



The Narration of the Prophet's Bewitchment and the *Mu'awwadhatayn*: A Critical Study of Its Chain of Transmission (Sanad) and Implication, with a Historical and Theological Reexamination

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Abstract

The narration of the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH) is reported in Islamic sources with variations in *Sanad* and Text. Its theological implications for the doctrine of impeccability have also made it contentious. This research assesses the reliability of these narrative reports through *Sanad* and text analysis. It investigates, if a minimal

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acceptance is granted, how to delineate the effect's scope to safeguard the prophetic role in receiving and conveying revelation. Using a comparative analytical method, the study evaluates *Rijāl* aspects and conducts textual criticism of the narrations. It examines the historical and social context of *Medina* and the plausibility of similar threats. The discussion also encompasses the cause of revelation and the debate over the Meccan or Medinan classification of the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, as linking these surahs to the event hinges on resolving chronological issues and their apotropaic application. Findings show inconsistencies in the reports' chains of transmission, with some narrations pointing only to a limited physical affliction. Thus, a minimal interpretation does not compromise revelatory impeccability or the mission of the prophet. The connection to the *Mu'awwadhatayn* can be framed as a recommended reuse for defense, offering a reconcilable perspective on their origin debate.

Keywords: Prophet's (PBUH) Bewitchment, *Mu'awwadhatayn*, Impeccability, Occasion of Revelation, Hadith Criticism.

Introduction

The issue of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment has long been a challenging subject. The most prominent report in Shia and Sunni sources regarding the cause of revelation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* (*al-Falaq* and *al-Nās*) involves the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH) by *Labīd ibn al-A'ṣam*, a Jewish man from the *Banū Zurayq*. According to this narration, *Labīd*, with his family's assistance, placed

158 hairs from the Prophet's (PBUH) comb along with the comb's teeth

and knotted threads inside a date palm spate, blew on it, and hid it in a well named *Dharwān*. The Prophet (PBUH) fell ill due to this magic until *Gabriel* revealed the *Mu'awwadhatayn*. Their recitation caused the knots to be loosened, removing the magic's effects.

This narration, found with minor textual variations but similar content in both sects, has been evaluated differently by exegetes and scholars throughout history. Some considered it a definite historical event, while others deemed it fabricated due to its conflict with the principle of prophetic impeccability. Previous research has often taken polarized positions of outright acceptance or rejection, lacking comprehensive analysis.

This research aims to provide a comparative examination of Shia and Sunni narrative sources to critically evaluate the narration of the Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) bewitchment through a two level analysis of *Sanad* and implication. It seeks to answer fundamental questions: 'Regarding the *Sanad* encompassing the reliability of narrators, the authenticity of the chain of transmission, and its continuity or discontinuity to what extent is this narration reliable?' Concerning implication and the text including its internal consistency, variant versions, and its contradiction or conformity with the Qur'ān and foundational theological principles, especially impeccability, 'What interpretation of the narration is defensible?'

Additionally, this study scrutinizes the relationship between the revelation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment incident, along with the challenges concerning the Meccan or Medinan classification of these two *Surahs*. This is undertaken to derive a well-

founded analysis of the narration's validity through a rational and textual approach. Elucidating these dimensions can serve as a significant step toward a better understanding of the position of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and a more precise articulation of the foundational beliefs of Muslims.

1. Research Background

The investigation of the episode of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment holds a significant place within Hadith and exegetical works. A number of hadith scholars and exegetes have endeavored to analyze or critique various dimensions of this narrative. For instance, *Ibn Hajar 'Asqalānī* (2003 AD/1424 AH: 1, 151) delved exhaustively into the specifics and details of the Hadith regarding the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH). In the contemporary period, specialized journals in Qur'anic and Hadith studies have published articles that independently examine the subject of the Prophet's bewitchment and its connection to the occasion of revelation for the *Mu'awwadhatayn Surahs*. Among these is the article "A Critique of Exegetical Opinions on the Lexical Items of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* Based on Re-examining the Structure of the Two Surahs." (Rajabi Qodsi and Muradi Zanjani, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 3, 142-171)

Furthermore, research focusing on the *Sanad* and text aspects of the narrative, such as the article "A Sanad and Text Evaluation of the Narration on the Cause of Revelation for the Surahs of *Mu'awwadhatayn*" (Rabe' Nattaj, Aqapour, and Heydari, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 15, 229-248) or "A Comparative Study of the Effect of

Bewitchment on the Prophet in *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Muslim* in Light of the Occasion of Revelation for the Mu'awwadhatayn," (Sayyid Mousavi, Murtazavi, and Abdullahzadeh, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 11, 255-276) have analyzed this report.

A common feature among most of these works is a binary and absolutist approach to the narrative of the Prophet's bewitchment; that is, they either completely affirm it or categorically reject it, without undertaking a comprehensive and comparative examination of all its facets. The present study strives to assess the narrative's validity through *Rijāl* science analysis and textual criticism, critique its text and variant versions, evaluate it against Qur'anic verses on magic and the principle of impeccability, and reconstruct the historical context of Medina. It aims to propose a defensible formulation regarding the extent of susceptibility in a manner that avoids both the extreme of unconditional acceptance and the extreme of unsubstantiated rejection.

2. Conceptual Definition of Bewitchment

2-1. Bewitchment in Lexicology and Terminology

In lexicons, bewitchment is defined as an act performed with the assistance and proximity of Satan, which diverts a person from truth to falsehood. According to *al-Azharī*'s expression, the essence of bewitchment is the alteration of the reality of things and the presentation of falsehood in the form of truth. This concept is defined in *Lisān al-'Arab* as "The presentation of something contrary to reality, such that the observer imagines what they see is reality," while the truth is otherwise (Ibn Manẓūr, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 4, 348-349; 161

Farāhīdī, 2001 AD/1421 AH: 3, 135). Bewitchment has also been referred to as meaning deception, guile, and influencing hearts through the subtlety and complexity of speech. This definition is particularly evident in the concept of "The Bewitchment of Speech," where speech, by affecting emotions and altering the state of the audience, acts like an enchantment (Ma'lūf, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 323; Bustānī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 478).

In some sources such as *Tāj al-'Arūs* and *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, bewitchment is defined as a corruption that occurs through proximity to Satan or via subtle and hidden methods. In this interpretation, the effect of bewitchment lies not in changing the essence of things, but in altering the perception of the recipient or observer (Zabīdī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 6, 502-505; Jawharī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 679). As expressed by Ṭabarsī, Bewitchment and soothsaying are similar due to their effect on the mind and sight of the observer, where the recipient imagines something contrary to reality. He explicitly states that bewitchment affects only the human mind and imagination and does not affect any change in the reality of the object. This view is strengthened by careful consideration of Qur'anic verses, as in the example of the transformation of ropes into serpents by the sorcerers, where the effect was solely applied to the perception of the observers (Qarashī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 3, 237).

Rāghib Isfahānī also analyzes bewitchment in three concepts: deception, the assistance of Satan, and the acts performed by ascetics. He holds the belief that *Bewitchment* as a real change in the nature of

162 objects is baseless and is merely a form of instilling falsehood in place

of truth (*Rāghib*, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 298).

An examination of the lexical meaning of bewitchment in various sources indicates that, in most definitions, this concept signifies the alteration or distortion of human perception of reality. Bewitchment is defined as a tool for creating illusion, deception, and presenting falsehood in the form of truth. From the perspective of lexicographers, this act is often carried out by utilizing proximity to Satan or employing specific methods that do not affect the truth of objects but only influence the mind and imagination of the recipient. Therefore, the general consensus of lexical sources is that bewitchment is an illusory and unreal manipulation achieved through deception or subtle acts and has no connection to changing the real nature of things.

2-2. Manifestations of Bewitchment from the Perspective of Scholars

From the viewpoint of Islamic jurists and thinkers, the definition of bewitchment encompasses various dimensions shaped by religious sources and common perceptions. *Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī* emphasizes that for an accurate understanding of the concept of bewitchment, one must refer to the common understanding of society, as among people, bewitchment is generally considered a hidden and extraordinary phenomenon, not counted as a normal or common occurrence (Narāqī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 14, 114).

Allamah *Ḥillī* considers bewitchment to be a collection of writings, utterances, or acts that can indirectly affect the body, heart, or intellect of the bewitched person (Ḥillī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 12, 144). In his view, this effect can lead to consequences such as illness, death,

creating affection or hatred, or even separation between spouses (ibid: 5, 396). Imam Khomeini also accepted this definition and emphasized this same meaning (Mousavi Khomeini, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 1, 529).

Shahīd Awwal considered the scope of manifestations of Bewitchment to be broader, including matters performed by employing jinn, satans, or even angels for hidden influence or treating illnesses, conjuring spirits, and communicating with them. He also lists revealing unknown properties of substances and writing talismans among the manifestations of bewitchment (*Shahīd Awwal* (‘*Āmilī Makkī*), n.d.: 3, 164).

Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn, the son of Allamah *Hillī*, defines bewitchment as performing extraordinary acts through psychic powers or by utilizing the influences of celestial bodies and linking supernatural forces with earthly factors, and alongside this, he also mentions seeking help from simple spirits (*Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn Hillī*, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 1, 405).

Ayatollah Gulpaygani also defines bewitchment as any act that has abnormal and unconventional effects, resembling spiritual graces or miracles, whether this effect is on humans, animals, or even inanimate objects. He gives examples such as moving a tree, causing a ceiling or wall to shake, and stopping water without attributing it to natural factors or well-established verses and supplications from the impeccable Imams (AS) as instances of such bewitchment (Gulpaygani, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 342).

3. The Status of Bewitchment in the Qur’an

164 According to the book *al-Mu‘jam al-Iḥṣā’ī li Alfāz al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*,

the word "*Bewitchment*" is used 61 times in the Qur'ān (Rouhani, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 2, 240). From the perspective of the verses, it is divided into two main categories: First, magic that is merely a type of deception, sleight of hand, and illusion with no external reality; as in the story of the magicians in the time of Moses in verse 66 of Surah *Tāhā*: "So it seemed to him, from their magic, that their ropes and staffs were moving." This verse clarifies that the movement of the magicians' ropes and staffs was purely illusory, and people thought they were actually moving. Another verse in the same vein, namely verse 116 of Surah *al-A'raf*, also states: "So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them," indicating that their magic only affected the perception of the onlookers and did not create an objective change in the objects themselves.

Second, a magic that has a real effect and the ability to create external or psychological changes in people. For example, verse 102 of Surah *al-Baqarah* mentions that some people learned magic that caused separation between husband and wife: "And they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife." It continues to emphasize: "And they learn what harms them and does not benefit them," showing that magic can have a real and harmful effect.

In this context, in his commentary on this verse, Makarem Shirazi recalls the story of *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*; two angels who appeared among the Children of Israel in human form and taught people the correct methods to ward off magic to prevent its misuse. However, many people used this knowledge for false purposes and fell into tribulation (Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 378-379).

Here, the question arises: 'Does the effect of magic have only a psychological and illusory dimension, or is a physical and real effect also possible?' *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* and some other exegetes, based on Qur'anic evidence, believe that the effect of magic is in most cases limited to the realm of the mind and perception. In his *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, he emphasizes that magic is a type of interference with human senses that causes one to see or hear things that are not real (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 8, 275). He considers interference in human imagination to be one of the most certain types of magic, calling it "Bewitching of the sight." (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 1, 368; Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 379)

In conclusion, it can be said that magic, from the Qur'anic perspective, is an extraordinary act that sometimes has only a suggestive and imaginary dimension, and at other times may, by utilizing unknown physical or chemical forces or through the cooperation of devils, leave real effects in the external world and on the human body. This distinction provides a more coherent analysis of the concept of magic in religious sources and paves the way for its methodical investigation¹.

1. As a corroborative indication within the Imami tradition even outside the specific context of Qur'anic exegesis jurists in certain legal chapters have presupposed the possibility that bewitchment can occur externally and that concrete effects may follow from it. In other words, their discussion of liability and legal responsibility under the condition that an effect is established suggests that bewitchment has not consistently been treated in this discourse as mere metaphor or illusion (cf. *Ṭūsī*, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 5, 329; *Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī*, 1989 AD/1409 AH: 4, 973; *Ḥillī*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 5, 425; *Shahīd Thānī*, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 15, 77; *Mousavi Khomeini*, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 2, 546). Nevertheless, this realist-leaning construal, →

4. Examination of the Chain of Transmission and Content of the Narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) Bewitchment

To evaluate the validity of the narration regarding the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment, it is essential to first classify and analyze this narration based on its narrative sources and chains of transmission. The related narrations can be examined in three primary axes:

4-1. Analysis of Sunni Narrations

A significant portion of the narrations concerning the Prophet's bewitchment is found in Sunni sources, particularly within the *Kutub al-Sittah*, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. Most of these narrations trace back to *ʿĀyishah* and *Ibn ʿAbbās*. In some reports, the name "*Labīd ibn al-Aʿṣam*" is explicitly mentioned as the one who performed the magic, while in others, only the phrase "A Jew bewitched the Prophet" is mentioned, generally referring to the same individual. For example, *Bukhārī* narrated this incident in seven different locations in his book, all of which are reported from *ʿĀyishah* (*Bukhārī*, 1981 AD/1401 AH: 4, 91; *Ibn Mājah*, n.d.: 2, 1173).

4-1-1. Chain of Transmission Analysis

Many Sunni hadith scholars and exegetes consider these narrations authentic. However, some researchers, such as *al-ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī*,

← by itself, does not demonstrate the occurrence of bewitchment in the case of the Prophet (PBUH). It can only clarify the intellectual grounds for accepting the possibility of causal influence at the ordinary level. Accordingly, a final judgment concerning the report of the Prophet's bewitchment remains contingent upon assessing the reports in terms of *Sand* and implication and evaluating them against established theological principles.

have raised doubts about the soundness of their chains. In *al-Mizān*, he explicitly states that many of these hadiths were not recorded through direct observation or firsthand oral transmission; rather, they are merely reports of a historical story that the narrator associated with the occasion of revelation based on a conceptual alignment with the verses (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1974 AD/1353 SH: 173).

Consequently, it appears that the transmission of these narrations from *ʿĀyishah* and *Ibn ʿAbbās* falls into one of two possibilities: either they heard this account from others and narrated it, in which case the narration is considered *Mursal*; or it was essentially a fabricated narration invented by them or those around them. *Allamah* Sayyid *Murtaza Askari* also believes that *ʿĀyishah*, in many instances, narrated hadiths inspired by the life of the Prophet (PBUH) (*Askari*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 3, 295).

Furthermore, in most chains of these narrations, the name *Hishām ibn ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr* appears before the name of *ʿĀyishah*. Although *Hishām ibn ʿUrwah* is mentioned in *Shia* sources as a trustworthy narrator and a student of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (*Ṭūsī*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 318), some scholars of biographical evaluation, such as *Mālik ibn Qiṭṭān*, *Ibn Ḥajar*, *al-Dhahabī*, and *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, have accused him of leniency and even *tadlīs* in narration (*Ibn Ḥajar*, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 11, 45; *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 1997 AD/1417 AH: 14, 40; *al-Dhahabī*, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36). On the other hand, it must be noted that *Hishām ibn ʿUrwah* was born in 61 AH, while *ʿĀyishah* passed away in 58 AH; therefore, his direct narration from her is chronologically impossible (*Ibn al-Athīr*, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 3, 362).

4-1-2. Supporting and Opposing Views in Sunni Sources

This narration is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and for this reason, many Sunnis consider it authentic (*Bukhārī*, 1981 AD/1401 AH: 4, 380; *Muslim*, 1985 AD/1405 AH: 4, 172). In contrast, a number of hadith scholars and hadith critics, such as *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī*, *al-Nawawī*, and *al-ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī*, have expressed doubts about the authenticity of these narrations. *Ibn Ḥajar*, in the introduction to *Fath al-Bārī*, names more than 300 narrators from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* who have been criticized or weakened by scholars of biographical evaluation (*Ibn Ḥajar*, 2004 AD/1424 AH: 1, 346). *Nawawī*, in the introduction to his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, acknowledges the existence of questionable narrations within the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and raises issues regarding the reliability of some of their narrators (*Nawawī*, 1928 AD/1347 AH: 1, 16).

Furthermore, personalities such as *Abū Hurayrah*, *Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī*, *ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀs*, and *ʿAbdullāh ibn Zubayr*, who play a role in the chains of narrations in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, are considered unreliable from the perspective of many researchers in hadith studies. For example, *Abū Hurayrah* accompanied the Prophet (PBUH) for only three years and was known for his prolific narration and even fabrication of hadith. For instance, *Dhahabī* in "*Sīyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*" and *Khaṭīb Baghdādī* in "*Tārīkh Baghdād*" have pointed to cases of leniency or problems in the reliability of some narrators.

In the contemporary period, researchers such as *Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah* and *Allamah Sayyid Murtaza Askari*, through a critical re-examination of the hadith heritage, have extensively critiqued the

reliability of some prolific narrators and the theological consequences of unconditionally accepting these reports (*Dhahabī*, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36; *Khaṭīb Baghdādī*, 1997 AD/1417 AH: 14, 40; *Abū Rayyah*, 1958 AD: 216; *Askari*, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 1, 89).

4-2. Analysis of Shia Narrations

In *Shia* sources, there are reports of the incident of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment, narrated in reliable exegetical and hadith works; these include *Tafsīr Qummī*, *Tafsīr Furāt Kūfī*, *Tafsīr Nūr Thaḡalayn*, *al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, and *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfi*. The common theme of these narrations often revolves around Gabriel informing the Prophet (PBUH) about the location of the magic and introducing *Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī* (AS) as the one entrusted to uncover and nullify it (Qummī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 446; Kūfī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 372; Ḥuwayzī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 718; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 813; Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 1, 413; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 5, 396-397).

Some of these sources, such as *Tafsīr Qummī* and *Tafsīr Furāt Kūfī*, are considered among the early *Shia* works. The report of the bewitchment incident within them indicates that the discussion of this issue is not limited to later sources but has roots in the earliest *Shia* narrative tradition. Although, in terms of their chains, many of these reports are narrated as *Mursal*, their multiplicity in reliable *Shia* exegetical and hadith works strengthens the core historical report.

These narrations state that Gabriel informed the Prophet that a Jewish man had concealed a magical object in a well, and the Prophet

170 was instructed to send *Ali* (AS) to extract it. *Amīr al-Muʾminīn*, after

considerable effort at the bottom of the well, found a container holding a rope with 21 knots along with other objects and brought it to the Prophet. According to this narration, as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* (AS) recited the *Mu'awwadhatayn Surahs*, each knot was untied, and the effects of the magic were completely nullified (Ḥuwayzī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 718; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 813).

4-2-1. Chain of Transmission Analysis

Many of these narrations in Shia sources appear as *Mursal* or with weak chains, especially those taken from works like "*Ṭibb al-A'immah*" or "*Tafsīr al-Furāt al-Kūfī*." Some later hadith scholars, such as *Allamah Majlisī*, have accepted these narrations despite their weak chains and cited them in their works (Majlisī, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 60, 24).

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in critiquing these narrations, explicitly noted that there is a question about how magic could affect the Prophet (PBUH); because the Qur'ān has denied the accusation of being bewitched that the polytheists made, considering it an allegation of madness: "*Wa Qāla al-Zālimūna in Tattabi'ūna illā Rajulan Mashūran*" (And the wrongdoers say, 'You follow none but a bewitched man'). However, he explains that this verse merely negates the Prophet's madness and does not indicate a denial of magic affecting his illness or physical symptoms (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683).

Some narrations also emphasize that the Prophet (PBUH) used to recite these very two *surahs*, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, as a protective incantation for Imam *Ḥasan and Ḥusayn* (AS) to safeguard them from

any harm of magic or the evil eye.

In summary, from the Shia theological perspective, the effect of magic is absolutely impossible and negated insofar as it relates to the mission, revelation, and the station of prophethood. However, a limited effect of magic on the physical health of the Prophet, in a manner that does not harm his mission and impeccability, is not considered impossible by some exegetes. Given the social and political conditions of Medina, where Jewish enemies were always seeking to harm the Prophet, such actions were not implausible, although God protected him through the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs*.

Attributing bewitchment to the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) is compatible with the foundational beliefs of Islam only if it does not extend to the realm of revelation, intellect, and his impeccability. The Qur'ān mentions the expression "Bewitched" in the context of quoting the opponents' words to invalidate the Prophet's mission and by attributing it to the "Wrongdoers" (*Zālimūn*), it clarifies the falsity of such a claim (Surah al-Furqān: 8; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 15, 249). However, this Qur'anic negation pertains to magic that could affect the reception or delivery of revelation, not the negation of any physical affliction. For this reason, a number of exegetes and theologians have interpreted the reports concerning the Prophet's bewitchment as pertaining to bodily afflictions and divine trials; trials that, like illness, do not compromise his impeccability and mission (Ṭabrisī, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 7, 267; Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 15, 456; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 3, 192). This

172 interpretation makes it possible to reconcile the narrative data with

definitive theological principles.

4-2-2. Differences of Opinion in Shia Sources

Differences of opinion are observed among *Shia* scholars; for instance, *Shaykh Ṣadūq* did not include these narrations in his books at all, whereas *Shaykh Ṭūsī* and *Ṭabrisī* mentioned them briefly and proceeded to analyze and critique their chains (Ṭūsī, n.d.: 10, 434; Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 10, 865). *Allamah Majlisī* also explicitly states that although magic cannot affect prophets and Imams in the sense of nullifying their intellect or revelation, it may occur to the extent of affecting their senses or causing physical illness (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 60, 23-25; 89, 365-366; 92, 125-129).

Therefore, the predominant Shia view is that the effect of magic on the Prophet (PBUH) to the extent of impairing his perception or revelation is rationally and textually negated. However, the possibility of a limited physical effect without compromising the station of prophethood is considered worthy of investigation in Shia narrations and has not been categorically rejected.

4-3. Criticism of Weak or Fabricated Narrations

A portion of the reports concerning the incident of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment in Shia and Sunni sources lack the necessary reliability due to weak chains or accusations of fabrication. Among these are narrations that trace back to *Hishām ibn 'Urwah*. Although *Hishām ibn 'Urwah* is counted among famous hadith scholars and jurists, many scholars of *Rijāl*, such as *Ibn Ḥajar* and *Dhahabī*, have expressed serious doubts about his narrations due to their abundance

in *Kufa* and his leniency in hadith transmission, and some have even accused some of his narrations of being fabricated (Ibn Ḥajar, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 11, 45; Dhahabī, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36).

The table below provides a brief comparative overview of the sources, main narrators, and chain reliability of these narrations:

Source Cluster	Principal Narrators	Sanad Status in <i>Rijāl</i> Sources	Researchers' Assessments
The Six Books (al-Kutub al-Sittah), e.g., <i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i> and <i>Sunan Ibn Mājah</i> (Sunni)	ʿĀyishah; Ibn ʿAbbās	Regarded as sound by many Sunni scholars; criticized by some researchers	Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī considers these transmissions weak in Sanad, yet does not object to the text; he also answers several objections raised against them.
<i>Biḥār al-Anwār</i> , <i>Nūr al-Thaqalayn</i> , and related works (<i>Shia</i>)	Imam Ṣādiq (AS)	Mostly <i>Mursal</i> or with weak chains	<i>Shia</i> Hadith scholars tend to accept them conditionally and in some cases affirm these reports.
Reports transmitted through Hishām ibn ʿUrwah	Hishām ibn ʿUrwah; al-Zubayr	Weak; suspected of fabrication	Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahabī accuse him of <i>Tadlīs</i> and laxity in transmission.

5. Theological and Doctrinal Analysis of the Bewitchment Narration

5-1. The Relation of the Bewitchment Narration to the Principle of the Prophet's (PBUH) Impeccability

One of the most important questions raised regarding the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is its potential conflict with the principle of his impeccability. Some researchers believe that if the Prophet, due to magic, experienced a state where he thought he had

174 done something he had not, this situation would be inconsistent with

his prophetic station and impeccability. To examine this issue, the definition of impeccability from the perspective of Shia and Sunni theologians must first be clarified. From the perspective of Shia theology, the impeccability of the Prophet (PBUH) means complete immunity from any error or mistake in receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation, as well as in acting upon divine laws. This immunity encompasses all aspects related to divine guidance (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 189-191; Ṭūsī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 1, 274; Allamah Ḥillī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 12, 144; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683).

In contrast, many Sunni theologians and hadith scholars consider the Prophet's impeccability to pertain to the realm of receiving and conveying revelation, and do not deem the occurrence of some non-legislative, ordinary symptoms or errors for the Prophet as impossible, though unlikely (Nawawī, 1928 AD/1347 AH: 1, 16; Ibn Ḥajar Asqalānī, 2004 AD/1424 AH: 11, 151; Fakhr Rāzī, 2000 AD/1420 AH: commentary on verse 102 of al-Baqarah, Vol. 1, p. 357).

Accordingly, the difference of opinion regarding the possibility or impossibility of magic affecting the Prophet (PBUH) stems more from a fundamental difference in the definition of impeccability between Shia and Sunni theologians than from a narrative contradiction. From the Qur'ānic perspective, numerous verses address the issue of magic, stating that its effect is only possible by God's permission (al-Baqarah: 102). Also, in the story of Pharaoh's magicians, it is stated that their magic only created a visual illusion and had no real power (Ṭāhā: 66). By categorizing the narrations related to the Prophet's (PBUH)

bewitchment, three approaches can be observed: "One group of narrations propose that the Prophet experienced a type of temporary perceptual disturbance; another group limit the effect of magic merely to a temporary sensation or illusion; and in contrast, some, relying on the absolute impeccability of prophets, deny any effect of magic upon them."

In this regard, two major theological views are evident. The first view holds that any effect of magic, even at the level of perception or sensation, could undermine people's trust in revelation and the prophetic mission, contradicting the verse: "*Wa mā Yanṭiqu 'an al-Hawā in Huwa illā Waḥyun yūḥā*" (al-Najm: 3-4). However, the second view accepted by many Shia theologians and even some Sunnis emphasizes that the Prophet was not naturally immune to physical and sensory harms, but his impeccability in receiving and conveying revelation was completely preserved. For example, *Allamah Majlisī* in "*Biḥār al-Anwār*" refers to narrations indicating that the effect of magic was limited to affecting the Prophet's senses or eyesight, and no more (*Majlisī*, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 60, 23-25). *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī* in "*al-Mīzān*" also confirms this meaning, emphasizing that illness, fatigue, or short-term perceptual disturbance did not compromise the Prophet's revelatory mission (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683-684).

The theological analysis of the bewitchment narration depends on distinguishing the scope of impeccability. According to the Imami basis, impeccability pertains to the Prophet's (PBUH) immunity from error in receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation, as well as

176 from committing sin. Therefore, any interpretation of the narration

that necessarily entails a disturbance in receiving or conveying religion, or casts doubt on the truthfulness of revelation, is, in terms of its implication, incompatible with the principle of impeccability and invalid. Conversely, bodily afflictions and external harms, as long as they do not extend to the realm of the revelatory mission, do not necessarily conflict with impeccability.

Based on this, if the occurrence of bewitchment is accepted, a defensible interpretation is a limited and temporary effect at the level of sensation and perception of ordinary, non-legislative matters, not an intrusion into revelation and the mission. This explanation clarifies the narrative's semantic boundaries and preserves the religious trust of the community, because the criterion of trust is certainty in revelation and the divine message, and this realm remains protected in the mentioned interpretation. Consequently, the result is that it is possible to reconcile a minimal acceptance of the report with safeguarding the principle of impeccability, without falling into unconditional acceptance or unfounded rejection.

5-2. Extra-Textual Analysis of the Incident as a Divine Trial

Some theologians and thinkers believe that the incident of bewitchment can be analyzed as a divine trial for the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers; because in the divine tradition, prophets are exposed to divine tests and hardships to manifest the degrees of their faith and patience, and that of their community. In this incident as well, the presence of Gabriel and the participation of Imam Ali (AS) in discovering and nullifying the magic indicate that God supported His

Prophet at that very moment and swiftly removed the danger.

Therefore, the philosophy of such an event can be understood as a demonstration of the power of Guardianship, supernatural assistance, and a divine trial without the slightest impairment to the prophetic mission and impeccability of the Prophet (PBUH). The effect of this magic was confined to a limited, perceptual domain and never prevented the Prophet from guidance or receiving revelation. This very aspect means that this narration not only does not contradict the prophetic station of the Prophet, but rather finds meaning within the framework of divine wisdom and the tradition of testing prophets, serving as a model of patience and trust in God for the believers.

6. Historical, Social, and Political Analysis of the Bewitchment Incident

Magic was a deep-rooted and prevalent phenomenon in pre-Islamic Arab society. Many tribes of the Arabian Peninsula believed that through magic and talismans, affection or enmity could be instilled in others' hearts, illness or incapacity could be created, and even a person's life could be taken. These beliefs were especially common in tribal rivalries and wars to harm enemies or preserve sovereignty in the courts of rulers, and were employed as a power-centric tool. Numerous historical evidences, such as those found in "*al-Aghānī*" (Abul Faraj Iṣfahānī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 1, 24-26) and "*Ṭabaqāt*" (Ibn Sa'd, 1988 AD/1408 AH: 2, 99 and 103), point to this prominent presence of magic in pre-Islamic culture.

178 On the other hand, the Jewish residents of Medina also possessed

considerable skill in the arts of magic and soothsaying. Historical sources such as "*al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*" by *Ibn Hishām* and "*al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*" by *Ibn Kathīr* report that the Jews, in addition to their economic and political influence, utilized occult sciences and magic to affect people or oppose the prophets (*Ibn Hishām*, 2013 AD/1434 AH: 1, 598-599; 2, 215). Even the Noble Qur'ān reminds us in verse 102 of Surah *al-Baqarah* that some Jewish groups used magic as a tool for causing tribulation.

Historical reports such as "*al-Ṭabaqāt*" by *Ibn Sa'd* and "*Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*" contain evidence indicating that the Jews of Medina attempted several times to harm the Prophet (PBUH); including the incident of *Zaynab bint Ḥārith*, who intended to kill the Prophet with poisoned food (*Ṭabarī*, 1967: 2, 92-93; *Ibn Sa'd*, 1988 AD/1408 AH: 2, 137-195), or the cooperation of the Jews with the polytheists in the Battle of *al-Aḥzāb*, and finally, the execution of magic by *Labīd ibn A'sam* and his accomplices. These events show that the Jews used all means, including magic, to threaten prophets.

This subject can be examined considering the status of magic in the Jewish tradition; such that in their sacred texts, the existence of magic is accepted while warnings are given against its use (Deuteronomy, 18:10–12). Historical research indicates that in religious conflicts, attributing magic to rival religious figures served a polemical function and was not always a precise report of a historical event (*Schäfer*, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 72).

From a historical perspective, magic was an accepted reality in the social milieu of that time and was sometimes used as a means of

intimidation and psychological sabotage. *Ibn Athīr* in "*al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*" emphasizes that Jewish scholars also resorted to magic against previous prophets (*Ibn Athīr*, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 1, 517). However, *Ibn Khaldūn* in his "*Muqaddimah*" warns that not all these reports should be considered definitive without chain and rational examination, and that part of these narrations may reflect the general atmosphere and beliefs of the people (*Ibn Khaldūn*, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 1, 273-281). Despite this, the historical conclusion shows that magic in the life world of pre-Islamic Arabs and also in some Jewish layers of Medina was not merely a marginal matter; rather, it was a tool for psychological warfare, intimidation, and weakening the social capital of a rival. In the atmosphere of Medina, where tribal conflicts, religious rivalries, and political sensitivities intensified after the consolidation of the Prophet's (PBUH) power, attributing magic or attempting it could have a political and social function: "Creating doubt in the spiritual authority of the Prophet (PBUH), suggesting vulnerability, and strengthening the opposition front. Therefore, the reports concerning bewitchment should be read not only alongside the possibility of an external act but also as a reflection of the atmosphere of hostility and the mechanisms of psychological and reputational sabotage. The judgment regarding the extent of its effect, which was explained in the theological analysis section, should not replace the explanation of these historical and social functions."

7. The Meccan or Medinan Origin and the Occasion of Revelation of the Mu‘awwadhatayn Surahs

180 One of the significant topics in this context is the issue of the Cause of

Revelation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs* and their connection to the bewitchment incident. Some exegetes, such as *Jābir ibn Zayd*, *‘Aṭā’*, *‘Ikrimah*, *Ibn ‘Abbās*, and *Ibn ‘Āshūr*, consider these *surahs* to be *Meccan* (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1956: 30, 624), relying on their monotheistic style and their placement at the end of the codex. However, another group, including *Tha‘labī*, *Fakhr Rāzī*, *Ibn Kathīr*, *Suyūṭī*, *Ṭabrisī*, and *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī*, consider the *Mu'awwadhatayn* to be *Medinan* and believe they were revealed during the Prophet's bewitchment as a means to repel it (Rāzī, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 32, 369; Tha‘labī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 10, 337; Ibn Kathīr, 2000 AD/1420 AH: 8, 536; Suyūṭī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 6, 417; Ṭabrisī, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 27, 378-380; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1974 AD/1393 SH: 20, 683-684).

To resolve this contradiction, several hypotheses have been proposed:

- The possibility of these *surahs* being revealed again in Medina as a cure for the magic;
- A reminder and instruction to recite them in Medina without a new revelation;
- Or their actual origin being *Medinan*, but later being counted among *Meccan surahs* due to their stylistic similarity to them.

Based on historical evidence and the order of the codex, the most probable hypothesis is that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* were revealed in Mecca and were later recommended to the Prophet in Medina in connection with the bewitchment incident. This conclusion is consistent with both the cause of revelation narrations and the function of these *surahs* in removing psychological or physical harms caused by magic.

In this context, the differing opinion of *Ibn Mas'ūd* regarding not including the *Mu'awwadhatayn* in his personal codex and the view of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS), who introduced these two *surahs* as part of the Qur'ān (*Baḥrānī*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 814), indicate that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* had a special protective and talismanic role from the very beginning, and this role became more prominent during the bewitchment incident. The narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) clearly emphasize that these *surahs* are part of the Qur'ān and that God saved His Prophet from the harm of magic through their revelation (*Nūrī*, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 13, 18; *Majlisī*, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 92, 15; *Ḥuwayzī*, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 5, 719; *Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 5, 30).

In summarizing this section, it can be said that the disagreement among exegetes regarding the Meccan or Medinan origin of the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs* directly affects how the connection between these two *surahs* and the bewitchment narration is explained. Considering the stylistic evidence, the position of the *surahs* in the codex, and at the same time, the narrative reports related to the bewitchment incident, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, as *surahs* with a function of seeking refuge and protection, had an original Meccan revelation. However, in Medina, following the bewitchment event, the recommendation to recite and apply them, or a reminder of their function, was emphasized. Therefore, the link between these two *surahs* and the bewitchment incident does not necessarily mean it is the original cause of revelation, but can signify an applicative and

contradiction of Meccan and Medinan is explainable, and the reports of the cause of revelation can be interpreted in a methodical and non-contradictory framework.

8. Exegetical Analysis of the Mu'awwadhatayn *Surahs* and Their Connection to Magic

Surah al-Falaq and *Surah al-Nās*, known as the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, begin with the phrase "*Qul A'ūdhu*" (Say, I seek refuge) and involve seeking God's protection from apparent and hidden evils. Because these *surahs* are recited in times of danger and threat, they are also called "*Mashqshaqatayn*" in some sources; meaning speech uttered in critical situations and during calamities (Khorramshahi, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 2, 1271-272).

Exegetical sources mention that the Prophet *Muḥammad* (PBUH) used these *surahs* as incantations for his two grandsons, *Ḥasan* and *Husayn* (AS); *Ibn Shahrāshūb* in "*al-Manāqib*" and *al-Ṭabrisī* in "*Majma' al-Bayān*" explicitly state that the Prophet (PBUH) would repeatedly recite these two *surahs* to protect them (Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 3, 384; *Ṭabrisī*, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 10, 565).

Other narrations also mention that these two *surahs* were brought down by Gabriel and Michael for the Prophet's healing. Imam *Ṣādiq* and *Bāqir* (AS) are reported in narrations by '*Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī* and *Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī* to have said that the Prophet suffered from a severe fever due to the illness from magic, and Gabriel brought these *surahs* to cure him (Qummī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 446; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 4, 531).

Furthermore, based on a narration from 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir, the Prophet (PBUH) said that these two *surahs* were revealed to him together and as a unit, and he emphasized: "Two *surahs* were revealed to me tonight the like of which I have never seen." (Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 20, 590)

Regarding the phrase "*Wa min Sharri al-Naffāthāti fil 'Uqad*" (And from the evil of the women who blow on knots) in *Surah al-Falaq*, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explained that "*Naffāthāt*" refers to women who would blow on knots and practice sorcery through this method, as this practice was more common among women. He also, in discussing the word "*Falaq*," refers to a narration that considers *Falaq* to be the name of a well in Hell, a view supported by some exegetical narrations (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974 AD/1393 SH: 20, 681-682). Suyūṭī also attributed "*Naffāthāt*" to the daughters of *Labīd ibn al-A'ṣam* (Suyūṭī, 2001 AD/1421 AH: 2, 336). These interpretations indicate that the reference to magic in these verses is also linked to the historical context of the Prophet's bewitchment incident and likely points to those who collaborated with *Labīd* in performing the magic.

From an exegetical perspective, the expression "*Wa min Sharri al-Naffāthāti fil 'Uqad*" in *Surah al-Falaq* refers to one of the most well-known methods of magic in the cultures surrounding the era of revelation: knotting and blowing (*Nafth*) accompanied by incantations for psychological effect or creating the illusion of harm and threat. Therefore, the primary indication of the verse is to state a clear instance of the evil of magic and to seek God's refuge from it, not a

184 direct literal reference to a specific incident. However, since the

pivotal element of the magical act in the narrations of the bewitchment incident namely the knots and blowing on them is prominently reported (such as the narration of the knotted rope and the knots being untied simultaneously with the recitation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn*), it can be said that there is a conceptual correspondence between the Qur'anic image of blowing on knots and the narrative image of the bewitchment incident. Accordingly, the connection between the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment story should be understood more as a kind of narrative correlation and highlighting of the *surahs'* apotropaic function, rather than the verses themselves definitively and explicitly referring to the well of *Dharwān* or the external details of the incident. Consequently, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, by outlining types of hidden evil including magic, establish a general framework for seeking refuge, and the narrations have applied this framework to a historical instance and emphasized the protective function of the *surahs*.

Conclusion

1. *Rijālī* and textual criticism evaluations demonstrated that the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is not uniform in its chains of transmissions across reports in both major Islamic traditions. Some chains face issues such as *Irsāl*, historical discontinuity, or problematic narrators. Therefore, the outcome of the research is neither definitive proof nor absolute rejection of the narration, but rather the acceptance of the possibility of a minimal historical core accompanied by narrative embellishments in some reports.

2. A comparison of texts revealed that differences primarily occur in the details of the narration (the type of tool, the role of individuals, the method of discovery, and the manner of removing the effect), while the common core of the narration revolves around the act of bewitchment and its subsequent removal through divine recourse. Consequently, in the semantic analysis, one must avoid generalizing individual details to the main claim and base the interpretation on reliable common elements.
 3. From a theological perspective, the criterion for judgment is that the content of the narration does not extend to the realm of receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation. Based on this, even assuming a minimal acceptance of the narration, a defensible interpretation refers to a limited and temporary effect at the level of physical symptoms, sensory matters, or ordinary non-legislative affairs, not a disruption in revelation and the prophetic mission. As a result, the principle of revelatory impeccability remains unimpaired, and the alleged conflict with doctrinal foundations is resolved.
 4. Historical evidence of the prevalence of magic and its functions within the cultural milieu of Arabia and in the context of the conflicts in Medina indicates that threatening with magic or accusing of it could have been part of the mechanisms of pressure and psychological warfare against the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, the very proposition of such an event is plausible in terms of historical context, although determining the details of the incident requires stronger chains of transmission.
- 186** 5. Exegetical analysis shows that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* primarily

provide a general framework for seeking refuge from hidden evils, including magic. The narrations may have applied this framework to a specific historical instance. Therefore, the connection between the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment incident does not necessarily signify the original cause of revelation. It can be explained as a recommendation and an immediate, apotropaic application in Medina, an explanation that increases the possibility of reconciling reports about the occasion of revelation and the disagreement over their Meccan or Medinan origin.

The culmination of the chain analysis, textual, theological, and historical analyses indicates that a methodological approach to the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is conditional acceptance with a minimal interpretation. That is, if reliance is placed on stronger chains, the narration ultimately indicates a limited affliction and is not incompatible with revelatory impeccability. Furthermore, the relationship of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* to the incident can be explained within the framework of their apotropaic function and narrative correlation. This result offers a middle path that avoids both the unconditional acceptance of weakly supported details and the unfounded absolute rejection of the narration.

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