobeyed their king's order to fight against an enemy. Some sources also mention the name of their city, Dāwardān, and state that they died when they had already abandoned their homes. Ezekiel, passing by their corpses, called upon God to bring them back to life. God did so — after eight days according to some traditions — thus demonstrating his omnipotence to the Israelites. Other reports add that Ezekiel called on God when the corpses had already been dismembered and the bones had been scattered by beasts and birds and that they were prodigiously recomposed and restored to life.

The Muslim tradition contains a great many orthographical variations of Ezekiel's full name. Most sources, however, refer to him as Ḥizqīl b. Būzī/Būdhi/Būrī. Some sources add that he was also called Ibn al-'Ajūz, "Son of the old woman," accounting for the origin of this name in various ways. Finally, a few exegetical traditions identify Ezekiel with Dhū l-Kifl (q.v.; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, i, 202) and with Elisha (q.v.; Maqdisī, *al-Bad'*, iii, 100).

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#### Ezra

Ezra (*'Uzayr*) is identified in the Jewish sources as a high priest and scribe who helped to rebuild the Temple after returning from Babylonian exile with a number of Jewish families. He is seen as a highly pious and learned person who directed the religious life of the Jewish community, first in Babylon and then, later on, in Jerusalem (q.v.). Modern scholarly opinion considers Ezra a lettered man with spiritual tendencies who was a functionary of the Persian state which sent him to Palestine around the fourth century B.C.E. in order to promote the political authority of Persian rule.

Only once does the Qur'an explicitly mention Ezra, in the course of disputing the claim, apparently made by some Jews in Medina, that Ezra was the son of God (see DEBATE AND DISPUTATION), a claim hard to verify in the Jewish sources. (According to Horowitz, *KU*, 128, Muḥammad could have heard about Jewish or Judeo-Christian sects that venerated Ezra in the way other sects venerated Melchizedek.) At any rate, one must understand the qur'anic verse which mentions 'Uzayr in the context of Muslim-Jewish relations in Medina (q.v.) after the emigration (q.v.; *hijra*) made by the Prophet and the Meccan Muslim community to Medina in 622 C.E.: "The Jews call 'Uzayr son of God, and the Christians call Christ son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; in this they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God fights them (*qatalahumu llāhu*): How they are deluded away from the truth!" (Q 9:30). The verse, which occurs in a Medinan sūra, was thus revealed in a context replete with theological arguments between the nascent Muslim community (*umma*) and the well-established Jewish community in Medina (see JEWS AND JUDAISM; OCCASIONS OF REVELATION).

7. The same attitude is apparent in the Hebrew Scriptures at Exodus, IV, 21; VII, 3; IX, 12, regarding the deliberate hardening of Pharaoh's heart by God.
8. *Fī Zilāl* . . . 90.
9. *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, v. 154.
10. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Hebrew Scriptures are taken from *Tanakh—The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988).
11. *Fī Zilāl* . . . Vol. II, 800.
12. *Fī Zilāl* . . . , Vol. II, 868, 892.
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15. *Fī Zilāl* . . . 101.
16. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, v. 93.
17. Exodus XXIV, 7.
18. *Fī Zilāl* . . . 105.
19. R. David Kimche, *Prophet and Scriptures* (Jerusalem: Shiloh Press, 1976), in Jeremiah, 211b.
20. On Exodus, XII, 45: "No bound or hired laborer shall eat of it [the Paschal sacrifice]".
21. Christianity, too, argues priority of revelation through the concept of the logos which existed eternally with God, coming down from Heaven in the form of Jesus, albeit long after the Sinaitic revelation.
22. Or even that God will do it for them, as in Deuteronomy XXX, 6: "Then the Lord your God will circumcise your heart . . . to love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . ."

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## 7. PROPHECY, QUR'ĀN AND METAPHYSICS IN IBN 'ARABĪ'S DISCUSSION OF 'UZAYR (EZRA)

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Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240) was no doubt the great master of theoretical mysticism in Islam. Though not enshrined in an institutionalised school (*ṭarīqah*), his views were enormously influential on all of later Islamic religious thought, *ṣūfī* and non-*ṣūfī*, *Shī'ī* as well as *Sunnī*; and even in the circles of some of those most bitterly opposed to him his mark was deep. One may well agree with a recent writer on Ibn 'Arabī that "His influence is so penetrating that it is impossible to understand the history of Islamic thought after the thirteenth century without a good understanding of Ibn 'Arabī. Especially in the *Sunnī* world . . . it is not an exaggeration to say that Ibn 'Arabī's thought became the only theology and philosophy. Also in *Shī'ite* Islam . . . the influence of Ibn 'Arabī is conspicuous".<sup>1</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī is best known within as well as outside the Islamic world in particular for two works, the massive multi-volume *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* and the smaller one-volume "summing up" of his thought, the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Though voluminous and profound, most of his other writings have as yet not captured the attention of as wide an audience as that commanded by his two "main works".

The *Fuṣūṣ* is Ibn 'Arabī's magnum opus of *ṣūfī* metaphysics. Made up of twenty-seven chapters, each devoted to the wisdom, *ḥikmah*, of a different prophet, the *Fuṣūṣ* has been considered the most difficult and profound exposition of Ibn 'Arabī's worldview. Its exquisite subtlety, shimmering ambiguity, and abstruse quality render it a most elusive work indeed, and most demanding of the reader.<sup>2</sup>

The *Fuṣūṣ* engendered a substantial literature of commentary in circles devoted to perpetuating Ibn 'Arabī's thought which obviously derived in part from an oral tradition of textual explication. Most of these commentaries sought to systematize the text of the *Fuṣūṣ* so that Ibn 'Arabī's elusive thought might be rendered somewhat more accessible. Their explicatory method usually treated terms and concepts in a rather structural and lexicographical manner, whilst generally "ironing out" many ambiguities. The result of this treatment was no doubt an "easier" and more "accessible" *Fuṣūṣ*, through a more "systematic" and "philosophical" presentation of ideas which from the master himself were characterized precisely by their difficulty of access.<sup>3</sup>

Much modern Western scholarship on the *Fuṣūṣ* has tended to take this traditional commentary literature at face value, and to see in the *Fuṣūṣ* a sort of "mystical philosophical system". This idea has involved a relative neglect of what I call "the

is mentioned by Ps.-Yovhannēs Mamikonean as the name of a 4th century pagan priest at Aštišat, so the name, at least, might be contemporary), a treatise on Creation (*Vašn ararč'ut'ean*: Eznik seems to have used the *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* of St. Basil of Caesarea [d. 379] as a source for his *Refutations*), and another on the monastic orders (*Karg uxti ew vanac'*). A number of phrases containing obscure words, and evidently drawn from discussions of mythological, herbalist, epic, and historical topics, are attributed to Eznik by Step'anos Rošk'ean Kamenic'ac'i (Stephen of Kamenets, Eastern Poland), in his *Dictionary*.

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(JAMES R. RUSSELL)

‘EZRĀ. See BIBLE.

‘EZRĀ, BOOK OF, canonical biblical book emanating from the early portion of the Second Temple period (515 B.C.E.-70 C.E.) of Jewish history. Despite bearing the name of "Ezrā," the title character only figures in the final chapters (7-10) of the book. Therein 'Ezrā is portrayed as an emissary of the Achaemenian monarch Artaxerxes I charged with restoring the Temple cultus at Jerusalem for the benefit of both the citizenry of the province of Yehud and the royal family. The preceding six chapters of the book introduce the mission of 'Ezrā by describing previous failed attempts to reconstitute the Temple service during the reigns of Cyrus, Darius I, and Xerxes. Hence the book of 'Ezrā provides potentially valuable testimony for the role played by the central Persian administration in managing provincial affairs during the Achaemenid period.

Of especial significance for assessing the historical worth of the book is the person and office of 'Ezrā himself. While some have argued that "Ezrā" is a fictional character (e.g., Torrey), the general consensus accepts his historicity. 'Ezrā is identified as a "priest" and "scribe" in the official commission addressed to him by Artaxerxes (7.12-26). He is dispatched from Babylon with a contingent of fellow Israelites, including authorized Temple personnel, in order "to inspect (the province of) Yehud and (the city of) Jerusalem (to determine their concordance) with the law of your God which you possess" (7.14). He also bears financial

subsidies contributed by both the Persian administration and the Jewish inhabitants of Babylon for the restoration of the Temple cultus. 'Ezrā moreover is granted full authority to appoint magistrates and judges to insure compliance with "the law of your God" and "the law of the king" (7.25-26).

The authenticity of such a commission was forcefully defended by Schaefer (1930a), and in spite of criticisms, remains a viable position today. The office of "scribe" (Aramaic *sāprā'*) should not be confused with mere clerical duties. It marked a lofty status in administrative circles of the ancient Near East, as is attested by the same title (in almost identical language to that of 'Ezrā 7.6) being ascribed to the legendary Ahiqar at the court of Esarhaddon. Moreover, an important extrabiblical parallel to the office and mission of 'Ezrā occurs within the context of the Achaemenid administration of Egypt. The figure of Udjahorresnet, also described as "priest" and "scribe," is given similar charges and responsibilities regarding the restoration of native cultus and civil order during the reigns of Cambyses and Darius I (Blenkinsopp).

Another important feature of the book of 'Ezrā is its apparent preservation of authentic Aramaic versions of decrees issued by Cyrus (6.3-5; compare 1.2-4), Darius I (6.6-12), and Artaxerxes I (4.17-22), interspersed with correspondence emanating from local Persian governmental officials based in Samaria (4.11-16; 5.7-17). The essential authenticity of these documents was vigorously championed by Meyer and Schaefer (1930b), and the cogency of their arguments continues to be recognized by most biblical scholars. They pointed to the numerous parallels in literary form and expression that link the 'Ezrā documents with recovered examples of authentic Aramaic governmental correspondence unearthed in Egypt (see Cowley and Driver). They noted the high percentage of Akkadian and Iranian loan-words appearing in the correspondence and the decrees, suggesting that the 'Ezrā documents had been translated from official archival copies. They also utilized Achaemenid royal inscriptions to demonstrate that certain expressions or syntagms once thought "Jewish" were actually common ancient Near Eastern formulae.

Despite these arguments, objections continue to be raised against the reliability of the 'Ezrā documents (Grabbe, p. 35). Perhaps the most compelling is the undeniable presence of Jewish religious and cultic expressions within the governmental records, especially in 7.12-26 (see Meyer, p. 65). Could Achaemenian officials have possibly been cognizant of all the different nuances of conception and expression employed by the various local cults under their administration? Schaefer suggested that 'Ezrā himself was responsible for adapting the official decree of 7.12-26 to a Jewish context (1930a, pp. 54-55). While this is possible, it is nevertheless evident from the Udjahorresnet inscription, the Egyptian *Demotic Chronicle* (see Blenkinsopp), and the Jewish Aramaic correspondence from Elephantine that Achaemenid rulers displayed a keen

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