

THE PRAYER OF *JAWSHAN*

– A Study of Its Sources –

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Abstract

This essay attempts to question the authenticity of the so called *Jawsban* by analyzing the canonical sources of ḥadīth literature to determine whether it can be traced back to the Prophet of Islam. After subjecting the *Jawsban* to a careful analysis of chain (*sanad*) and text (*matn*), the essay concludes that there is neither a reliable source nor a valid set of academic criteria that would prove that the text concerned is attributable to the Prophet of Islam. The results of our source analysis, the literature survey, and certain other historical data lead us to believe that this prayer, *Jawsban*, may have first appeared within the “Shī‘ī world” in the prayer books by Ibrāhīm al-Kaf‘amī, and only later was introduced to the “Sunnī world” through *Majmū‘at al-aḥzāb*, the collection of prayers by al-Gumushkhānawī, and gained wide circulation among certain groups.

Key Words: *Jawsban* prayer, Shī‘a, al-Gumushkhānawī, *Majmū‘at al-aḥzāb*, Bediuzzaman

Introduction

The word *jawsban* means “chest,” “the front part of the chest,” “battle armor,” “the head of something” or “a part of something.”¹ The word is stated to enter Arabic from the Persian language. This word does not appear in the famous work by Ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam*, in which he identifies the root meaning for a number of words.

Many believe that the prayer of *jawsban* protects the person who reads it or carries it on his person, like a shield.² This prayer has two versions: *al-jawsban al-kabīr* (the great *jawsban*) and *al-jawsban al-ṣagbīr* (the lesser *jawsban*). Many people believe that the great *jawsban* prayer was sent to the Prophet Muḥammad by Allah via the Archangel Gabriel. According to the Shīʿa, the lesser *jawsban* is a prayer that was invoked by Abū l-Ḥasan Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), seventh of the twelve imāms.³

The importance and value given to the great *jawsban* certainly stem from its attribution to the Prophet himself.

¹ See Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿayn* (ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), I, 243 (*j-sb-n*); Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn ʿAlī Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (eds. Amīn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad al-Šādiq al-ʿUbaydī; Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999), II, 291 (*j-sb-n*); Abū l-Fayḍ Murtaḍā Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawābir al-Qāmūs* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Khayriyya, 1306 H.), IX, 161 (*j-sb-n*). There was a companion of the Prophet called Dhū l-jawsban. It is said that he was given this nickname because he was the first Arab to wear a *jawsban* or because he had a barrel-chest, or perhaps that the Kisra had given him a *jawsban* as a present. See Abū l-Faḍl Ibn Ḥajar Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba* (ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī; Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1972), II, 411.

² Bediuzzaman Saʿīd Nūrsī says that he “overcame the danger of a poison” that was extremely potent, and that “he had maybe overcome death twenty times with the merits” of this prayer; see *Emirdağ Lâbikası* (Istanbul: Nesil Matbaacılık, 2004), 186, 195.

³ See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār al-jāmiʿa li-durar akhbār al-aʿimma al-aṭbār* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1984); LXXVIII, 331; Mīrzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil wa-mustanbat al-masāʾil* (Qum: Muʿassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1987-1988), II, 234; cf. al-Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, *Mubajj al-daʿawāt* (Qum: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 1990), 220.

1. The Sources of the Prayer and Its *Sanad*

The lesser *jawshan* first appeared in written literature in *Mubaj al-da‘awāt* of al-Sayyid ‘Alī ibn Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī (d. 664/1265), a Shī‘ī author. According to a report narrated with a *sanad* (chain of narrators) that dates to al-Imām Mūsā ibn Ja‘far (d. 183/799), he learned that the ‘Abbāsī caliph of the time, Mūsā al-Hādī ibn Muḥammad al-Mahdī (d. 170/786), was planning to have the Imām killed. The Imām assembled his followers to discuss the situation. When his followers told him to go and hide, the Imām smiled and narrated the following story: After he completed his prayers in his usual prayer area, his eyes became heavy with sleep, and he saw the Prophet in his dream. He complained to the Prophet about the Caliph, told him what the Caliph had done to *ahl al-bayt* (people from the Prophet’s lineage) and also told the Prophet that he feared the Caliph. The Prophet told the Imām not to worry because Allah would protect him from the Caliph for Allah destroys his enemies. The Prophet ordered Mūsā ibn Ja‘far to show appropriate gratitude. After he told this story, Mūsā ibn Ja‘far turned towards the *qibla* and recited a long prayer. This prayer, which starts with “*Allāhumma, kam min ‘aduwwⁱⁿ intaḍā ‘alayya sayfⁱⁿ ‘adāwatibⁱⁿ* ... (O Lord, there are many enemies that have swords of enmity drawn out against me ... which I have eliminated with your help. For this ... I am thankful to you)” is known as “the *jawshan* prayer from the prayers of Mūsā ibn Ja‘far al-Kāzim.”⁴ After narrating the prayer, Abū Ṭālib ibn Rajab, the copyist of *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*, stated that he found the *jawshan* prayer and the story above as it preceded the prayer with a different narration in one of the books belonging to his grandfather, Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥasan (ibn ‘Alī) ibn Dāwūd (alive in the second half of the 7th/13th century),⁵ and added another story that refers to the Prophet as the source of the prayer. The story which the first part of its *sanad* is missing begins as follows:

⁴ Al-Ḥillī, *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*, 217-227. Muḥsin Mu‘īnī refers to this prayer as *jawshan-i ṣagħbīr* and says that Mūsā al-Kāzim narrated it from the Prophet himself; see his “Jawshan-i kabīr,” *Dānīshnāma-i Jibān-i Islām*, XI, 368.

⁵ This person is sometimes mentioned in connection to the grandfather, al-Ḥasan ibn Dāwūd.

It is narrated from our friend and teacher, Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (may Allah be pleased with him), he from his father Jaʿfar al-Şādiq, he from his father, he from his grandfather and he from his father, *amīr al-muʿminīn*, al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with them all), he (al-Ḥusayn) said: “My father, *amīr al-muʿminīn* (may Allah be pleased with him) said: ‘My child! Shall I teach you something from the secrets of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) taught this to me and it is a secret that no one knows.’ I said, ‘Yes, please teach me father.’ He said: ‘*Al-rūḥ al-amīn Jabrāʾīl* came to the Prophet (pbuh) on the day of Battle of Uḥūd. It was a terribly hot day. The Prophet was wearing armor (jawshan), which he had difficulty carrying due to the heat of the day and the heat of the armor. The Prophet (pbuh) said: ‘I turned my face to the heavens and prayed to Lord Almighty. I saw the doors of the heaven open. Jabrāʾīl, who was surrounded with light, came down next to me and said: Peace be unto you, O the Messenger of Allah! ... The Exalted sends his *salām* (greetings) to you. He tells you to take off your armor and read this prayer ...’

Following this statement, the virtue of the prayer was explained, but the prayer itself was not recorded.⁶ Thus, this prayer must be that of Mūsā al-Kāẓim, which came to be known as *al-jawshan al-ṣaghīr* afterwards, and whose first part was given above.⁷ However, the great *jawshan* is significantly not included in this book. When Ibrāhīm al-Kafʿamī (d. 905/1499) reported the prayer referenced above, calling it ‘the *jawshan* prayer narrated by Jaʿfar al-Şādiq,⁸ he also recorded the famous great *jawshan* prayer,⁹ under the title “the prayer of *al-jawshan al-kabīr* narrated from Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).” Al-Kafʿamī recorded the *sanad* of the great *jawshan* as a notation on the margin of his work *Junnat al-amān*, as follows:

⁶ See al-Ḥillī, *Mubajj al-daʿawāt*, 227-232; the discussion of the merits of this prayer will be given below, in the section concerned with al-Gumushkhānawī. Cf. al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, LXXVIII, 331-332; XCI, 397.

⁷ Al-Majlisī noted that this section, which was added by the copyist and which is concerned with the merits of the *jawshan* could have been for both prayers of *jawshan*, but that it seems the copyist confused them; *Bihār al-anwār*, XCI, 327.

⁸ Al-Kafʿamī, Taqī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī, *al-Balad al-amīn wa-l-dirʿ al-ḥaṣīn* (Tehran: Muʾassasa-i Taḥqīqāt wa-Nashr-i Maʿārif-i Ahl al-Bayt, 1963), 326.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 401; id., *al-Miṣbāḥ (Miṣbāḥ al-Kafʿamī)* (2nd ed., Qum: Intishārāt-i Raḍī, 1405), 336.

“From *al-Sajjād* (i.e., *Zayn al-‘ābidīn*), he from his father, he from his grandfather,¹⁰ and he from the Prophet (pbuh) himself.”¹¹

The *jawshan* prayer attributed to Ja‘far al-Šādiq has been referred to as the lesser *jawshan* from this point forward.¹²

The prayer of great *jawshan* first appeared in the Sunnī Muslim world in *Majmū‘at al-aḥzāb*, the compilation of prayers by Aḥmad Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Gumushkhānawī (d. 1311/1893). In this book, the text of the prayer is identified in the text as “the prayer of *al-jawshan al-kabīr* narrated by Zayn al-‘ābidīn (may Allah be pleased with him),” whereas the *sanad* and information related to its virtue are given on the margin of the page under the title “the *isnād* of the *jawshan* prayer.” This section could be translated as follows:

1. My father narrated from Umāma, he from Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Šādiq, he from his father, and he from his grandfather, al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib – *karrama llābu wajhab^a* – that he said: “Son! Shall I teach you a secret from the secrets of Lord Almighty, who is the only god and whose blessings are for everyone and whose glory is supreme? The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) taught this to me.” I replied, “Yes! Please do!” He continued: “The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: ‘Once I was walking towards Uḥud. It was a very hot day in addition

¹⁰ Al-Majlisī says this grandfather was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; see *Biḥār al-anwār*, XCI, 382.

¹¹ Al-Kaf‘amī, *Junnat al-amān al-wāqīya wa-jannat al-aymān al-bāqīya* (n.p., n.d.), 246 etc. In this narration, which mentions the merits and contains similar narrations to those found in al-Gumushkhānawī, which is mentioned below, the name of the battle is not stated and the phrase “in one of the battles” is used. We should note that *Junna* and *al-Miṣbāḥ* are the same books. The difference between them is the notes on the margins of the pages in *Junna*; cf. Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, LXXVIII, 331; XCI, 382; al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasā’il*, II, 232 etc.

¹² Mehmet Toprak says that ‘Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ṭāwūs refers to this prayer as *al-jawshan al-ṣagbīr* on the margin of a page of his *Muhaj al-da‘awāt*, and presumes that the distinction between *ṣagbīr* and *kabīr* started with Ibn Ṭāwūs (Mehmet Toprak, “Cevşen [Jawshan],” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)* [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam], VII, 464). But there is no such record in the mentioned work. Also, two *jawshan* prayers cannot be found in the aforementioned book. Furthermore, considering his bibliography, Mehmet Toprak does not seem to use this book.

to the heaviness¹³ of the armor (jawshan). I gazed at the sky and prayed to Allah Almighty. Whereupon I saw the gates of heaven open. Surrounded with light, Jibrīl came down next to me, and said: "The Exalted Lord Almighty has sent you his greetings and blessings and said, 'Take off this armor and read this prayer. When you read this and carry it on you, it will provide greater protection for you.'"

2. I said: "O Jibrīl, my brother, is this only for me or is it for my entire community?" He replied: "This prayer is a gift to you and to your community from Lord Almighty. Only He knows its reward. There is no servant of Allah who carries this prayer on him and reads it in the morning before he leaves his house or in the evening when he comes home, whom Allah will not direct to the best of deeds!

3. It is as if this person has read Tawrāt, Injīl, Zabūr and Furqān. For each letter, Lord Almighty will give him two houris, will build a home for him in Paradise, He will give him the *thawāb* (reward) in amount of the letters of Tawrāt, Injīl, Zabūr, Furqān, and the books of Abraham, Moses, as well as the same *thawāb* of Abraham the Loyal Friend, Moses the Interlocutor, Jesus the Spirit of God, and Muḥammad (pbuh) the Last Prophet. He will leave an *al-arḍ al-bayḍā'* (the white blessed land) in the West. Here, there are people who worship Allah Almighty and who do not rebel against Him. The flesh of their faces is torn from crying due to the fear of Allah's wrath. They do not eat or drink. Allah will give the *thawāb* of these pious servants to the person who reads this prayer.

4. There is a house that is called *al-bayt al-ma'mūr* in the fourth heaven. Everyday, seventy thousand angels enter and exit from here, and they will not return until the Day of Judgment. Lord Almighty will give the person who reads this prayer the same *thawāb* given to these angels.

5. For whoever reads this prayer at home, no thief will ever enter that place nor will fire burn it down. Allah will give health to the ill person if he writes this prayer down in a clean bowl, then washes it with the water of rain and saffron, and drink it on an empty stomach. If this

¹³ Here, the word *thiqal/thiqal* (heaviness) was written as *naql* due to an error in copying.

prayer is read in a night, Allah will turn towards that person with His kindness and give him whatever he wishes.”

6. Then, I said, “O brother Jibril, tell me more!” to which he replied: “I swear on Allah who has sent you as a prophet that I asked Archangel Isrāfil, and he said: ‘The Mighty and Exalted Allah has said that I swear on My glory, might, generosity, kindness and the highness of My place, whoever believes in Me, and O Muḥammad, whoever attests to your prophethood, will attest to this prayer. And I will provide that person with plenty of possessions. I am the One Who will not decrease His treasures by giving thus.

7. O Muḥammad, if one of my servants reads this prayer with good intentions and a sincere heart in front of everyone seventy times, he will find a cure from albinism, leprosy and lunacy. If he writes this prayer in a bowl with camphor and musk, then washes it and sprays it onto the shroud of a person who has just died, a hundred thousand lights will descend onto that person’s grave and Allah will remove the fear of the angels who will come to question him, thus relieving the person from the torments of the grave. Allah will send seventy thousand angels to the grave. Each angel will be carrying a cover made of light. They will spread these on the person and give him the good news of his entrance to Paradise.

8. I heard the Exalted and Mighty Creator say that: ‘This prayer was written on the wall of the highest heaven five thousand years before I created the world. Whichever of my servants makes an undoubting and sincere supplication to Me with this prayer at the beginning of Ramaḍān, or at the end, or each Friday night or day, Allah Almighty will show him the night of *al-qadr*.

9. Allah Almighty created the night of *al-qadr* while there were seventy thousand angels within, seventy thousand angels in each heaven, seventy thousand angels in Mecca, seventy thousand angels in Medina, seventy thousand angels in the East and seventy thousand angels in the West. Each angel has twenty thousand heads, each head has twenty thousand mouths and each mouth has twenty thousand tongues. These praise Allah in various languages and give the *thawāb* to the person who makes a supplication with the prayer.

10. There is no (longer) a curtain between Allah and the person who makes the prayer. Allah gives him everything he wants. Whoever

makes this prayer three times, even at once, Allah keeps his body away from the hellfire and makes his entrance to Paradise obligatory. Allah appoints for this person two angels who protect him from sins. They praise Allah for him, and save him from all ills, and open the doors of paradise for him.

11. This prayer is a treasure among treasures of Allah. It is known by a thousand and one names. Allah has made it a shelter and security for those who pray with it against all ills and calamities of this world. Also, Allah gives that person a share from the benefits and happiness of this world.”

12. The Prophet (pbuh) continued his speech and said: “O ‘Alī! Jibrīl has informed me the following about the merits of this prayer. ‘And Allah created the air. He also created an overflowing sea. He created the air above the sea. He created the angels that he made agents for each raindrop.

13. He made these angels agents for the raindrops. Now, neither a raindrop can overtake rain, nor can angels can overtake a raindrop. Both of these are different creatures.

14. The names of the angels that are the agents of the raindrops are: Mikā’īl, Sa’dā’īl, Damkhāyīl, Kafkā’īl and Zamzayīl. When the keeper of the raindrop and mercy – one of these angels – wishes to help the person who has made this prayer, comes down from the pulpit of glory, takes off his crown, prostrates before Allah, helps the person in all their deeds, protecting him against all ills and calamities, from in front and behind.

15. (Allah) has created a thousand angels on an angel. These are keepers of the gates of heavens. The names of the angels that are the keepers of the first heaven are Hawqīl and Hamqīl. The names of the angels that are the keepers of the second heaven are Kazqīl, Ka’īl, Kahīl, Dābiḥ, Sa’dīl, Baryīl, Samīl, Ma’īl, Bawsil, Ba’īl, Arqaṭaqīl, Aşrāfīl, Hāhīl, Awqīl, Baryānānīl and Isma’īl. Their highest is Karqīl.

Those who are the keepers of the third heaven are called Miqyā’īl, Suṭūnyāyīl, ‘Arāfīl and Ma’būsā’īl. The names of the keepers of the fourth heaven are Ḥarqīl, Qabāyīl, Ṭarqayāsīl and Aḥyāyāsīl. The names of the keepers of the fifth level are Ṭawṭīl, Ṭarfīl, Arqīl, Sāḥīl, Māsīl and Samhīl. The names of the keepers of the sixth heaven are

Bāsīl, Bāhīl, Farqīl, Raj‘īl and Farsīl. The names of the keepers of the seventh heaven are Isma‘īl, Awyāsīl, Alratbā‘īl and Aṣḥaṭriyā‘īl.

16. When each of these angels looks at the person who makes the prayer, they come down from their seat, prostrate to Allah Almighty, help the person in all their important deeds and all their needs. They help him to continue his prayer, maintain his health and fulfill his needs. They say: ‘O, the One Who opens doors! Open the doors of Your blessings to this servant of Yours, protect him with Your eye that never becomes weary, remove all problems, discomforts and illness from him. O, the Most Merciful of the merciful, remove all kinds of calamities that this person has faced in this world and in the hereafter. Save this person who carries this prayer on him from all calamities and from treacherous Satan. Bestow him with Your secret blessings; protect him with Your powerful protection. Because You are the most forgiving and most beneficent.’

17. The names of the angels that are mentioned in the *muḥkam* verses of the holy book: Allah has said: ‘And we are verily ranged in ranks (for service). And we are verily those who declare (Allah’s) glory.’¹⁴ They are twelve tribes. Each tribe has a billion soldiers, a million brigades, and each brigade has a thousand ranks of angels. When these angels look at the person who makes this prayer they come down from their seat of honor, take off their crowns, prostrate to their Lord and become intercessors for him. They say: ‘You are the light of the heaven and earth. We glorify You. You are the most powerful (*jabbār*) of the powerful, the ruler of the ruler. Protect the person who makes this prayer from all kinds of calamity, disaster and poverty. This is very easy for You. You are the owner of everything, the One Who ruins the rulers, feeds the babies with His mercy, O the most merciful of the merciful.’

18. The names of the angels that are the keepers of the curtain of sublimity are Sarāṭīl and Saqāṭīl. These are the chiefs of every angel. These have a chieftain and every chieftain has one million eight hundred ranks of angels; each one has a brigade, each brigade has seventy thousand wings and each wing has one million seven hundred thousand angels. These do not rebel against Allah, not even for a sec-

¹⁴ Q 37:165-166.

ond, and they do what they are ordered. These also yield when they look at the person who is making this prayer, take off their crowns and prostrate to their Lord. While prostrating they say: ‘O Lord, we glorify you and we praise you. All praise is unto you. There is no Lord but you, and you are *al-Ḥannān* (the most Merciful), *al-Mannān* (the Bestower), *Badī‘ al-samāwāt wa-l-arḍ* (the Creator of the heavens and the earth). O *Dhū l-jalāl wa-l-ikrām* (the Lord of majesty and bounty); protect your servant, protect him from all kinds of worry, sorrow and difficulty. Take him under Your protection with your mercy, O the most merciful! Treat him with Your kindness and beneficence, O the most beneficent!

19. This prayer has firm bases and there is much more to be said for it. It is the prayer that is known as *jawsban*.¹⁵

In the contemporary Sunnī Muslim world, the *jawsban* prayer is only well-known in Turkey.¹⁶ Bediuzzaman Sa‘īd Nūrsī (d. 1960) made this prayer famous¹⁷ in Turkey, particularly in his own circles.

¹⁵ Aḥmad Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Gumushkhānawī, *Majmū‘at al-aḥzāb* (n.p., n.d.), I, 231-240 (in the margins of the page; the numbers of paragraphs was put by us). There are omissions of the narrators in the suspended (*mu‘allaq*) chain of the report here; these probably occurred during copying. The report should be a *musnad ḥadīth* from ‘Alī, and ‘Alī Zayn al-‘ābidīn should be mentioned after al-Ḥusayn in the *sanad*. For similar but more detailed narrations, see al-Ḥillī, *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*, 227-232; al-Kaf‘amī, *Junnat al-amān*, 246-248 (in the margins); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XCI, 382-384, 397-402 (quoted from *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*).

¹⁶ It is seen that this prayer has begun to become popular in other Sunnī countries among whom are in contact with the members of the Risāla-i nūr community through the schools they opened there.

¹⁷ The following reports are mentioned alongside the sound recordings and written publications (books, articles, internet sites, etc.), which have almost become a trade sector in themselves, displaying the popularity of this prayer: “The sūra of Yāsīn, *jawsban* and other prayers were recited at the grave of Ahmet Feyzi Kul, a student of Bediuzzaman” (*Zaman* [a Turkish daily newspaper], 26.10.2007); “The Muftī of Reyhanlı, Ali Yazıcı, provided advice about reciting the Qur’ān and *jawsban*, making extra prayers on the night of *barā’a* (*Zaman*, 26.10.2007); “It is reported that the previous Istanbul envoy of the Vatican, George Marovich, who is staying in a room decorated by the Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı [The Journalists and Writers Foundation] at the Italian Poorhouse, can’t put *jawsban* down and he said that “I read a section from the *jawsban* every day and will continue to do so. I’m in love with *jawsban*.” (*Zaman Cumartesi*, 16.05.2009, 15; reported by Bün-

As stated by an author, “this unparalleled prayer, which comes immediately after the Qur’ān as it too is a revelation, was made known in this century by Bediuzzaman Sa‘īd Nürsî.”¹⁸ Bediuzzaman mentioned the importance of this prayer in many of his works,¹⁹ and he claimed that the prayer’s attribution to Prophet Muḥammad was sound and even *mutawātir*.²⁰ Although he staunchly believed that the prayer was valid and significant, he provided no information on its source. Bediuzzaman explained his personal history with the prayer:

The special tutor of the “new” Sa‘īd, al-Imām al-Rabbānī, al-Ghawth al-a‘ẓam, al-Imām al-Ghazzālī and Zayn al-‘ābidīn (may Allah be pleased with them), I studied especially the prayer of the great *jawshan* from these two imāms. During the thirty years of my spiritual lessons from al-Ḥusayn (may Allah be pleased with him) and ‘Alī – *karrama llāhu wajhab^u* –, particularly during my spiritual connection with them concerning the great *jawshan*, I learned the truth about the past and the spirit which has come to us from *Risāla-i Nūr*.²¹

The two imāms mentioned here are likely the same two mentioned at the end, al-Imām al-Ghazzālī and Zayn al-‘ābidīn. The name Zayn al-‘ābidīn appears in some of the suspended (*mu‘allaq*) chains of narration. We do not have any information that compellingly connects Zayn al-‘ābidīn with this prayer, although tradition holds that he

yamin Köseli). Also, two professors have shown great interest in the *jawshan*; this has led them to the publication of the following books: Davut Aydın, *Hizbu Envârî'l-Hakâiki'n-Nûriyye: Büyük Ceşen ve Meali* [*Hizb anwâr al-ḥaqâ'iq al-nûriyya: The Great Jawshan and Its Turkish Translation*] (Istanbul: Define Yayınları, 2010), 468 pp.; Abdülaziz Hatip, *Kur'an ve Hikmet Işığında Ceşen Şerhi* [*The Commentary of Jawshan in the Light of the Qur'ân and Hikma*] (Istanbul: Nesil Yayınları, 2009), 584 pp.

¹⁸ Ümit Şimşek, *Risâle-i Nûr Işığında Ceşen Meâli* [*The Translation of Jawshan in the Light of Risâla-i Nûr*] (Istanbul: Zafer Yayınları, 1994), XII.

¹⁹ See Bediuzzaman Sa‘īd Nürsî, *Şuâlar* [*The Rays*] (Istanbul: Çeltüt Matbaası, 1960), 87, 108, 525; id., *Sözler* [*The Words*] (Istanbul: Sinan Matbaası, 1958), 322, 445; id., *Mesnevî-i Nûriye (Türkçe Çeviri)* [*Mathnawî-i Nûriyya (Turkish Translation)*] (trans. Abdülmecid Nursi; Istanbul: Osman Yalçın Matbaası, 1958), 161.

²⁰ See Abdülkadir Badıllı, *Risale-i Nûr'un Kudsî Kaynakları* [*The Divine Sources of Risâla-i Nûr*] (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1992), 341.

²¹ Bediuzzaman Sa‘īd Nürsî, *Emirdağ Lâbikası*, 271.

read this prayer, and he even wrote a commentary on it.²² However, no sources confirm this report. Thus, Bediuzzaman's statement that he took lessons from "these two imāms" must be examined. In addition, we can reasonably assume that Bediuzzaman took this prayer from the work of al-Gumushkhānawī.²³

Thus, Bediuzzaman considered the narration about the merits of the *jawshan* prayer to be sound,²⁴ but he did not approve of writing it down or duplicating it. In his reply to a letter from Naẓīf Chalabī of İnebolu, in which the latter asks for Bediuzzaman's opinion on including the report about the merits of the great *jawshan* in the introductory section of it while duplicating,²⁵ Nürsī said:

Making duplications of the *jawshan* is a great deed. I congratulate you with deepest affection. But do not write down the part you have translated about the merits of the prayer, because the reports about such merits are ambiguous. Their actual nature is not known. Ungodly people or philosophers who will object to it will have doubts about it, taking it as exaggeration or superstition – *we seek refuge in Allah from this* ... For this reason the section I have marked²⁶ should not be recorded. This is so that no harm will come to the great prayer

²² "Fasıldan Fasıla - Cevşen," *Zaman*, 20.04.1994, 7. The information on the page, which seems to belong to Fethullah Gülen, has been later given in the same newspaper and Gülen's books many times.

²³ On the page 9 of the photocopy of a handwritten document of Bediuzzaman in the research file of "Cevşen [Jawshan]" (in the Library of Turkish Religious Foundation Centre for Islamic Studies [İSAM] in İstanbul) prepared as a source for the entry on "Cevşen [Jawshan]" in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)* [*Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam*], we found the phrase "a part of the translation concerning the special place and merits of the great *jawshan* on the margins of *Majmū'at al-abzāb*."

²⁴ See Bediuzzaman Sa'îd Nürsî, *Emirdağ Lâbikası*, 212-214.

²⁵ A partial translation of the lengthy narration about the merits of the *jawshan* prayer has been placed in the beginning of a mimeograph edition of *al-Jawshan al-kabîr* published in İnebolu. See Muhsin Demirel, *Evrâd-ı Nuriye* (İstanbul: İnşirah İslâmî Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1997), 9.

²⁶ In the photocopy of the handwritten translation of the lengthy narration about the merits of the prayer in the later parts of Bediuzzaman's letter, the paragraphs numbered above as 3, 4, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18 are omitted. This might be a result of omitting the "parts marked out" by Bediuzzaman.

and no criticism will come to the conservative issues of the *Nurcus*, which are strong as iron.²⁷

He mentioned this subject in another letter as well:

In order to do a good service Naẓīf has mimeographed the *jawshan* prayer, which is very important for *Nurcus*. He wrote to me about adding the part about the merits of this great prayer that was derived from wonderful but ambiguous ḥadīths in its margins. I said “Although I have read *jawshan* every day for the last thirty-five years, I have not read that section more than three or four times. Thus, it is not suitable to duplicate it exactly. This is so that unbelievers and the like should not accuse us of anything.”²⁸

Although it is stated that Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Shādhilī also “confirmed” the *jawshan* prayer,²⁹ there is no document to prove that. Through the conversations we had with some of the sheikhs from the order of Shādhiliyya in Damascus, such as Muḥammad Abū l-Hudā al-Ya‘qūbī, we learned that this prayer is not included in their prayers. Also, the *jawshan* prayer is not mentioned in recent works on the Shādhilī prayers.³⁰ Moreover, although some

²⁷ Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursî Taribçe-i Hayatı [Bediüzzaman Sa‘id Nursî: His Biography]* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1990), III, 1640. Here, the letter is given under the title, “The reply of *al-Ustādb* to our question exactly as it was written.” In this version of the letter there are small variations from the version in the abovementioned research file (see note 23). There is no record, however, in the latter version about the person to whom the letter was addressed.

²⁸ Bediüzzaman Sa‘id Nursî, *Emirdağ Lâbikası*, 406. Some contemporary scholars who believe in the authenticity of the prayer invalidate the narrations about the merits of it, stating that they “belong to Shī‘ī sources” and are not acceptable “according to Sunnī principles.” See Ahmet Kurucan, “Dua İkliminde Cevşen III [Jawshan in the Climate of Prayer III],” *Zaman*, 04.08.1996, 2; Davut Aydüz, “Cevşen Üzerine [On the Jawshan],” *Yeni Ümit* 13/51 (Jan.-Feb.-March 2001), 33. Nevertheless, these authors followed Bediüzzaman who interpreted reports about the merits of the prayer by stating that these are ambiguous.

²⁹ “Ebcet ve Cevşen [Abjad and Jawshan],” *Zaman*, 01.09.1992, 10.

³⁰ See, for example, Ma‘mūn Gharīb, *Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: Hayātub^â, taşawwufub^â, talāmīdbub^â wa-awrādub^â* (Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 2000), 119 et al.

claim that al-Ghazzālī wrote a commentary for this prayer,³¹ no document confirming this has been found to date.

The most interesting claim on this subject is that this prayer was included in the main Shī‘ī ḥadīth books, *al-Kutub al-arba‘a*.³² The more astonishing point here is that, the encyclopedia entry referred to by who maintains this claim as the source for his claim states the opposite: no such prayer can be found in these books!³³

A similar claim was made earlier in an attempt to associate the prayer with Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). Two printed works, *Du‘ā’ al-jawshan al-kabīr* (Lucknow, 1288 H., with a Persian inter-linear translation) and *Du‘ā’ al-jawshan al-ṣaghīr* (Lucknow, 1288 H., with an Urdu translation), were attributed to this author, who is one of the authors of *al-Kutub al-arba‘a*.³⁴ However, the list of his works provided by himself in his *al-Fibrīst* includes no mention of any book that could be related to the *jawshan* prayer.³⁵ Furthermore, none of the detailed researches on the life and works of al-Ṭūsī refer to these works.³⁶ Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi notes that attribution of these works to al-Ṭūsī is incorrect and they were most likely derived from the work of al-Kaf‘amī.³⁷

³¹ See M. Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma I [Prism I]* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 1997), 151.

³² See Aydüz, “Cevşen Üzerine,” 33. The author later reprinted this article in the beginning of his translation of the great *jawshan*. See Aydüz, *Hizbu Envârî'l-Hakâiki'n-Nûriyye*. For this claim see p. i.

³³ See Toprak, “Cevşen,” VII, 463.

³⁴ See M. Hidāyat Ḥusayn, “al-Ṭūsī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Abū Ja‘far,” *Urdū Dā‘ira-i Ma‘ārif-i Islāmīyya*, XII, 573-574.

³⁵ See Abū Ja‘far Shaykh al-ṭā‘ifā Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Fibrīst kutub al-Shī‘a* (eds. Mawlawī ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq et al.; Calcutta: n.p., 1853), 285-288.

³⁶ See, for example, S. Waheed Akhtar, *Early Shī‘ite Imāmīyyah Thinkers* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1988). In the section “Shaykh al-Ṭā‘ifāh al-Ṭūsī: Life and Works,” fifty works of al-Ṭūsī are introduced. There is no work related to the *jawshan* prayer.

³⁷ Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan Abū Dja‘far,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Second Edition*, X, 746. Although Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī attributed a work called *al-Jawshan al-kabīr* to al-Kaf‘amī (Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharī‘a ilā taṣānīf al-Shī‘a* [Beirut: n.p., n.d.], V, 25), he does not mention such a work for al-Ṭūsī.

In addition, the claim that this prayer “was received from the Prophet by a saintly man through spiritual insight (*kashf*) in later centuries”³⁸ has some vague points such as when and to whom this *kashf* occurred, and what the source of information about the occurrence of this *kashf* is, a second *kashf* or a written document, etc., aside from the problem of the authenticity of a ḥadīth acquired through *kashf*.³⁹

2. Criticism of the Narration of the Great *Jawshan* Prayer

a. The *Sanad*

As our research indicates, the *jawshan* prayer was first recorded in the prayer book, *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*, of the Shī‘ī author ‘Alī ibn Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, who died in 664/1265. However, this is not identical with the famous prayer of the great *jawshan*, although the reason of occurrence for both is the same according to another report. The great *jawshan* can be first seen in a prayer book by another Shī‘ī author, al-Kaf‘amī, who died in 905/1499. Later, the prayer appears in a Sunnī scholar’s, al-Gumushkhānawī’s, book. Thus, we can say that the great *jawshan* appeared after al-Ḥillī.

The *sanad* of the prayer mentioned in the books by al-Kaf‘amī and al-Gumushkhānawī ends near the beginning or middle of the second/eighth century. This indicates a time gap of almost seven cen-

³⁸ “Fasıldan Fasıla - Cevşen,” 7; Gülen, *Prizma I*, 150.

³⁹ Sufis believe that knowledge gained through *kashf* is valid. But, sometimes this knowledge can be contradictory; this alone shows that this means of knowledge cannot be accurate. However, the following incident of al-Imām al-Rabbānī is given as an important basis to establish the accuracy of this method: It is said that al-Imām al-Rabbānī had doubts that *mu‘awwidhatayn* (the sūras of *al-Falaq* and *al-Nās*) were actually part of the Qur’ān and stopped reciting them in his prayers; he later attained through *kashf* that they were from the Qur’ān and stopped this practice. (See “Fasıldan Fasıla - Cevşen,” 7; Gülen, *Prizma I*, 149). This incident, while trying to establish *kashf*, is of a nature that casts a shadow on the Qur’ān’s being wholly and exactly *mutawātir*. For this reason, even if there is such an incident, narrating it as a proof is extremely serious. About the value of knowledge attained by *kashf*, see Süleyman Uludağ, “Keşf [Kashf],” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)* [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam], XXV, 315-316; Seyit Avcı, *Sûfîlerin Hadis Anlayışı – Bursevî Örneği – [Sufis’ Understanding of Ḥadīth – The Case of al-Bürsawî –]* (Istanbul: Ensar Yayıncılık, 2004), 137-171.

turies between the last narrator in the chain and its first appearance in a written document. In this case, this suspended chain of narration should have no scientific value for both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. Therefore, stating that this prayer “has come to us through the Shīʿī imāms” would be inaccurate⁴⁰ given this chain of narration.⁴¹ In other words, the problem is not that this prayer came through the Shīʿī imāms but rather that it did not.⁴² If the prayer’s coming through the Shīʿī imāms was definite, then its validity would not be a problem because the imāms of *Ahl al-bayt*, in particular those mentioned in the *sanad* of this prayer, Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Kāzim (d. 183/799)⁴³, Jaʿfar al-Şādiq (d. 148/765)⁴⁴ and ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿābidīn (d. 94/712),⁴⁵ are

⁴⁰ See Toprak, “Cevşen,” 463; Gülen, *Prizma I*, 149; Kurucan, “Dua İkliminde Cevşen I,” *Zaman*, 02.08.1996, 2; Aydüz, “Cevşen Üzerine,” 33.

⁴¹ Dr. Najafqūlī Ḥabībī, a Shīʿī scholar, says that there is no need to investigate the *sanad* of the *jawsban* because the *jawsban* consists of some Qurʾānic verses, as well as reports and prayers whose authenticity was approved; Najafqūlī Ḥabībī, “Muqaddimat al-Muṣaḥḥih [Editor’s Introduction],” in Mullā Asrār Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ (Sharḥ duʿāʾ al-jawsban al-kabīr)* (ed. Najafqūlī Ḥabībī; Tehran: Dānīshgāh-i Ṭahrān, 1993), 7.

⁴² During our research on Shīʿī literature, we found the book, *Kasr al-şanam* of Āyat Allāh al-Barqaʿī who is a Shīʿī scholar, but has some criticisms against the Shīʿa and who is known to have caused heated discussions with his books. In this book, the author criticizes some of the ḥadīths found in one of the most trusted Shīʿī ḥadīth books, *al-Kāfi* of al-Kulaynī. One of these criticisms is about the narration of the *jawsban* prayer; see Āyat Allāh al-ʿUzmā Abū l-Faḍl ibn al-Riḍā al-Barqaʿī, *Kasr al-şanam* (trans. from Persian to Arabic ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Mullāzāda al-Ballūshī; Beirut: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1998), 113. Furthermore, in some Shīʿī *fatwā* books, it is stated in response to questions about the *jawsban* prayer that it is unfounded.

⁴³ He is “trustworthy, devout person,” whose ḥadīth reports are included in *Sunans* of al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Māja; see Abū l-Faḍl Ibn Ḥajar Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tabdhīb* (eds. ʿAbd al-Waḥhāb ʿAbd al-Laṭīf et al.; 2nd ed., Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1975), II, 282.

⁴⁴ He is “trustworthy, *faqīh*, imām” whose reports are included in al-Bukhārī’s *al-Adab al-mufrad*, Muslim’s *Şaḥīḥ*, and the four *Sunans*; see Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tabdhīb*, I, 132.

⁴⁵ He is “trustworthy, *faqīh*, respected, famous” person, whose reports are included in all the six renowned ḥadīth books; see Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tabdhīb*, II, 5.

scholars whose narrations are included in the Sunnī books and who are respected by the Sunnīs.

b. The Text

The text of this narration consists of two sections: the merits of the prayer and the prayer itself. We have provided the translation of the initial section above. Overly exaggerated expressions can be seen in this section. In essence, these reveal the actual nature of the prayer, which overshadows even the merits of the great holy books, Prophets and angels.

As for the text of the prayer, it consists of one hundred sections, each including ten names and attributes of Allah, and so, of the demand to be saved from Hell through the recitation of one thousand names and attributes. The text is almost identical in both Sunnī and Shī'ī literature, with only minor variations.

Based on the narration mentioned above, some state that the prayer is a revelation⁴⁶ from Allah and not a human invention. Others claim that it is “full of prophetic statements as a truth that does not remain hidden to those who are talented in recognizing the words and statements of the Prophet himself.”⁴⁷

When the text of the prayer is compared to the verses of the Qur'ān, especially the ones including prayers, the stark difference between the two can be detected immediately. The expressions of the prayers in the Qur'ān are clear, short and without a rhymed style, whereas the statements in the *jawsban* are long, complicated and of a rhymed style. The comparison between their contents also reveals many differences. While in the *jawsban* prayer, the only wanted thing by reciting the names of Allah is to be saved from hellfire, the prayers in the Qur'ān have also desires regarding this world as well as hereafter such as paradise of *al-na'īm*,⁴⁸ paradises of *ʿadn*,⁴⁹ a mansion from the paradise,⁵⁰ bounty,⁵¹ being united with the right-

⁴⁶ Şimşek, *Risâle-i Nûr Işığında Cevşen Meâli*, X.

⁴⁷ “Fasıldan Fasıla - Cevşen,” 7; Gülen, *Prizma I*, 148.

⁴⁸ Q 26:85.

⁴⁹ Q 40:8.

⁵⁰ Q 66:11.

eous people⁵² etc. Accordingly, it is hard to explain how reading this prayer which is only devoted to be saved from hell can equal reading all four of the holy books?

The same conclusion can be reached when a comparison is made between this prayer and the prayers of the Prophet in respected ḥadīth books. The Prophet did not favor florid expressions in his prayers. In the same context, it is narrated that the Prophet did not like such these florid rhymed statements, and his companions avoided them.⁵³ Furthermore, some scholars contend that the “people who transgress in their prayers”⁵⁴ described in some ḥadīths are the ones who strive to make prayers in such a fashion.⁵⁵

The subject should be also examined from a historical standpoint. According to the narrations, the prayer is connected to a historical event and is a gift for all Muslims in the difficult times. If so, the Muslims who have encountered similar occasions in the course of time should have commonly used this prayer. However during these events the prayer has never been a topic of discussion, and all Muslims, no matter whether they are Sunnī or Shīʿī, have not been aware of this prayer.⁵⁶ Such a situation seems almost impossible to happen.

⁵¹ Q 2:201; Q 7:156.

⁵² Q 12:101; Q 26:83.

⁵³ al-Bukhārī, “Daʿawāt,” 20. During the pre-Islamic period, the Arabs made such prayers of rhymed style and believed that these would most probably be accepted (Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿī Qalʿajī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), I, 96-97.

⁵⁴ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, I, 172, 183; Abū Dāwūd, “Ṭahāra,” 45, “Witr,” 23; Ibn Māja, “Duʿā,” 12.

⁵⁵ Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raʿūf ibn Tāj al-ʿārifin al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣagḥīr* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Muḥammad, 1938), IV, 130; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Ibyāʿ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: n.p., 1957), I, 308. Al-Ghazzālī narrates such an interpretation but adds that it is better to interpret this as one that goes beyond the known prayers.

⁵⁶ Ümit Şimşek says that: “it is unfortunately not possible to say that the *jaushan* has received the attention it deserves by Muslims since the Prophet’s time, despite its great value and importance;” see his *Risāle-i Nūr Işığımda Cevşen Meālī*, XII. But it would be more accurate to say that this prayer “has not received any attention” rather than saying “it has not received the attention it deserves.”

It could be noted here that this prayer includes a sense of human “composition.” The rich prayer tradition found in the Shī‘ī circles has such many long examples with rhymed style.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Beyond those who “believe” in the prayer’s authenticity, it could be said that the prayer has no connection to the Prophet. This prayer likely appeared first in Shī‘ī circles. Over time, it was associated with the Prophet, and then introduced to the Sunnī world. This prayer seems to be an attempt for fabrication of ḥadīth (*wad‘*) as the probably longest example in Islamic history. The great *jawshan* which appeared for the first time in the book of a 9th/15th century Shī‘ī author in Islam’s lengthy history, has been unknown to thousands of scholars of tafsīr, ḥadīth, fiqh, kalām, as well as Sufis and historians except for two late scholars, al-Gumushkhānawī and Bediuzzaman who most likely took it from the former, in the Sunnī world. Therefore, great caution must be employed when attributing to the Prophet himself such a prayer on which a premium has been put in later times.

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⁵⁷ For examples see al-Ḥillī’s *Mubaj al-da‘awāt*.

- _____ *Hizbu Envâri'l-Hakâiki'n-Nûriyye: Büyük Cevşen ve Meali* [*Hizb anwâr al-ḥaqâ'iq al-nûriyya: The Great Jawshan and Its Turkish Translation*] (Istanbul: Define Yayınları, 2010).
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