



# **The Achievement of Some Companions in Confronting Isra'iliyyat: A Critique and Review**

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## **Abstract**

Despite the Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) prohibition against referring to the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*), some Muslims did not refrain from narrating traditions or using their sources. This approach expanded significantly after the Prophet's (PBUH) demise. Examining the conduct of

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his successors in dealing with Isra'iliyyat and their transmitters in Sunni and Shi'i sources reveals contradictions that necessitate a thorough and comprehensive study. This research employs a library-based method and descriptive-analytical processing. Findings indicate that after the Prophet's (PBUH) passing, some Companions not only failed to prevent recourse to the People of the Book or interactions with narrators of Isra'iliyyat but also promoted these fabrications among Muslims, advocating the idea of "*Hasbunā Kitāb Allāh.*" Their aim was to reinforce the notion that the Quran alone suffices, rendering the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah unnecessary, by comparing Israelite superstitions with Prophetic traditions. This move, ostensibly to preserve the political status of the Prophet's (PBUH) successors, had severe negative consequences, including the proliferation of fabricated hadith and the infiltration of Isra'iliyyat into Quranic exegesis (Tafsir). The results demonstrate how political motivations influenced intellectual and doctrinal developments in Islamic society. This study also underscores the importance of critically re-examining hadith and historical sources in light of their political contexts. Its findings may pave the way for deeper investigations into the role of politico-intellectual currents in shaping Islamic foundations and help researchers adopt a more analytical approach to religious texts.

**Keywords:** Isra'iliyyat, Companion, Fabricated Hadith, Prophtic Narrations, Quran-Sufficiency.

## Introduction

The Jews played the most significant role in fabricating a vast volume of Isra'iliyyat (Israelite traditions), which is why their influence in

contaminating Islamic hadiths and interpretations surpasses that of others. Particularly after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the falsehoods and incorrect narratives of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, later known as Isra'iliyyat, became widespread among Muslims (al-Mas'ūdī, 1988 AD /1409 AH: 2, 216). These traditions were often transmitted by newly converted Jews (al-Dhahabī, 1998AD /1419 AH: 1, 54; al-Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 169; Ibn Kathīr, 1998AD /1419 AH: 4, 18). Most of their narrations emerged during the era of the Caliphs (Ibn al-Athīr, 1988AD/1409 AH: 1, 256; al-ʿAsqalānī, n.d.: 3, 473; al-Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 52). In other words, the foundation for the infiltration of Isra'iliyyat into Islamic culture was laid after the Prophet's (PBUH) passing. This was due to several reasons; first, with the death of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), the door of revelation was closed to Muslims; second, Muslims neglected the inheritor of the Prophet's knowledge, Imam Ali (AS), as well as learned companions such as *Ibn ʿAbbās* and *Ibn Mas'ūd* (Ibn Shahr Āshūb, 2000AD /1379 AH: 2, 30); and third, the caliphs' failure to decisively confront Isra'iliyyat and their narrators led to the marginalization of authentic Prophetic traditions and accelerated the influx of these foreign narratives into Islamic culture. Given the massive infiltration of Isra'iliyyat into Islamic tradition after the Prophet's (PBUH) demise, it is essential to examine the stance of his successors toward these narratives and their transmitters, as well as the reasons for their inaction.

There is significant disagreement over whether the caliphs reacted to Isra'iliyyat and their narrators, and if so, to what extent their measures were effective. These disagreements stem from sectarian

biases, which have distorted the truth. This research aims to provide a scientific-historical analysis of the political and social status of Isra'iliyyat transmitters during the era of the first three caliphs and answer the following questions:

1. What measures did these caliphs take regarding Isra'iliyyat and their narrators?
2. Were their actions effective in preventing their spread?
3. If they did not confront Isra'iliyyat and their narrators, what were their reasons?

However, no prior research has been found on the reasons behind the caliphs' failure to counter Isra'iliyyat and their consequences. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining Sunni sources to independently analyze and critique each caliph's approach to Isra'iliyyat and its narrators. Thus, this research can serve as a starting point for further studies on the subject. It is also important to note that while the widespread and explosive proliferation of Isra'iliyyat reached its peak during the Umayyad era—particularly under *Mu'āwīyah*—this study limits its timeframe to the Prophetic era and the period of the first three caliphs.

## 1. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, examining historical and narrative documents to analyze the stance of the first three caliphs toward Isra'iliyyat. Primary historical sources such as *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, *al-Kāmil* by *Ibn al-Athīr*, *Murūj al-Dhahab* by *Mas'ūdī*, and hadith sources such as the *Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah*, *Tafsir Ibn*

*Kathīr* and the works of *al-Dhahabī* have been utilized. For a comprehensive analysis, a comparative examination of Shia and Sunni reports has been conducted. Evidence was gathered by extracting narrations and reports related to Isra'iliyyat and the caliphs' treatment of their transmitters. The analytical section examines texts and deduces behavioral patterns of the caliphs in dealing with Isra'iliyyat.

## 2. Research Background

Their impact on the interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith has been the topic of Isra'iliyyat widely studied by scholars. Key works in this field include:

- "*al-Isra'iliyyat fī al-Tafsir wa al-Hadith*" by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī (2004). This book explores the historical roots of Isra'iliyyat, their infiltration into Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith literature, and their theological consequences.
- "*Isra'iliyyat al-Qur'an*" by Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyya (1983 AD/1404 AH) is a critical analysis of Israelite narratives in Qur'anic commentaries, assessing their authenticity.
- "A Study on Isra'iliyyat in Qur'anic Exegesis" by Muḥammad Reza Diyari (2004 AD/1383 SH) is a Persian work identifying and critiquing Isra'iliyyat in classical tafsir.

These studies primarily focus on the historical origins of Isra'iliyyat, their transmission into Islamic sources, and their exegetical influence.

Conversely, some scholars have critiqued the doctrine of Qur'an-Sufficiency, which asserts the Qur'an's self-sufficiency as a religious

source, rejecting Hadith. Notable critiques include:

- "A Critique of Qur'an-Sufficiency" by Muḥammad Said Ramazan al-Buti (2020 AD/1399 SH), challenges Qur'an-only arguments using scriptural and rational evidence.
- "An Analysis of Iranian Qur'anists' Rational and Scriptural Arguments on Qur'an-Sufficiency" (Rahimiyan et al., 2017 AD/1397 SH), examines flaws in Qur'anic reasoning.
- "Critiquing the Qur'anic Movement in the Exegetical Thought of Mahdavi Kani" (2023 AD/1402 SH), analyzes a prominent critic's perspective.

Despite extensive research on both topics, few studies explore the relationship between Isra'iliyyat and Qur'an-based views.

Key unanswered questions include:

- How do Qur'an scholars view isra'iliyyat?
- Does rejecting Hadith reduce or exacerbate isra'iliyyat in Tafsir?

Current research on isra'iliyyat is largely historical and exegetical, while studies on Qur'an Sufficiency are theological, neglecting hermeneutical implications.

### 3. Conceptualizing Isra'iliyyat

This word is derived from *Isrā'īl*, the title of Prophet Jacob (Ṭurayḥī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 5, 315; Muṣṭafawī, 1941 AD/1360 AH: 1, 84; Ibn Manzūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 14, 383). Fabricated stories borrowed from Jewish texts. On the other hand, isra'iliyyat is any baseless narratives from pre-Islamic (Ma'rifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 2, 71) or

(Dhahabī, 2004 AD: 21; Maʿrifat, 2000 AD/1379AH: 2, 72).

#### **4. Historical Background of Muslims Referring to the People of the Book**

Before Islam, Arabs occasionally referred to the Jews residing in the Arabian Peninsula regarding certain matters of interest to them (Behrouz, 1980 AD/1359 AH: 45). It is worth noting that the Jews living among the Arabs during the advent of Islam did not possess much knowledge or learning (Ibn Khaldūn, 1918 AD/1337 AH: 1, 439). They boasted to the Arabs about having a divine scripture like the Torah, but after the emergence of Islam, the Arabs referred to the People of the Book to learn about the new religion (Maʿrifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 2, 73). The Holy Qurʾān also directed those who doubted the truth of the Qurʾān and Islam to refer to the knowledgeable and the People of the Book (Yūnus: 94; al-Anbīyāʾ: 7; al-Naḥl: 43), advising them to consult the People of the Book to recognize the characteristics of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH).

Commentators have expressed various opinions regarding the interpretation of these verses. Some have said that this recommendation to refer to the People of the Book was relevant when the Arabs had hope in their honesty (Dhahabī, n.d.: 66). Moreover, Allah's intent in these verses was largely figurative, akin to the saying, "I address you, but my words are meant for the neighbor"—indicating that the primary audience was those who doubted the prophethood, not the Muslims themselves (Maʿrifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 1, 82). There is ample evidence to support this claim (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1996 AD /1417 AH: 10, 123), or it may have been for clarification or emphasis

(Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 AH: 5, 201). Thus, it can be said that the Qur'an explicitly warned Muslims against referring to the People of the Book.

#### 4-1. The Prophet's Prohibition Against Referring to the People of the Book

The Qur'an explicitly forbade Muslims from consulting the People of the Book (Āli 'Imrān: 118), and the Prophet (PBUH) also warned Muslims against referring to them or relying on their sources, as the corruption and doubt sown by the Jews became evident to the Muslims. *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, in his *Musnad*, narrates from *Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī* that *'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb* once presented a book from the Jews to the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) became angry and sternly rebuked *'Umar* for referring to the People of the Book, stating: "Islam, with its clear teachings, answers all questions and leaves no aspect of human life ambiguous." (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 3, 387; 'Asqalānī, n.d.: 13, 281) It is also important to note that the Qur'anic prohibition against referring to the People of the Book primarily pertains to preventing Muslims from following their political and social stances rather than prohibiting healthy intellectual exchange, which is essential in any social life.

Despite this explicit command from the Qur'an and the Prophet (PBUH), some Muslims did not refrain from consulting Jews and their sources, accepting and transmitting their unreliable narrations. Their justification was that they sought information they believed was missing from Muslim traditions (Ma'rifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 2, 76).



## 4-2. Referring to the People of the Book After the Prophet's Death

The practice of referring to the People of the Book and relying on their sources became widespread after the Prophet's (PBUH) death (Ibn Athīr, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 1, 256; 'Asqalānī, n.d.: 3, 473; Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 52), as the door of divine revelation was closed. Among the influences that infiltrated Islamic culture through this practice was the introduction of baseless isra'iliyyāt (Judeo-Christian narratives) into Islamic history, exegesis, and hadith literature, corrupting them.

During the reigns of the first three caliphs, isra'iliyyāt and storytelling extensively entered Islamic culture. Some even consider this period as the foundational era of *Quṣāṣ* (Ibn Athīr, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 1, 256). Thus, it can be said that most isra'iliyyāt entered Islamic culture during the era of the first three caliphs. This indicates that their measures against isra'iliyyāt and their transmitters were insufficiently deterrent. They even permitted narrators of isra'iliyyāt to preach and disseminate these tales ('Asqalānī, n.d.: 3, 473; Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 52). This research aims to investigate the primary reasons why the first three caliphs did not prevent the influx of isra'iliyyāt into Islamic discourse. Before delving into the discussion, it is necessary to examine the political and social standing of the transmitters of isra'iliyyāt during their rule.

## 5. An Overview of the Political and Social Status of the Transmitters of Isra'iliyyāt During the Caliphs' Era

Most of the isra'iliyyāt that entered Islamic culture came from Jewish converts during the caliphate, such as *Ka'b al-Aḥbār*, *Wahb ibn*

*Munabbih*, ‘*Abd Allāh ibn Sallām*, *Tamīm al-Dārī*, *Abū Hurayrah*, and others, who extensively transmitted Jewish sources (Dhahabī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 1, 54; Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 169; Ibn Kathīr, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 4, 18). The exegeses of the Successor are replete with their narrations, and later commentators either tolerated them or, out of respect for the Successor’s works, incorporated these reports into their exegeses, thereby filling tafsir books with fabricated *isra’iliyyāt*. An examination of these individuals’ lives reveals that most of their narrations and the fabrications attributed to them entered Islamic culture during the caliphs’ era. A detailed study of each of them requires separate attention. This research, however, focuses on their general political and social status and the conduct of the Prophet’s successors regarding *isra’iliyyāt* and their transmitters.

## **5-2. The Political and Social Status of Transmitters of Isra'iliyyat During the Era of the First Caliph**

There is no recorded information about how the first Caliph (*Abū Bakr*) dealt with the narrators of *isra’iliyyat* during his caliphate. However, after the demise of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), false narratives and fabricated stories from the *Ahl al-Kitāb* became widespread among Muslims (Ibn Athīr, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 1, 256; ‘Asqalānī, n.d.: 3, 473; al-Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 52). Individuals such as *Ka’b al-Aḥbār*, ‘*Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, and *Abū Hurayrah* engaged in transmitting *isra’iliyyat*.

A noteworthy observation is that historical records do not mention  
**162** any instance of the first Caliph confronting *isra’iliyyat* or its narrators.

While he ordered the destruction of Prophetic traditions, he remained silent regarding the infiltration of isra'iliyyat and its transmitters.

'*Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ* was the first person to propagate fabricated isra'iliyyat narratives after the Prophet's (PBUH) demise, during the era of the first three caliphs. It is said that during the Battle of *Yarmūk* (which took place in the final years of *Abū Bakr*'s rule), he acquired bundles of Jewish scriptures and began narrating from them. He justified his actions by citing a hadith attributed to the Prophet (PBUH):" *Ḥaddithū 'an Banīlsrā'īl wa lā ḥaraj.*" (Bukhārī, 1969 AD/1389 AH: 4, 207)

'*Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ* relied on the Prophet's (PBUH) permission for him to write hadith, interpreting the above narration as a license to transmit from *Banī Isrā'īl* (the Israelites) and thus freely spread isra'iliyyat. Another hadith he fabricated to justify his narrations was: "I saw in a dream that one of my fingers was smeared with oil and another with honey, and I was licking them. In the morning, I went to the Prophet and told him about the dream. He said: 'Its interpretation is that you will read two books—one is the Torah, and the other is the Furqān Qur'an." (Dhahabī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 3, 86; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 2, 222; al-Iṣfahānī, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 1, 286)

### **5-3. The Political and Social Status of Transmitters of Isra'iliyyat During the Era of the Second Caliph**

One of the narrators of isra'iliyyat was *Tamīm ibn Aws al-Dārī*, originally a Christian who embraced Islam in the 9th year after Hijrah

following the Prophet's (PBUH) return from the Battle of *Tabūk*. He was the first to introduce storytelling in the mosque. Some believe he was the first storyteller in Islam (al-Ṣan'ānī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 3, 219). According to *Ibn Kathīr*, *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* converted to Islam during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and began narrating isra'iliyyat to the Caliph, who would memorize and transmit them to others (Ibn Kathīr, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 4, 17). *Dhahabī* states:

"The first storyteller was *Tamīm al-Dārī*. He sought permission from 'Umar, who initially refused but later allowed him to preach before Friday prayers." (Dhahabī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 2, 447) During 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān's rule, *Tamīm* was granted permission to preach twice on Fridays (Numayrī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 11; Miqrīzī, 1908 AD/1326 AH: 3, 199). Exaggerated miracles were attributed to him ('Asqalānī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 18), indicating their fabricated nature. *Tamīm* spent less than two years with the Prophet (PBUH) but became a trusted figure under 'Umar (Ya'qūbī, n.d.: 2, 140). He freely narrated isra'iliyyat without restrictions.

According to *Abū Shahbah*, the second decade after the Prophet's (PBUH) demise marked the rise of myths, legends, and isra'iliyyat, with narrations becoming widespread towards the end of 'Umar's rule (Abū Shahbah, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 89). While 'Umar occasionally imposed restrictions (al-Dhahabī, 1993 AD /1414 AH: 3, 490; Ma'rifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 2, 112), these were temporary. Many copied or translated the Old Testament, and some freely narrated isra'iliyyat in mosques. Despite reports of 'Umar prohibiting consultation with the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, the reality was that he did not

strictly oppose it—only forbidding the direct copying of their scriptures, just as he banned writing hadith.

*Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Qurazī*, another transmitter of isra’iliyyat, descended from Jewish priests. Some historians place his birth in 40 AH (‘Asqalānī, n.d.: 9, 373), but since he narrated from major Companions like ‘*Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *Ibn Mas‘ūd*, and *Anas ibn Mālīk*, his birth must have been earlier. His narrations are mostly *Mursal* (lacking a complete chain). He was a prolific storyteller. During ‘*Alī*’s caliphate, he was banned (Amīn, 1975: 159), but after ‘*Alī*’s martyrdom, he resumed preaching in mosques until a roof collapse killed him and his audience (Ibn Ḥajar, n.d.: 9, 420). *Aḥmad Amīn* notes: "Storytelling quickly gained popularity among the masses. Narrators fabricated tales freely until Imam Ali (AS) expelled them from mosques." (Amīn, 1975: 159)

The most prominent figure in spreading isra’iliyyat was *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār*, a Jewish scholar born 72 years before Hijrah. He converted to Islam late in ‘*Umar*’s caliphate and died during ‘*Uthmān*’s rule (‘Asqalānī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 3, 315). *Ka‘b* was among the first to introduce isra’iliyyat into Islam, embedding them in Tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis) and historical accounts. His narrations became so widespread that ‘*Umar* once threatened: "Either stop narrating these false tales, or I will exile you to (Dhahabī, 1993 AD /1414 AH).

### **5-2-1. The Negligence of the Second Caliph in Dealing with Transmitters of Isra’iliyyat**

The question arises: Why should the Caliph of the Muslims merely issue a warning regarding *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār*? Did he not know the

calamity that *Ka'b*'s fabrications and *isra'iliyyat* would bring upon Islam? Why was the Caliph unwilling to distance himself from him? Consider the words of *Abū Rīyāh*, who states: "This Jew succeeded in his plot, managing to insert superstitious beliefs, delusions, falsehoods, and baseless claims into Islamic narrations and religious texts. He filled books of Tafsir (exegesis), hadith, and history with these myths, thereby tarnishing their credibility and casting doubt on their authenticity. The harm he caused continues to afflict us to this day." (*Abū Rīyah*, 1994 AD: 164) *Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* (AS) consistently reprimanded and criticized him, saying: "*Ka'b al-Aḥbār* is undoubtedly a liar." According to *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, it was due to these rebukes that *Ka'b* turned away from the Imam and aligned himself with his enemies (*Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4, 77).

*Ka'b al-Aḥbār* particularly intensified his transmission of *isra'iliyyat* after relocating to Syria during *Mu'āwīyah*'s rule. Some even claim that *Mu'āwīyah* appointed him as one of his advisors (*Ibn 'Abd al-Barr*, 1991AD/1412 AH: 3, 243). *Mu'āwīyah* praised *Ka'b*'s knowledge, saying: "*Ka'b* is one of the scholars. He possesses vast knowledge, and we have neglected his rights." (*Ibn 'Abd al-Barr*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 3, 243) It appears that *Ka'b*'s lies were trivial to *Mu'āwīyah* as well. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Mu'āwīyah* states: "*Ka'b* is among the most truthful narrators who transmitted from the People of the Book, though we have also witnessed him lying at times." (*Bukhārī*, 1969 AD/1389 AH: 13, 282)

Despite this, *Mu'āwīyah* did not expel *Ka'b* or take action against him. *Ṭabarī* narrates: "Three days before *'Umar*'s assassination, *Ka'b*

came to him and said: "Appoint a successor, "for you will die in three days." Umar asked: "Who informed you of this?" *Ka'b* replied: "I found it in the Torah." (Ṭabarī, 1874 AD/1291 AH: 4, 191) *Aḥmad Amīn* comments on this incident: "If this story is true, it means *Ka'b* was aware of the plot to kill 'Umar and disguised it as an isra'iliyyat narrative. This reveals his skill in forgery and deception." (Amīn, 1975: 161)

### **5-2-2. *Ka'b al-Aḥbār*'s Influence in the Caliphal Court and His Role in Justifying the Policies of the Caliphs**

Historical sources indicate that *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* attained an unparalleled position in the ruling apparatus during 'Uthmān's caliphate. Ṭabarī (Ṭabarī, 1874 AD/1291 AH: 4, 342) and 'Askarī ('Askarī, 1966 AD/1386 AH: 2, 191) explicitly note that *Ka'b* not only functioned as a hadith narrator but also as an authority issuing religious rulings, with the third Caliph often endorsing his opinions. This closeness reached such an extent that, as reported by *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd* (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 8, 256), *Ka'b* became one of 'Uthmān's close companions, and the Caliph frequently favored his views over those of other Companions of the Prophet. This preference marked a fundamental shift in the scholarly and juristic hierarchy of Islamic society.

#### **5-2-2-1. Reasons for the Caliphs' Support of *Ka'b al-Aḥbār***

Three reasons can be cited for the Caliphs' support of *Ka'b al-Aḥbār*; first, political justification; *Ka'b* cited Jewish sources (claiming they were derived from the Torah) to narrate traditions extolling the virtues of the second Caliph (Ṭabarī, 1874 AD/1291 AH: 4, 343). These

narrations lent legitimacy to the caliphal institution. Second: Replacement of Knowledge Sources: At a time when Prophetic hadith transmission was restricted, *Ka'b* was presented as an "Alternative" source for religious inquiries. Third: Weakening the Authority of Ahl al-Bayt; by elevating *Ka'b*—a scholar from the People of the Book—the influence of Imam 'Alī (AS) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) was deliberately diminished.

### **5-3. The Political-Social Status of Narrators of Isra'iliyyat during the Caliphate of 'Uthmān**

Caliph 'Uthmān followed the same approach as his predecessors or even more so in allowing the unrestricted transmission of isra'iliyyat (Judeo-Christian narratives). He permitted storytelling and the narration of isra'iliyyat in mosques, to the extent that, according to Ma'rifat, this practice became officially recognized as a religious ritual (Ma'rifat, 2000 AD/1379 AH: 2, 114). One of the key figures who played a significant role in the spread of Isra'iliyyat was 'Abdullāh ibn Sallām. It is said that he was a Jewish resident of Medina who converted to Islam two years before the Prophet's (PBUH) demise, and the Prophet (PBUH) named him 'Abdullāh ('Asqalānī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 2, 320). He was among those who fabricated hadiths to gain social status among the people. One of his fabricated narrations was a hadith about the descriptions of the Prophet (PBUH) in the Torah, which he would recite to the people. He would mention certain attributes of the Prophet (PBUH) and then claim, "I found these descriptions about him in the Torah." (Ibn Sa'd,



It can be argued that, through this propagandistic approach, he sought to promote a particular ideology about the Prophet—namely, the idea that the Book of Allah (the Quran) was sufficient, distracting Muslims with fabricated isra'iliyyat so that Prophetic traditions would be forgotten. Given that he was one of 'Uthmān's advisors during his caliphate (Ṭabarī, 1967AD: 4, 284; Mas'ūdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 340), he enjoyed greater freedom in transmitting isra'iliyyat. His refusal to pledge allegiance to Imām 'Alī (AS) and his support for 'Uthmān (Ibn Khaldūn, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 267) have cast doubt on his character throughout history, suggesting that the virtues attributed to him may have been exaggerated.

Another prominent narrator of isra'iliyyat was *Abū Hurayrah*. He converted to Islam in the seventh year of Hijrah (Ibn Sa'd, n.d.: 1, 90) and spent only three years in the company of the Prophet (PBUH), yet he narrated an unusually large number of hadiths. Consequently, he has been accused of fabrication and deception. He would hear narrations from the People of the Book, particularly *Ka'b al-Aḥbār*, and then attribute them to the Prophet (PBUH) or other prominent Companions to make them more acceptable to the masses. Some have stated, "The first narrator accused of lying in Islam was *Abū Hurayrah*." (Rāfi'ī, 2012: 1, 278) *Abū Hurayrah* transmitted the most narrations from *Ka'b*. The worst of his actions was attributing what he heard from *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* directly to the Prophet (PBUH). Among the Companions, *Abū Hurayrah* was the most prolific in transmitting isra'iliyyat from *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* and other People of the Book.

### 5-3-1. Sunni Scholars' Admission of Caliph 'Uthmān's Promotion of the Slogan "*Ḥasbunā Kitāb Allāh*" (The Book of Allah is Sufficient for Us)

*Dhahabī*, quoting *Abū Rayyah* regarding the relationship between *Ka'b* and *Abū Hurayrah*, states:

"*Ka'b al-Aḥbār* embraced Islam deceitfully, without sincerity, remaining a Jew at heart. With his cunning, he dominated *Abū Hurayrah*, a simple-minded man, exploiting his naivety to disseminate whatever myths and superstitions he wished, inserting them into Islamic hadiths through *Abū Hurayrah*. *Ka'b* took *Abū Hurayrah* under his wing, urging him to repeat his words verbatim and attribute them to the Prophet (PBUH)." (*Dhahabī*, 2004: 95) *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* consistently referred to the Torah and Israelite traditions, even after converting to Islam." (*Dhahabī*, n.d.: 1, 188) A notable point is that the baseless hadiths of *Abū Hurayrah*—which neither sound reason accepts nor align with the Quran and Sunnah—have been transmitted by several Sunni scholars, including *al-Bazzār* and *Abū Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī* (*Dimyārī*, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 1, 222), *al-Ḥākim* and *al-Ṭabarānī* (*Nuwayrī*, n.d.: 10, 22; *Abū Rayyah*, 1994: 208), and *Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī* (*Ibn Kathīr*, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 3, 104-105). *Abū Rayyah* adds others to this list, such as *Muslim*, *Bukhārī*, *Bazzār*, *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, and *Nasā'ī* (*Abū Rayyah*, 1994: 209).

## 6. The Reasons for the Caliphs' Failure to Confront Isra'iliyyat

The most significant reasons for the decisive inaction of the Prophet's (PBUH) successors in dealing with *isra'iliyyat* and their transmitters

## 6-1. Promoting the Idea of the Sufficiency of the Book of Allah and Replacing Isra'iliyyat for Prophetic Hadith

As previously mentioned, the foundations for the transmission and spread of isra'iliyyat were laid during the era of the first caliphs. Historical analysis shows that the lack of serious confrontation by the first three caliphs against the transmitters of isra'iliyyat paved the way for the widespread infiltration of these narratives into the fields of exegesis and hadith during the period of the Successor (successors of the Companions). This policy was, in fact, part of a calculated plan to manage religious sources. The main reasons for this approach can be analyzed along several key axes.

First, the caliphs, by prohibiting the narration and writing of Prophetic hadith (Ma'ārif, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 97) under the pretext of preventing discord and with the slogan "*Ḥasbunā kitāb Allāh*" (Allah's Book is sufficient for us), effectively created a vast void in religious knowledge. This void was quickly filled by isra'iliyyat, which primarily consisted of historical tales, creation myths, and elaborations on Qur'anic stories (Ma'ārif, 2002 AD/1381 AH: 107).

Second, this policy had clear political motivations. Prophetic hadith that mentioned the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt and particularly Imam Ali could challenge the legitimacy of the caliphate. In contrast, isra'iliyyat, which were mostly historical and non-jurisprudential in nature, did not pose a threat to the power structure.

A noteworthy point is that while the narration of Prophetic hadith was severely restricted, figures such as *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* and *Tamīm al-Dārī*—that were among the most prominent transmitters of isra'iliyyat—were officially supported. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, in *Al-*

*Iṣābah*, quotes ‘*Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb* as having called *Tamīm al-Dārī* "The best of the people of Medina." (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, n.d.: 3, 473) Meanwhile, according to *al-Subḥānī* (Subḥānī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 85), *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār* fabricated predictions and narrations that affirmed the legitimacy of the caliphs. This double standard clearly indicates that the primary goal was not preserving religious authenticity but rather controlling knowledge sources and directing public opinion. On one hand, authentic Prophetic hadith, which could raise awareness, were collected and burned, while on the other hand, *isra’iliyyat* that aligned with the rulers’ agenda were freely disseminate

The consequences of this policy gradually became apparent: the authentic Prophetic tradition was marginalized, the idea of the "Sufficiency of the Qur’an" without reference to the Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah was promoted, and a vast amount of unreliable narrations entered Islamic culture. This ultimately led to a deep divide between the pure Islam of Muḥammad (PBUH) and what was practiced in Muslim society. As a result, the Shia Imams in later periods had to purify hadith from *isra’iliyyat* and revive the true Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

## **6-2. The Alignment of Isra'iliyyat Transmitters with the Political Goals of the Caliphs**

One of the primary objectives behind fabricating hadith and the widespread transmission of *isra’iliyyat* after the Prophet (PBUH) was to  
**172** elevate the status of the ruling elite (‘Askarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 1, 215).

Someone like *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* knew well that praising the caliph would earn him favor. Thus, he told the second caliph, "We have read in our books that you will be martyred." (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 12, 193) *Ka'b al-Aḥbār* had gained 'Umar's trust to such an extent that the caliph would consult him on political matters (ibid: 81; Iṣfahānī, 1974 AD/1394 AH: 5, 371; Ibn al-Mubārak, n.d.: 2, 117).

What strengthen our view regarding the caliphs' reluctance to confront isra'iliyyat are the transmitters' predictions about the caliphs—their order of succession, names, and key events in their lives—which they claimed were derived from previous scriptures. These astonishing narrations were highly useful for the political and religious exploitation by the first three caliphs.

It is noteworthy that none of the Sunni exegetes or hadith scholars has explained why the first three caliphs did not prevent the transmission of isra'iliyyat. This is despite Sunni authorities acknowledging the Prophet's (PBUH) prohibition against narrating isra'iliyyat (Bukhārī, 1389 AH: 9, 136; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 3, 387; 'Asqalānī, n.d.: 8, 129; Dhahabī, n.d.: 1, 71). *Bukhārī* even dedicated a chapter in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to the Prophet's saying: "Do not ask the People of the Book about anything." (Bukhārī, 1969 AD/1389 AH: 9, 136)

In contrast, *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* strongly opposed the transmitters of isra'iliyyat, expelling them from the mosque during his caliphate and threatening some with legal punishments. A hadith from Imam *Ṣādiq* states: "Amīr al-Mu'minīn saw a storyteller in the mosque, struck him with a whip, and expelled him." (Kulaynī, 1944 AD/1363 AH: 7, 263)

This helps us better understand *Dhahabī*'s statement that *isra'iliyyat* entered exegesis during the era of the companion, and referring to the People of the Book became one of the sources of exegesis for them (*Dhahabī*, n.d.: 1, 169).

Thus, due to leniency—especially during the caliphate of the second caliph—the transmission of *isra'iliyyat* officially began. During the third caliph's rule, the transmitters enjoyed his support (*Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 8, 25) and used their freedom to feed people superstitions under the guise of Prophetic hadith, ensuring that authentic hadith undermining the caliphs' political position would be forgotten.

## Conclusion

The transmitters of *Isra'iliyyat* during the caliphs' era—particularly Jewish converts who outwardly embraced Islam—sought to tarnish Islam's radiant image and create doubt in Muslim beliefs. With the freedom they had, they successfully introduced Israelite superstitions into Islamic culture, which later permeated Tafsir and hadith. As a result, numerous fabricated narrations entered hadith collection. The reason the first three caliphs did not confront *isra'iliyyat* was twofold. To undermine the credibility of Prophetic hadith by presenting fabricated *isra'iliyyat* as authentic, thereby fostering the idea that hadith had been distorted over time and were thus unnecessary; to distract people with Israelite superstitions, ensuring that the pure Prophetic hadith—which weakened their political standing—would be forgotten. The void left by the prohibition of hadith was filled with

isra'iliyyat that aligned with the caliphate's agenda. This issue negatively impacts the credibility of the Prophet's (PBUH) successors and underscores the need for vigilance in analyzing historical and religious sources. It highlights the importance of relying on authentic texts and critical historical examination.

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