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# A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IGNAZ GOLDZIHER'S ALLEGATION OF HADITH FABRICATION AGAINST IMAM AL-ZUHRĪ

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***Abstract***
*This study critically examines the allegations made by the renowned Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher against Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH), one of the most distinguished transmitters and early compilers of Prophetic ḥadīth. Goldziher, in his seminal work Muhammedanische Studien, accused al-Zuhrī of fabricating ḥadīths to serve the political interests of the Umayyad caliphs, particularly ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. Employing a critical and analytical methodology, this paper evaluates Goldziher's claims by consulting authentic biographical sources, the evaluations of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl scholars, and established historical records. The study demonstrates that Goldziher's accusations rest upon multiple scholarly errors: a fundamental misreading of al-Zuhrī's statement regarding the writing of ḥadīths, confusion between kitābat al-ḥadīth (transcription) and waḍʿ al-ḥadīth (fabrication), reliance on a historically unreliable narration from Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī, and a disregard for chronological evidence—particularly that al-Zuhrī's first meeting with ʿAbd al-Malik occurred in 82 AH, nearly a decade after the alleged fabrication period. The study further establishes that the hadith cited by Goldziher as evidence is transmitted through numerous independent chains by multiple contemporaries of al-Zuhrī, confirming its authenticity. The unanimous testimonies of ḥadīth critics, including Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Imām al-Nasāʾī, and Imām al-Dhahabī, affirm al-Zuhrī's integrity, reliability, and scholarly authority. The paper concludes that Goldziher's allegations stem from a preconceived orientalist paradigm rather than objective scholarship, and that Imām al-Zuhrī remains one of the most trustworthy preservers of the Prophetic Sunnah in Islamic intellectual history.*
***Keywords:*** *Imām al-Zuhrī, Goldziher, Ḥadīth Fabrication, Orientalism.*

## 1. Introduction

The Prophetic Sunnah constitutes the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qur'an. It provides the practical exposition of the Qur'an, clarifies legal rulings, and offers a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings. For this reason, from the era of the Companions onwards, extraordinary efforts were devoted to the preservation, verification, compilation, and transmission of the Sunnah. In subsequent generations, the muhaddithūn

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(traditionists), jurists, and leading Muslim scholars rendered unparalleled scholarly services in the fields of ḥadīth transmission (riwāyah), critical evaluation (dirāyah), al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl (narrator criticism), asmāʾ al-rijāl (biographical evaluation of transmitters), and other related disciplines. Their monumental contributions played a decisive role in safeguarding the Prophetic tradition from fabrication, distortion, and other forms of corruption.

In contrast, Orientalist scholars subjected the primary sources of Islamic law to sustained criticism, raising a variety of objections concerning their authenticity and historical development. Just as they questioned the history, compilation, and preservation of the Qur'an, they also directed extensive criticism toward the Prophetic traditions. One of their principal methodological approaches was to cast doubt upon the integrity and reliability of those eminent Companions and Successors through whom a substantial portion of the ḥadīth corpus was transmitted. By challenging the credibility of these key transmitters, they sought to undermine the authority and authenticity of the traditions narrated through them. Among the Orientalists who critically examined the science of ḥadīth, Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) occupies a particularly prominent position. This Hungarian Jewish scholar is widely regarded as one of the most influential Orientalist authorities on ḥadīth studies, just as Theodor Nöldeke is considered a leading figure in Qur'ānic studies. In his celebrated work Muhammedanische Studien (published in English as Muslim Studies), Goldziher advanced his theory of the fabrication of ḥadīth, arguing that numerous Companions and leading Successors fabricated traditions to serve political, legal, or personal interests. Among the figures whom he accused was Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH/742 CE), whom he alleged to have fabricated certain Prophetic traditions.

The primary objective of this study is to present a critical and scholarly evaluation of Goldziher's allegations against Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī. Al-Zuhrī was one of the foremost pioneers of the systematic compilation of ḥadīth during the early second century AH. He was universally recognized as an outstanding traditionist, an eminent jurist, a highly trustworthy transmitter, and a scholar renowned for his meticulous adherence to the principles of isnād (chain of transmission). His contributions to the preservation, compilation, and dissemination of the Prophetic Sunnah are universally acknowledged in the Islamic scholarly tradition. It appears that precisely because of these exceptional scholarly contributions, Orientalist writers devoted particular attention to questioning both his personal integrity and the authenticity of the traditions transmitted through him. Undermining the credibility of al-Zuhrī would inevitably make it easier to cast doubt upon a substantial portion of the Prophetic traditions preserved through his narrations.

Accordingly, this paper begins with a brief biographical introduction to Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī, followed by an examination of his scholarly standing, reliability, integrity, trustworthiness, and academic stature in the light of the evaluations of the leading authorities of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl and other eminent ḥadīth scholars. This discussion aims to present a clear and balanced picture of his scholarly personality. The study then proceeds to examine Goldziher's principal allegations by referring directly to the original Arabic sources, critically analyzing them through established historical and ḥadīth methodologies, and assessing their validity in light of the available evidence.

## 2. Introduction to Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH)

Imām Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Shihāb ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah al-Qurashī al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH) was

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one of the most distinguished Successors (Tābiʿūn), an eminent ḥadīth scholar, and among the earliest compilers of Prophetic traditions. He belonged to the noble Banū Zuhrah clan of Quraysh, the same maternal lineage as the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). His genealogy converges with that of the Prophet at Kilāb ibn Murrah.[i] Although various reports place his birth between 51 AH and 58 AH, the majority of biographical authorities maintain that he was born in 51 AH.[ii]

Imām al-Zuhrī was renowned for his exceptional intelligence, extraordinary memory, and profound scholarly aptitude. He began his education by memorizing the Qurʾān, which he completed at an early age. Thereafter, he acquired expertise in genealogy (ansāb), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), and other religious sciences. However, his primary focus remained the science of ḥadīth, in which he attained unparalleled mastery and emerged as one of the foremost traditionists of his era. In pursuit of knowledge, he travelled extensively throughout the Ḥijāz, Syria (al-Shām), and other prominent centres of learning, studying under leading scholars and transmitting both the narration and understanding of Prophetic traditions. His command of ḥadīth was so comprehensive that scholars remarked there was scarcely any well-known tradition circulating between the Ḥijāz and Syria with which Imām al-Zuhrī was unfamiliar.[iii]

The magnitude of his scholarly reputation is further reflected in the fact that, during his residence in Madīnah, even senior scholars refrained from holding public ḥadīth sessions. Imām Mālik relates that he witnessed elderly traditionists, some seventy or eighty years of age, whose study circles remained unattended until Imām al-Zuhrī departed from Madīnah, as the students of ḥadīth overwhelmingly preferred to attend his gatherings despite his comparatively younger age.[iv] This vividly demonstrates his remarkable academic authority and widespread recognition among both scholars and students.

When the Rightly Guided Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz initiated the first official state-sponsored project for the compilation of the Prophetic Sunnah, Imām al-Zuhrī became one of its principal architects. Through his diligence, integrity, and scholarly insight, he played a foundational role in collecting, organizing, and preserving the Prophetic traditions. Consequently, he occupies a distinguished place in Islamic intellectual history as one of the earliest compilers of ḥadīth.[v]

Imām al-Zuhrī had the privilege of meeting approximately twenty Companions of the Prophet (Ṣaḥābah) and narrating directly from them. He also studied extensively under leading Successors (Tābiʿūn). Among his most prominent teachers were Anas ibn Mālik, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, Abān ibn ʿUthmān, Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib, Sālim ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, Sulaymān ibn Yasār, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Khārijah ibn Zayd ibn Thābit, ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtbah ibn Masʿūd, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and numerous other eminent scholars.[vi]

Likewise, he taught a large number of distinguished students who transmitted his vast scholarly legacy to subsequent generations. Among them were Imām Mālik ibn Anas, Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah, al-Awzāʿī, al-Layth ibn Saʿd, Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, Qatādah ibn Diʿāmah, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār, Ṣāliḥ ibn Kaysān, Shuʿayb ibn Abī Ḥamzah, Yūnus ibn Yazīd, ʿUqayl ibn Khālid, ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, Isḥāq ibn Yaḥyā, Muʿāwiyah ibn Yaḥyā, Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Makkī, and many

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other celebrated traditionists who carried forward the Prophetic heritage to later generations.[vii]

Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī devoted his entire life to the service of the Prophetic Sunnah through teaching, transmission, compilation, preservation, and dissemination of ḥadīth. He passed away on the 17th of Ramaḍān in 124 AH.[viii] Nevertheless, his invaluable scholarly contributions and his pioneering role in safeguarding the Prophetic tradition continue to be regarded as one of the greatest achievements in the intellectual history of Islam.

**3. The Views of the Hadith Scholars Regarding Imam al-Zuhrī's Scholarly Excellence**

The scholarly eminence, vast knowledge, exceptional memory, and distinguished status of Imam Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH) in the field of Prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) have been unanimously acknowledged by the leading Imams and hadith scholars of the Muslim Ummah. His expertise in ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), genealogy (ansāb), and history was so widely recognized that both early and later scholars regarded him as the foremost authority and an authoritative proof (ḥujjah) of his age. Although the statements of scholars and hadith experts concerning his scholarly stature are too numerous to be comprehensively presented—and could, in fact, constitute an independent volume—a few representative testimonies are cited below to illustrate the remarkable academic standing of Imam al-Zuhrī.

The eminent traditionist Imam Makhūl (d. 118 AH) said concerning Imam al-Zuhrī:

"ما بقي أحد أعلم بسنةٍ ماضيةٍ من ابن شهاب الزهري."[ix]

*"No one remains who possesses greater knowledge of the established Sunnah than Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī."*

This concise yet comprehensive statement reflects the conviction of Imam Makhūl, himself a leading traditionist, that Imam al-Zuhrī was the greatest authority on the Prophetic Sunnah in his time.

Likewise, Imam al-Layth ibn Saʿd (d. 175 AH), one of the foremost jurists and hadith scholars of his era, praised Imam al-Zuhrī's remarkable intellectual versatility in the following words:

"ما رأيت عالماً قط أجمع من ابن شهاب، ولا أكثر علماً منه، ولو سمعت ابن شهاب يحدث في الترغيب لقلت: لا يحسن إلا هذا، وإن حدث عن الأنبياء وأهل الكتاب لقلت: لا يحسن إلا هذا، وإن حدث عن العرب والأنساب لقلت: لا يحسن إلا هذا، وإن حدث عن القرآن والسنة كان حديثه أروع جامع."[x]

*"I have never seen a scholar more comprehensive in knowledge or more learned than Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. If you heard him speaking on exhortation and admonition, you would think that no one excelled him in that discipline. If he spoke about the Prophets and the People of the Book, you would assume that this was his exclusive field of expertise. If he discussed Arab history and genealogy, you would regard him as the foremost authority in that subject. And when he spoke about the Qur'an and the Sunnah, his discourse was exceptionally comprehensive, profound, and eloquent."*

This testimony demonstrates that Imam al-Zuhrī was not merely an outstanding authority in ḥadīth but also possessed extraordinary mastery over a wide range of Islamic sciences.

Similarly, Imam Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198 AH) stated:

"ما بقي عند أحد من العلم ما بقي عند ابن شهاب."[xi]

*"No one possessed the vast body of knowledge that remained with Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī."*

This statement highlights the unparalleled breadth and richness of Imam al-Zuhrī's scholarly legacy.

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The distinguished authority in al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī (d. 233 AH), remarked:

"كان هؤلاء الستة ممن اعتمد عليهم الناس في الحديث: الزهري لأهل المدينة، وعمرو بن دينار لأهل مكة، وأبو إسحاق والأعمش لأهل الكوفة، ويحيى بن أبي كثير وقتادة لأهل البصرة."[xii]

*"These six scholars were those upon whom people relied for the transmission of ḥadīth: al-Zuhrī for the people of Madinah, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār for the people of Makkah, Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī and al-Aʿmash for the people of Kūfah, and Yaḥyā ibn Abī Kathīr and Qatādah for the people of Baṣrah."*

This testimony clearly indicates that Imam al-Zuhrī was regarded as the principal and most reliable authority on ḥadīth among the scholars of Madinah.

Likewise, Imam Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH) paid tribute to Imam al-Zuhrī's invaluable services to the preservation of the Prophetic tradition by stating:

"لولا الزهري ذهبت السنن من المدينة."[xiii]

*"Had it not been for al-Zuhrī, the Sunnah would have disappeared from Madinah."*

This profound statement underscores Imam al-Zuhrī's pivotal role in preserving, compiling, and transmitting the Prophetic Sunnah to subsequent generations. It reflects the consensus among the leading scholars of ḥadīth that he was one of the foremost guardians and most trustworthy transmitters of the Prophetic tradition.

The foregoing testimonies unequivocally establish that Imam al-Zuhrī was universally recognized as an authoritative Imam, a highly reliable traditionist (thiqah), an accomplished jurist, and one of the greatest preservers of the Prophetic Sunnah in the early Islamic period. Consequently, the allegation that he fabricated ḥadīths is not only contradicted by the unanimous testimony of the classical scholars but is also fundamentally inconsistent with the established principles of ḥadīth criticism and the verified historical record.

**4. The Opinions of the Scholars of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl Regarding the Reliability and Integrity of Imām al-Zuhrī**

The reliability (thiqah), integrity (ʿadālah), exceptional memory (ḥifẓ), precision (itqān), and undisputed authority of Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī in the transmission of ḥadīth are unanimously acknowledged by the scholars of ḥadīth and the authorities of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl. Numerous eminent scholars have explicitly testified to his scholarly integrity, meticulousness in narration, and extraordinary powers of memory and precision. If all of these statements were compiled, they would constitute an independent volume. Therefore, only a few representative statements are presented here to illustrate Imām al-Zuhrī's scholarly reliability and his distinguished position in the science of ḥadīth.

Al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ibn Saʿd writes concerning Imām al-Zuhrī:

"كان الزهري ثقة كثير الحديث والعلم والرواية، فقيهاً جامعاً."[xiv]

*"Al-Zuhrī was a highly trustworthy narrator, prolific in the transmission of ḥadīth, distinguished in knowledge and narration, and an exceptionally comprehensive jurist."*

This statement clearly demonstrates that Ibn Saʿd not only explicitly affirmed the reliability of Imām al-Zuhrī but also described him as a prolific transmitter of ḥadīth, a scholar of vast learning, and a jurist of the highest rank.

Imām al-Nasāʾī (d. 303 AH), who is recognized as one of the most rigorous critics in the science of ḥadīth, stated that there are four chains of transmission reaching the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that are regarded as the finest and strongest, and that two of these chains are transmitted

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through Imām Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. He states:

"قال النسائي: أحسن أسانيد تُروى عن رسول الله ﷺ أربعة: منها الزهري، عن علي بن الحسين، عن الحسين بن علي، عن علي بن أبي طالب، عن رسول الله ﷺ، والزهري عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة بن مسعود، عن ابن عباس، عن عمر، عن النبي ﷺ..."[xv]

This statement constitutes clear evidence that, according to Imām al-Nasāʾī, Imām al-Zuhrī was among those narrators through whom some of the most authentic and strongest chains of ḥadīth transmission were conveyed. Had there been even the slightest doubt regarding his reliability or integrity, al-Nasāʾī would never have accorded his chains of transmission such an eminent status.

Muḥammad ibn Sahl ibn ʿAskar narrates from Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH):

"سمعت أحمد بن حنبل يقول: الزهري أحسن الناس حديثاً، وأجود الناس إسناداً."[xvi]

*"I heard Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal saying: Al-Zuhrī was the best of people in terms of ḥadīth, and his chains of transmission were the finest among all."*

The statement of Imām Aḥmad indicates that Imām al-Zuhrī was not only distinguished in the narration of ḥadīth but that his chains of transmission also possessed the highest standards of authenticity, continuity, and reliability.

Imām Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH), who is regarded as one of the greatest authorities in the fields of biographical evaluation (ʿilm al-rijāl) and the history of ḥadīth, introduces Imām al-Zuhrī with these words:

"محمد بن مسلم الحافظ الحجة."[xvii]

*"Muḥammad ibn Muslim was a master of ḥadīth memorization and an authoritative proof (ḥujjah)."*

In the terminology of the scholars of ḥadīth, the titles "Ḥāfiẓ" and "Ḥujjah" are only given to those scholars whose strength of memory, precision in narration, and reliability are firmly established. The expression used by Imām al-Dhahabī is therefore a powerful testimony to the elevated scholarly status of Imām al-Zuhrī.

These statements make it abundantly clear that the scholars of ḥadīth and the authorities of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl had complete confidence in the reliability, integrity, memory, precision, and trustworthiness of Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī. His status was never a matter of serious disagreement; rather, he is counted among those few eminent scholars whose integrity and reliability were practically accepted by the Muslim community.

This is why his narrations have been accepted with great confidence in all major sources of ḥadīth, including the Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah (the Six Authentic Books of Ḥadīth).

Therefore, the allegation that Imām al-Zuhrī fabricated ḥadīths is not only contrary to the unanimous testimonies of the scholars of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, but it also directly contradicts the established principles of the science of ḥadīth, historical evidence, and the collective position of the scholars of ḥadīth.

**5.1 Goldziher's First Objection: The Umayyad Caliphs Forced Imām al-Zuhrī to Fabricate Ḥadīths**

Goldziher claims that Imām Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī had close relations with the Umayyad royal family. According to him, due to these connections, Imām al-Zuhrī would occasionally fabricate ḥadīths in order to safeguard the political and governmental interests of the Umayyad rulers. Goldziher further claims that Imām al-Zuhrī himself acknowledged this reality by stating: "These rulers compelled us to write ḥadīths."

Goldziher argues that Imām al-Zuhrī was willing to use his scholarly prestige and

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reliability to fulfill the desires of the government because he was not among those scholars who maintained complete detachment from rulers. Rather, according to Goldziher, his inclination was towards reconciliation and cooperation with the ruling authorities.

He writes:

*The Ma'mar just mentioned preserved a characteristic saying by al-Zuhri: "these emirs forced people to write hadiths" (akrahana alayhi ha'ula I l-umara). This account can only be understood on the assumption of al-Zuhri's willingness to lend his name, which was in general esteemed by the Muslim community, to the government's whishes. Al-Zuhri did not belong to the circle of the irreconcilable but to those who thought a modus vivendi with the government was desirable.*[xviii]

**5.2 A Critical Analysis of Goldziher's Objection**

Goldziher's primary objection against Imām Muḥammad ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī is that, since he had close relations with the Umayyad caliphs, he would sometimes fabricate ḥadīths under the pressure of the rulers or to gain their favor. According to Goldziher, these fabricated reports served as a means of protecting the political interests of the ruling authorities.

In order to examine the reality of this claim, it is first necessary to investigate the nature of the relationship between Imām al-Zuhrī and the Umayyad caliphs, and to determine whether these relations were truly of such a nature that a distinguished scholar of ḥadīth could compromise his scholarly integrity and religious trustworthiness and dare to fabricate ḥadīths for the benefit of rulers.

**5.3 The Relationship Between Imām al-Zuhrī and the Umayyad Caliphs**

It is a historical fact that, in every era, many eminent scholars maintained relationships with rulers and caliphs. For example, Imām Abū Yūsuf had a relationship with the Abbasid caliphs, yet this closeness has never been considered evidence against his integrity, uprightness, or scholarly trustworthiness. Similarly, Imām al-Zuhrī's relationship with some of the Umayyad caliphs was merely an academic and educational relationship, not an expression of political allegiance or courtly flattery. Therefore, this relationship cannot in any way undermine his reliability, honesty, and piety.

Imām al-Zuhrī was neither desirous of wealth and riches nor a seeker of fame and positions. Historians have explicitly mentioned his asceticism and independence. In fact, even Goldziher acknowledges the reality that he was not motivated by financial benefits. Moreover, he was one of the most distinguished scholars of ḥadīth of his time and a great authority whose scholarly reputation was recognized throughout the Islamic world. Therefore, he had no need for the patronage of rulers to establish or strengthen his position. His connection with the caliphal court was solely for the purpose of providing religious guidance to the caliphs, educating their children, and teaching Prophetic ḥadīth in scholarly gatherings.

Despite this, Imām al-Zuhrī never abandoned the principle of speaking the truth. He could neither utter false statements nor conceal the truth out of fear of the rulers' displeasure. As the scholars of ḥadīth and the authorities of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl have declared him a trustworthy (thiqah), a master of ḥadīth memorization (ḥāfiẓ), honest, and highly reliable narrator, his practical life also reflects this very reality. For instance, on one occasion, al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik asked him about a statement widely circulated in Syria which people considered a ḥadīth. The statement claimed: "Allah only records the good deeds of rulers and does not record their mistakes." Imām al-Zuhrī immediately declared that this statement was completely false and fabricated, and he also presented strong arguments proving its falsehood. After listening to his

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response, al-Walīd acknowledged: "These people have misled us."[xix]

Similarly, on another occasion, Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik asked him about a person mentioned in the Qur'an whose name is not explicitly stated. Imām al-Zuhrī replied that the person referred to was ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl. This answer was contrary to Hishām's preference, so he said: "You are lying; rather, it refers to ʿAlī ." Upon this, Imām al-Zuhrī became extremely angry and responded in clear words: *"By Allah! Even if a voice from the heavens were to announce that Allah has permitted lying, I would still never tell a lie."*[xx]

This incident provides clear evidence that Imām al-Zuhrī was never willing to distort facts or speak falsely for the sake of pleasing rulers.

The extent of Imām al-Zuhrī's commitment to truthfulness was such that he openly criticized the immoral conduct of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd and advised Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik to remove him from the position of heir apparent. Al-Walīd even used to swear that if he ever gained power, he would kill Imām al-Zuhrī. Imām al-Zuhrī himself was aware of this danger, to the extent that if al-Walīd became caliph, he intended to migrate to the Byzantine Empire.[xxi] Even while teaching ḥadīth to members of the royal family, he never compromised his scholarly integrity nor granted them any special treatment.

In light of these historical evidences, the claim that Imām al-Zuhrī fabricated ḥadīths for the political objectives of the Umayyads merely because of his relationship with them is contrary to historical facts and scholarly integrity. The reality is that Imām al-Zuhrī's character was that of a scholar and traditionist who remained committed to truthfulness, honesty, and trustworthiness under all circumstances, even when this exposed him to the displeasure of rulers or threats to his own life. Therefore, Goldziher's objection is neither supported by historical evidence nor confirmed by the unanimous statements of the scholars of ḥadīth or by the practical life of Imām al-Zuhrī.

**5.4 A Research Review of Imam al-Zuhri's Statement**

While quoting the statement of Imam al-Zuhri, Goldziher not only abandoned scholarly integrity but also completely ignored its original context and background. He neither presented the complete details of the incident nor clarified the circumstances in which the statement was made. Moreover, he went further and derived a meaning from it that has no connection whatsoever with the original text. In reality, concluding from Imam al-Zuhri's words that he used to fabricate ḥadīths for rulers is merely a self-created interpretation of Goldziher, which has no historical or academic basis.

The fact is that Imam al-Zuhri, following the methodology of his teachers, initially did not allow his students to write down ḥadīths. Rather, he encouraged them to memorize the traditions and rely upon their memory. Later, when Caliph Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik summoned him to the royal court for the education and training of his sons, he was compelled to write down ḥadīths for them. After completing this task, Imam al-Zuhri went to the mosque, leaned against one of its pillars, gathered all his students, and said: "Previously, I used to prevent you from doing this thing, but today I had to do the same thing for the Amir-ul-Mumeneen. Therefore, now you should also write down the ḥadīths."

This incident is mentioned in Tārīkh Ibn ʿAsākir with the following wording:

كان الزهري لا يترك أحدًا يكتب بين يديه، فأكرهه هشام بن عبد الملك، فأملى على بنيه، فلما خرج من عنده دخل المسجد، فأسند إلى عمود من عمده، ثم نادى: يا طلبة الحديث، فلما اجتمعوا إليه قال: إني كنت منعتكم أمرًا بذلته لأمير المؤمنين آنفًا، هلم

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فاكتبوا، فكتب عنه الناس من يومئذ.[xxii]

*"Al-Zuhri did not allow anyone to write in his presence. Then Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik compelled him, so he dictated ḥadīths to his sons. When he left him, he entered the mosque, leaned against one of its pillars, and called out: 'O students of ḥadīth!' When they gathered around him, he said: 'I had prevented you from something that I have just granted to the Amir-ul-Mumeneen. Come and write.' From that day onward, people began writing from him."*

Similarly, a narration from Imam al-Zuhri's student Maʿmar states that Imam al-Zuhri used to say:

*"We used to dislike writing down ḥadīths until the rulers compelled us to do so. Then we considered it appropriate that since we had provided this facility to them, we should not deprive anyone among the Muslims of it."*[xxiii]

This narration makes the reality clear like daylight: Imam al-Zuhri's intention was never that rulers forced him to fabricate ḥadīths. Rather, his meaning was simply that the rulers compelled him to write down ḥadīths, although before that he did not prefer the practice of writing traditions. Therefore, this report neither proves that rulers ordered the fabrication of ḥadīths nor that Imam al-Zuhri invented traditions according to their wishes. On the contrary, this incident demonstrates Imam al-Zuhri's high level of honesty, trustworthiness, and justice, because the scholarly facility that he provided to the sons of the caliph, he later extended to ordinary Muslims as well.

This reality is further supported by a narration from Imam al-Zuhri's student Abū al-Malīḥ. He states:

*"We did not have the courage to write ḥadīths in the gathering of Imam al-Zuhri until Hishām made him do so. Then he wrote ḥadīths for the sons of Hishām, and afterwards ordinary people also began writing ḥadīths."*[xxiv]

All these historical evidences clearly demonstrate that the conclusion drawn by Goldziher from Imam al-Zuhri's statement is neither consistent with the text, nor with its context, nor with historical facts. The reality is that Imam al-Zuhri's statement relates to the writing of ḥadīths (kitābat al-ḥadīth), not to the fabrication of ḥadīths (waḍʿ al-ḥadīth).

Therefore, Goldziher's allegation is not based on academic research but rather on an unfounded assumption and an incorrect interpretation. Instead of proving any criticism against Imam al-Zuhri, this incident further highlights his scholarly integrity, sense of justice, and honesty. He ensured that the intellectual benefit which was initially provided to the sons of the caliph was not restricted to a privileged class but was made available to the wider Muslim community, so that the knowledge of ḥadīth would not remain confined to a particular group.

**6.1 Goldziher's Second Objection: The Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān's Alleged Attempt to Encourage People to Perform Pilgrimage to Jerusalem Instead of Makkah and His Attribution of Fabricating Ḥadīths to Imam al-Zuhrī**

Goldziher claims that during the period of the revolt of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān prevented the people of Syria from travelling to Makkah for pilgrimage. According to him, ʿAbd al-Malik feared that if the Syrians went to Makkah, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr might obtain their allegiance for his own caliphate, because at that time Makkah and Madinah were under the control of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, who was an opponent of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān.

According to Goldziher, for this reason ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān constructed the Dome

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of the Rock (Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah) in Jerusalem so that people would come there for pilgrimage and perform circumambulation around it instead of the Kaʿbah. Furthermore, he claims that in order to attract people towards the Dome of the Rock on the basis of religious devotion, he persuaded Imam al-Zuhrī—one of the great scholars and renowned transmitters of ḥadīth in the Muslim community—to fabricate ḥadīths. Thus, according to Goldziher, Imam al-Zuhrī fabricated the following ḥadīth: "Do not make pilgrimages except to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām), my mosque (al-Masjid al-Nabawī), and the Far Mosque (al-Masjid al-Aqṣā)."

Goldziher writes:

*When the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival Abd Allah b. Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious hajj to the Qubbat al-Sakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation (tawaf) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Ka'ba ordained in Islamic Law. The pious theologian al-Zuhri was given the task of justifying this politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying traced back to the Prophet, according to which there are three mosques to which people may make pilgrimages: those in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. This hadith shows its sharp tendentiousness in an addition which, apparently, belonged to its original form but was later neglected by levelling orthodoxy in this and related sayings: "and a prayer in the Bayt al-Maqdis of Jerusalem is better than a thousand prayers in other holy places," i.e. even Mecca or Medina.*[xxv]

The claim made by Goldziher that ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān constructed the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah) as an alternative to the Kaʿbah for pilgrimage and circumambulation, and that he used Imam al-Zuhrī to fabricate a ḥadīth in its support, is in fact based on his argument from Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī.

It is mentioned in Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī:

ومنع عبدالملک اهل الشام من الحج وذالک ان ابن الزبیر کان یاخذهم اذا حجوا بالبیعۃ فلما رای عبدالملک ذالک منعهم من الخروج الیٰ مکۃ فضج الناس وقالو: تمنعنا من حج بیت الله الحرام؟ وهو فرض من الله علینا فقال لهم: هذا ابن شهاب الزہری یحدثکم ان رسول اللهﷺ قال: لا تشد الرحال الا الیٰ ثلاثۃ مساجد: المسجد الحرام، ومسجد ومسجد بیت المقدس وهو یقوم لکم مقام المسجد الحرام وهذه الصخرۃ التی یروی ان رسول اللهﷺ وضع قدمہ علیها لما صعد الیٰ السماء تقوم لکم مقام الکعبۃ، فبنی علی الصخرۃ قبۃ وعلق علیها ستور الدیباج واقام لها سدنۃ واخذ الناس بان یطوفوا حولها کما یطوفون حول الکعبۃ واقام بذالک ایام بنی امیۃ[xxvi]

*"ʿAbd al-Malik prevented the people of Syria from performing pilgrimage. This was because Ibn al-Zubayr used to take allegiance from them whenever they came for pilgrimage. When ʿAbd al-Malik saw this situation, he prevented them from travelling to Makkah. The people protested and said: 'Are you preventing us from performing the pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah, which Allah has made obligatory upon us?' He replied: 'Here is Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī narrating to you that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Travelling (for the purpose of worship) should not be undertaken except to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque, my mosque (the Mosque of the Prophet), and the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)." Therefore, Bayt al-Maqdis will serve as a substitute for the Sacred Mosque for you. And this rock (al-Ṣakhrah), regarding which it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed his foot upon it when he ascended to the heavens during the Miʿrāj, will serve as a substitute for the Kaʿbah for you.' Then ʿAbd al-Malik built a dome over the rock, hung silk curtains around it, appointed attendants for it, and instructed*

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*people to circumambulate around it just as they circumambulate around the Kaʿbah. This practice continued throughout the period of the Umayyad dynasty."*

This passage from Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī is the basis upon which Goldziher constructed his argument that ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān attempted to replace the Kaʿbah with the Dome of the Rock and that Imam al-Zuhrī was involved in fabricating a ḥadīth to support this political objective.

**6.2 A Critical Review of Goldziher's Objection**

Goldziher, citing Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, has claimed that Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan commissioned the construction of the Dome of the Rock as a substitute for the Kaaba, with the intention of diverting people from Mecca to Jerusalem for pilgrimage (Hajj) and circumambulation (Tawaf). Goldziher's claim rests on a narration found in Tarikh al-Ya'qubi. Therefore, a scholarly evaluation of this objection requires, first, an assessment of the authenticity of this narration, and second, an examination of the actual motivations behind the construction of the Dome of the Rock within their historical context. This will help clarify the extent to which Goldziher's reasoning aligns with historical facts.

First and foremost, it is noteworthy that the author of Tarikh al-Ya'qubi belonged to the Shia tradition, and many scholars have regarded him as careless in transmitting historical narratives. His intense animosity toward the Umayyads is also well known, on account of which he leveled numerous accusations against them—and the incident under discussion is one of them. Furthermore, if this event as mentioned in Tarikh al-Ya'qubi is read in its full context, it contains internal contradictory statements that point to the weakness and invalidity of this narration. However, for fear of length, we do not detail these internal inconsistencies here; interested readers may consult Tarikh al-Ya'qubi themselves.

**6.3 The Purpose Behind the Construction of the Dome of the Rock**

The true motivation behind the construction of the Dome of the Rock must be sought in the historical circumstances of that period. Syria had long been under Christian rule, where magnificent and awe-inspiring churches abounded. Seeing these grand edifices, the Umayyad caliphs too developed a desire to erect monumental and splendid buildings for the Muslims that would represent the greatness of Islamic civilization. Accordingly, the Umayyad caliphs, over various periods, constructed numerous splendid mosques, palaces, and other structures in Syria. Walid ibn Abd al-Malik built the Great Mosque of Damascus in 91 AH, which is now known as the Umayyad Mosque. Likewise, Qasr Hisham, also known as Khirbat al-Mafjar, was a magnificent royal palace built by the Umayyad caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik. Furthermore, Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik built the Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo in 96 AH. In addition to these, the Umayyad caliphs constructed countless other mosques, palaces, and buildings, which are considered masterpieces of Islamic architecture.

The construction of the Dome of the Rock is a prominent link in this very chain, commissioned by Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. The Dome of the Rock is essentially a grand dome erected over a rock. According to traditions, this is the very rock from which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) ascended to the heavens on the night of the Isra and Mi'raj, riding the Buraq. During the caliphate of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), when Jerusalem was conquered, he intended to clean this rock, which at the time was covered with a pile of refuse. At that moment, Allah sent down a torrential rain that washed the entire rock clean.[xxvii] This indicates that this site held sacred status for Muslims from the very beginning; therefore, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan erected a magnificent dome over it for its veneration and preservation.

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Al-Muqaddasi writes:

*"Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, seeing the grandeur and magnificence of the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Qumamah), felt a sense of rivalry lest the Muslims be awed by it, so he built this magnificent dome over the Rock."*[xxviii]

Had Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan's intention truly been to divert people from the Kaaba to circumambulate the Dome of the Rock or to turn toward Jerusalem for Hajj, this would have constituted an extremely grave and blatant distortion of Islam's fundamental acts of worship. In the face of such an extraordinary alteration, neither the general populace could have remained silent, nor could the eminent scholars, jurists, and traditionists (muhaddithun) of that era have stayed quiet. Moreover, the Abbasids—who were the fiercest political opponents of the Umayyads—would surely have made this accusation a part of their political and scholarly propaganda and transmitted it widely. Yet historical sources are completely devoid of any credible testimony of this sort. This historical silence makes it clear that Goldziher's claim is merely an unfounded conjecture, unsupported by authentic historical evidence.

**6.4 A Critical Examination of the Accusation Against Imam al-Zuhri of Fabricating Hadith**

Goldziher claims that Imam al-Zuhri fabricated hadiths in the interest of the Umayyad dynasty. As evidence for his claim, he cites a single hadith and asserts that Imam al-Zuhri forged it for ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. The exact wording of the hadith that Goldziher presents as proof is as follows:

«لَا تُشَدُّ الرِّحَالُ إِلَّا إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَسَاجِدَ: مَسْجِدِي هَذَا، وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ، وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى»[xxix]

*"Journeys should only be undertaken to three mosques: this mosque of mine (the Prophet's Mosque), the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām), and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā."*

Goldziher's claim is entirely baseless for the following reasons:

(1) Goldziher's first misconception is that he reads the meaning of "Ḥajj" (pilgrimage) into this hadith, even though the word "Ḥajj" is nowhere mentioned in the text. This addition is Goldziher's own interpolation, not part of the hadith. The early hadith scholars (muḥaddithūn) understood this hadith to refer to the virtue of praying in and visiting these three mosques, as is clearly stated in numerous other narrations.[xxx]

(2) Goldziher's assertion that ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān built the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Ṣakhra) as an alternative to the Kaʿbah so that people would perform ṭawāf (circumambulation) around it is also questionable. If Imam al-Zuhri had truly fabricated this hadith for that purpose, the hadith would have mentioned the Dome of the Rock, not al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. However, the hadith contains no mention of the Dome of the Rock or ṭawāf; it only mentions al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. Furthermore, the Dome of the Rock and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā are two separate structures — the Dome of the Rock is a domed shrine built over a rock, while al-Masjid al-Aqṣā is a distinct mosque located about five hundred meters away.

(3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā is not an insignificant place of worship such that its mention in the hadith should be considered unusual. It is the sacred mosque mentioned in the Qur'an itself and holds the status of the third holiest site in Islam. Numerous Companions, including ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, and Wāthilah ibn al-Asqaʿ (may Allah be pleased with them), would travel to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā to obtain the virtue of prayer there. Therefore, attributing the hadith that mentions its virtue to political motives is not supported by any solid evidence.

(4) Imam al-Zuhri narrated this hadith from his teacher, Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib. If Imam al-Zuhri had fabricated this narration himself, he would not have attributed it to a teacher who was a

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staunch opponent of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān and a supporter of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr. Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib was even imprisoned by ʿAbd al-Malik on account of his outspokenness for truth, yet despite this, he never refuted this hadith nor claimed that Imam al-Zuhri had falsely attributed it to him. Moreover, he lived for nearly two decades after the construction of the Dome of the Rock and passed away in 94 AH, yet throughout this entire period, no denial of this narration is reported from him.

(5) This hadith is not narrated exclusively by Imam al-Zuhri; rather, numerous eminent Successors (tābiʿūn) and their successors (tābiʿ al-tābiʿīn) have also narrated it through their own independent chains of transmission (asānīd). Listed below are several of these chains:

- · ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Qāsim ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Qatādah ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Ibrāhīm ibn Sahl ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Quṣaym ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Mujālid ← Abū al-Waddāk ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ← Shahr ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Layth ← Shahr ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr ← ʿIkrimah — mawlā of Ziyād — ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Abān ibn Thaʿlabah ← ʿAṭiyyah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · ʿAbd al-Malik ← ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ← Abū Baṣrah al-Ghifārī
- · Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb ← Murshid ibn ʿUbaydullāh ← Abū Baṣrah al-Ghifārī
- · Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ← Abū Salamah ← Abū Hurayrah
- · ʿImrān ibn Abī Anas ← Sulaymān ← Abū Hurayrah
- · ʿAmr ibn Dīnār ← ʿArfajah ← ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar
- · ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr ← Qazaʿah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Ṭalq ← Qazaʿah ← ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar
- · Layth ← Mus-hir ← Abū Saʿīd
- · Hishām ← Nāfiʿ ← ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar
- · Salamah ibn Kuhayl ← Ḥujayyah ibn ʿAdī ← ʿAlī
- · Abān ibn Thaʿlabah ← ʿAṭiyyah ← Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī
- · Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ← Abū Salamah ← Abū Hurayrah
- · Zayd ibn Sālim ← Saʿīd ibn Abī Saʿīd ← Abū Hurayrah
- · Yazīd ibn Abī Maryam ← Qazaʿah ← ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr

In addition to these, the hadith is also narrated through many other chains.[xxxi]

Thus, when this same hadith has been transmitted by numerous contemporaries of Imam al-Zuhri through their own independent chains, how can the entire accusation of fabrication be leveled solely against Imam al-Zuhri? If Goldziher's claim were accepted, would one also have to concede that all these contemporary hadith scholars of Imam al-Zuhri had likewise fabricated the hadith on their own?

From the above chains, any fair-minded reader can easily conclude that this hadith is not a fabrication by Imam al-Zuhri, but rather a prophetic hadith that many of his contemporaries, alongside him, narrated through their respective chains.

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(6) Historical evidence also does not support Goldziher's theory. In 67 AH, Palestine was not under ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān's control, and the Umayyads performed the Hajj in 68 AH. Therefore, even if one assumes that ʿAbd al-Malik prevented people from going to Makkah, this would have occurred after 68 AH and before the martyrdom of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr in 73 AH. Since construction of the Dome of the Rock began in 69 AH, according to Goldziher's hypothesis, Imam al-Zuhri would have been commissioned to fabricate this hadith around that time. However, during this period, Imam al-Zuhri's age was approximately between ten and eighteen years. It is inconceivable that a ten-year-old child or an eighteen-year-old youth — who had not yet gained any remarkable scholarly repute even in his home city Medina — could have possessed such immense scholarly authority in Syria that his single narration could serve as the basis for an alternative to the great obligation of Hajj.

(7) Furthermore, historical traditions indicate that Imam al-Zuhri's first meeting with ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān occurred in 82 AH — nearly nine years after the martyrdom of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr. Ibn ʿAsākir writes:

إِنَّمَا خَرَجَ إِلَى عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ سَنَةَ اثْنَتَيْنِ وَثَمَانِينَ[xxxii]

*"Indeed, he (Imam al-Zuhri) went to ʿAbd al-Malik (ibn Marwān) in the year 82 AH."*

When their first meeting is established as 82 AH, on what basis can it be claimed that Imam al-Zuhri fabricated this hadith between 69 AH and 73 AH at ʿAbd al-Malik's behest, so that people would perform Hajj to the Dome of the Rock instead of the Kaʿbah? In light of this historical fact, Goldziher's entire case collapses on its own.

**7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the allegations advanced by Ignaz Goldziher against Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī are devoid of scholarly merit and fail to withstand critical examination. Goldziher's thesis rests upon multiple fundamental errors: a misreading of the primary sources, a confusion between the written transcription of ḥadīth and their fabrication, an overreliance on a historically unreliable narration from Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī, and a complete disregard for the established principles of ḥadīth criticism and historical chronology. The hadith cited by Goldziher as evidence of fabrication—"Journeys should only be undertaken to three mosques"—is transmitted through numerous independent chains of narration by a wide array of al-Zuhrī's contemporaries, many of whom were politically opposed to the Umayyads. This multiplicity of transmission conclusively establishes its authenticity as a genuine Prophetic tradition. Furthermore, the historical timeline decisively refutes Goldziher's claim: al-Zuhrī's first meeting with ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān occurred in 82 AH, nearly a decade after the period in which the alleged fabrication supposedly took place, when al-Zuhrī was still a young man of limited scholarly renown.

The unanimous testimony of the leading authorities of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl—including Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Imām al-Nasāʾī, Imām al-Shāfiʿī, and Imām al-Dhahabī—affirms al-Zuhrī's reliability, exceptional memory, precision, and unimpeachable integrity. His role as one of the principal architects of the state-sponsored compilation of the Sunnah under Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz further attests to his scholarly stature and trustworthiness.

Goldziher's accusations, therefore, stem not from objective historical investigation but from a preconceived orientalist paradigm that seeks to undermine the authority of the Prophetic Sunnah by casting doubt upon its most distinguished transmitters. When subjected to rigorous scholarly scrutiny using authentic Islamic sources and established methodologies, his entire case collapses. Imām al-Zuhrī remains, as he has always been regarded throughout Islamic intellectual history, one of the foremost preservers of the Prophetic tradition—a scholar of unparalleled knowledge, unwavering integrity, and enduring legacy.

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