

Pre-existence and light*

Aspects of the concept of *Nūr Muḥammad*

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INTRODUCTION

Light is one of the most prevalent representations of Muḥammad's prophetic mission. It serves, to begin with, as a major motive in several legendary traditions about his luminous body. "Whenever he went in darkness" — says a tradition — "light was shining around him like the moonlight".¹ Dark houses were lit by his brightness, says another tradition.² ʿĀ'isha, who lost her needle while sewing at dawn, found it easily by the light of the prophet who had entered the house.³ The miracle of Moses who drew out his hand in front of Pharaoh and it was white (Qur'ān, vii 108, xx 22, xxvi 33, xxvii 12, xxviii 32), is frequently compared with what is regarded as a greater miracle of Muḥammad, namely that when he sat down light was shining on his right and left. All people saw this light, and it was believed to be glowing on his grave till the day of resurrection.⁴ Muḥammad's irradiant face served for encouraging the believers in their hard battles. At Ḥunayn, while standing in the darkness, Muḥammad turned his face toward the Muslims, and it shone like a full moon.⁵ Whenever he was standing in sunshine or moonlight,

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¹ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 167: *kana idhā yamsih fi laylātin zahmā' bada lahu nūrun ka-annahu qamār*. Cf. also Bukhārī, IV, 229: ... *idhā surra 'istanāra wajhuhu hattā ka-annahu qif'atu qamār*.

² Khargūshī, 80^a: *wa-tuwayya anna min nūri l-nabiyi (s) aḏā'a l-boyyu l-muḥaddīn*.

³ *Ibid.*, 80^a-80^b; Suyūṭī, I, 156; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 107.

⁴ Khargūshī, 93^b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 188; Ibn Kathīr, 537. Cf. also Abū Nu'ayn, *Ḥilya*, III, 209, 210. The comparison (*muwāzā'a*) between Muḥammad's miracles and those of the preceding prophets is most frequent in sources dealing with Muḥammad's prophetic merits. See e.g. Khargūshī, 90^b ff.; Ibn Kathīr, 497 ff.; Ibn al-Jawzī, 360 ff.; Suyūṭī, III, 110 ff.; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 183 ff.

⁵ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 181.

or near a lamp, his light outshone them.⁶ According to some traditions, Muḥammad's fingers were an exclusive source of light. On dark nights they used to shine for Muḥammad and his companions.⁷ His forefinger: more lucent than the sun and the moon, lightened the way for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, whenever they were approaching his house or leaving it.⁸

Yet, serving as an exalted symbol of Muḥammad's prophethood, the light is sometimes conceived as being seen by selected people on special occasions only. Ḥalīma, his wet nurse, was one of them. When she first took little Muḥammad in her arms, he opened his eyes and they beamed.⁹ When Abū Ṭālib once looked at Muḥammad without being noticed, while the latter was absorbed in prayer, he saw a ray of light emerging from his head, reaching heaven.¹⁰ Bahīrā the monk, who saw the boy Muḥammad on his way to Syria with some Qurashī merchants, said to them: "I see what you are not able to see... I have seen on him (i.e. on Muḥammad) when he approached, light going ahead of him, shining between heaven and earth."¹¹

The representation of Muḥammad's prophetic emergence as light, is illustrated, in its pure metaphorical sense, through traditions to the effect that "light" serves as Muḥammad's name. Thus, some interpretations of Qur'ān v 15 (*qad jā'akum nūrun minā llāhi*) maintain that the word *nūr* mentioned in it stands for the prophet.¹² Already some of his contemporary poets used to describe the prophet as a light guiding the believers. Among them we find Ḥassān b. Thābit,¹³ Ka'b b. Zuhayr,¹⁴ and 'Abdallāh b. al-Zibā'ā.¹⁵ Similarly, some traditions maintain that Muḥammad's name — "moon of the moons" — was inscribed upon the moon, whereas another name of his — "light of lights" — was written on the sun.¹⁶ Likewise, Allāh revealed to Muḥammad:

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 107: *wa-kāna idhā waqafa fi l-shamsi wa-l-qamari wa-l-miḥābāhi nūrunu yaḡthibu anwārāhā*.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 188-189.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 32; *Bihār*, XV, 232; *Simt*, I, 262; Khargūshī, 35^b; Zurgānī, I, 143.

¹⁰ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 35; *Bihār*, XV, 336.

¹¹ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 37: *inni la-ara mā lā tarawna... wa-la-qad rā'aytu lahu, wa-qad aqbalā, nūran mā boyya l-samā'i wa-l-arḍi*.

¹² Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 104; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 198. Cf. also Zurgānī, III, 149.

¹³ Ibn Hishām, VI, 320: *nūran aḏā'a l-baḥriyyata kallāhā / man yuhādā li-l-nūri l-mubāraki yahaḏi*, and see also Khargūshī, 125^a; Suyūṭī, I, 368: *yad'ū ilā nūrin lahu sā'i'in*.

¹⁴ Ka'b b. Zuhayr, 23 (*Bānat Sū'ād*): *inna l-rasūla la-sayfun yusādā'u bihi*.

¹⁵ *Isf'āb*, III, 904: *wa-'alayka min simati l-maliki 'alāmatun / nūrun 'ā'azzu wa-khātamun makhūmū*, and see also *ibid.*, 902, last line; compare Goldziher, p. 328 note 1, 2.

¹⁶ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 132: ... *wa-'alā l-qamari: qamaru l-qamār, wa-'alā l-shamsi: nūru l-anwārī*.

"You are My light among My servants, My messenger to My creatures, and My *hujja* upon them".¹⁷

Light serves also as a symbol of the prospective expansion of the Islamic faith. When young Muḥammad once set out to Syria his companions saw, on approaching, that its castles shook and a great light emerged from them.¹⁸ When the ditch was dug around al-Madīna Salīmān al-Fārisī hit upon a hard stone which he could not split. The prophet approached and began striking it with his hoe. Three times he struck and each time a lightning flashed from the stone. Muḥammad explained to the astonished Salīmān that with the first blow Allāh would open al-Yaman before him; with the second he would open Syria and the Magrib; the Mashriq would be opened with the third blow.¹⁹ According to another version, the first blow was followed by light emerging from al-Yaman, the second was followed by light from Persia, and the third was followed by light from Byzantium.²⁰

The light of Muḥammad's prophetic emergence, as part of God's design, was foreseen by several people in their dreams. Among them were some of his forefathers. Already al-Nadr b. Kināna saw in his dream a high green tree reaching the clouds. Its branches were "light within light". On waking up he was told that his dream hinted at his future power, honour and high rank. The tradition goes on to remark that all these were indeed bestowed on him by Allāh (through Muḥammad, his offspring).²¹ A similar vision was seen by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥammad's grandfather. Lying in the Ka'ba he dreamt that a pure chain was coming out of his back (i.e. out of his loins). The chain had four edges reaching the ends of heaven and earth. One of the edges turned out to be a bright green tree; two old men, namely, Noah and Abraham, sat beneath it. Afterwards he was told that a prophet, whom the inhabitants of heaven and earth would follow, was about to emerge from his loins.²² Another version, ascribed to Abū Ṭālib, states that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib saw some members of Quraysh trying to cut off the tree which was worshipped by all mankind; yet, a handsome boy drove them away.²³

Dreams of light were seen not only by Muḥammad's ancestors. Al-'Abbās

¹⁷ *ʿUlal* 5: *fa-innaka nūrī fi 'ibādī wa-rasūlī ilā khalqī wa-hujjātī 'alā barriyyati*.

¹⁸ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 38.

¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, III, 230. See also Suyūṭī, I, 571 (from Ibn Sa'd); Khargūshī (Tübingen) 45^a-45^b.

²⁰ Suyūṭī, I, 572. Cf. Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 104.

²¹ *Iḥbāʾī*, 98. See also Khargūshī, 12^a-12^b.

²² *Iḥbāʾī*, 104; Khargūshī, 17^b-18^a; Suhaylī, I, 182; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 24; *Biḥār*, XV, 77, 225.

²³ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 24. And see further versions in Suyūṭī, I, 98-99; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 79-80; Zurgānī, I, 90-91; *Biḥār*, XV, 254-255.

b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the prophet's uncle, saw in his dream a white bird flying out of 'Abdallāh's (Muḥammad's father) nose, reaching to the eastern and western ends of the earth. After a while the bird came down near the Ka'ba, being worshipped by Quraysh. Then it flew away again. A *kāmina* from Makhzūm told al-'Abbās that a person who would be followed by the inhabitants of the east and the west was about to emerge from 'Abdallāh's loins.²⁴ According to another version the bird had turned into light before it flew from the Ka'ba.²⁵ Khālid b. Sa'īd dreamt of a light ascending out of the well of *Zamzam*. It lit first the Ka'ba, then all the surroundings of Mecca, then the sky and the palm trees of Yathrib. Khālid's brother, 'Amr, suggested that this vision alluded to a great event about to happen among the children of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who had dug the *Zamzam*.²⁶ When 'Amr b. Murra of Juhayna was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he saw in a dream light shining from the Ka'ba and up to Yathrib. Out of this light a voice announced the emergence of the prophet. The light shone again reaching al-Ḥira and al-Madā'in, and a voice announced the victory of Islam. This dream made 'Amr embrace Islam in due course.²⁷ Finally, Salīmān al-Fārisī saw a handsome boy radiating light eastwards and westwards, and towards Syria and al-Yaman. The light was growing brighter from hour to hour. Salīmān hastened to his garden and saw all its trees and its fence prostrating themselves to Muḥammad. Salīmān joined them, uttering the *shahāda*. Then he heard a voice announcing Muḥammad's appearance.²⁸

Most of the above mentioned traditions were quoted from Shi'i sources. The Shi'a is, indeed, the Muslim sect that has made the utmost use of light. The Shi'i imāms are regarded as the exclusive representatives of the divine light on earth. The Shi'i interpretation of the Qur'ānic "verse of light" (*āyat al-nūr*, xxiv 35) sees the various instruments of light mentioned in it as allegoric symbols of 'Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the rest of the imāms. Other Qur'ānic verses are similarly interpreted.²⁹ These members of Muḥammad's family (*ahl al-bayt*) belong, according to the Shi'a, to an eternal line of chosen persons on whom God bestowed His light. "When Allāh created paradise", says a tradition, "He created it from the light of His face. Then He took the light and dispersed it. One third hit Muḥammad, one third hit Fāṭima, and another third hit 'Alī. All people whom this light reached found

²⁴ Suyūṭī, I, 121.

²⁵ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 24; *Biḥār*, XV, 256.

²⁶ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, p. 109; Suyūṭī, I, 304-305; Suhaylī, I, 192.

²⁷ Suyūṭī, I, 264-265.

²⁸ Khargūshī (Berlin) 133^b.

²⁹ Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *ʿUmda*, 186, 219-220. Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 240 ff.; *Biḥār*, XXIII, 304 ff.

the right path of loyalty to Muhammad's family; those who missed it — went astray.³⁰ This duality is known already in the Qur'ān. Verse ii 257 states that Allāh is the patron of those who believe. He brings them forth from darkness into light. But those who disbelieve, their patrons are *ṭāghūt*, that draw them away from light to darkness. The Shi'ī interpretations identify the people of light with Muhammad's family, and the people of the *ṭāghūt* with the enemies of the Shi'a.³¹

The divine light is reached only through the imāms; knowing them is sufficient for salvation from darkness. This notion is set forth through some interpretations of Qur'ān, vi 122. The verse speaks about the dead who were given new life, and light was made for them. Shi'ī commentators conceived this verse as referring to people who had come to new life, by knowing their guiding light, i.e., the imām. Those who were unable to get out of darkness, also mentioned in the same verse, are referred to as people who do not know their imām.³² A similar interpretation is given for Qur'ān, lvii 28.³³

The divine light of the imāms emanates to their followers, whose hearts were purified by Allāh. This very light shines in their hearts more intensely than the sun. Allāh will save them on the day of resurrection, because of their love and loyalty for the imāms.³⁴

Light as an element of communication between the imāms and the rest of humankind is sometimes described as a cosmic column. It is erected as such on the birth of each imām, and supplies him with knowledge about the deeds of all people.³⁵ It also communicates between the imām and the heavenly world.³⁶

'Alī was the first Shi'ī imām. The prophet declared that 'Alī had a light in heaven and a light on earth; whoever got hold of that light would enter paradise, and whoever missed it would enter hell.³⁷ 'Alī was the light that

³⁰ Ibn Shahrāshub, III, 106; *Bihār*, XXIII, 308-309.

³¹ *Bihār*, XXIII, 310: *fa-l-nūru hum ālu muḥammad (s) wa-l-zulmāt 'adawwuhum* (from *Tajisr al-Ayyāsh*).

³² *Ibid*, 310-311.

³³ *Ibid*, 319.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 308: ... *wa-llāhi yā abā khālid, la-nūru limāmi fi qulūbi l-mu'miniṭina anwaru minna l-shamsi l-mudī'ati bi-l-nahāri... wa-yakhibu llāhu nūrāhu 'amman yashā'u fa-tuzṭimu qūlābuhum, wa-llāhi yā abā khālid, lā yuhābunā 'abdun wa-yatawallānā karāta yuṭahhira llāhu qalūbahu... wa-idhā kāna siḥnan lanā sallānahu llāhu min shādidi l-ḥisābi, wa-āmanahu min faṣā'i yawmi l-qiyāmati l-akbari. Cf. also *Iḥbār*, 179-180.*

³⁵ *Iḥbār*, 176: ... *fa-idhā waqa'a 'alā l-arḍi ruḥ'a lahu 'amānun min nūrin yarā bihi a'māla l-'ibādī.*

³⁶ *Baḡā'ir*, 129.

³⁷ *Bihār*, XXIII, 319-320: *yā ka'b, inna li-'alyin nūrayni; nūran fi l-samā' wa-nūran fi l-arḍ, fa-man tamassaka bi-nūriḥi adkhalahu llāhu l-jannata, wa-man akhaḥa ahu adkhalahu l-nāra.*

was given to the believers by Allāh (see Qur'ān lvii 28),³⁸ and he was the universal light after the death of the prophet.³⁹

A special sphere in which light is a major motive, is the concept of the pre-existence of prophets. The first to study this subject in a Muslim context was Goldziher.⁴⁰ Yet, since we now have access to some further relevant sources, a new examination of the subject may not be superfluous.⁴¹

I. THE PRIMORDIAL SUBSTANCE OF MUHAMMAD

Already early Muslim sources furnish us with the view that the spirit of Muhammad, forming part of the spermatic substance of his ancestors existed in the world as an integral prophetic entity before his birth. It was being transmitted from father to son until its visible manifestation on earth, through the corporeal Muhammad.¹

This traducian concept is brought forth, to begin with, in some early interpretations of Qur'ān vii 172. It says: "When your Lord took from the children of Adam, out of their loins, their descendants and made them testify for themselves: am I not your Lord? they said: Yes, we do testify. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: we forgot about it!"² Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation, as transmitted through Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 95),² is that Allāh, after having created Adam, took out of his loins all the spirits that He was about to create till the day of resurrection; He then made them bear witness

³⁸ *Bihār*, XXIII, 319.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 320.

⁴⁰ Goldziher, 324 ff. The idea of pre-existence (particularly its Šūfi aspects) was discussed also by Andrae (pp. 313 ff.) general Šūfi usage of light was discussed also by F. Rosenthal (pp. 157 ff.). Cf. also L. Massignon, *Et*, s.v. "Nūr Muḥammadi".

⁴¹ It should be noted that certain Muslim scholars systematically elaborated on the concept of Muhammad's light. In a special *risāla* entitled *risāla fi anwār al-mabīy* Ibn Sab'īn, for instance, described 33 different sorts of Muḥammad's light. The light of Muḥammad's pre-existence — the subject of this study — is only one of them. See *Rasā'il Ibn Sab'īn*, ed. by 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (Mifir, n.d.) pp. 201-211. And see *ibid*, p. 12 the remark of the editor concerning the relation between Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669 A. H.) and preceding Muslim philosophers and Šūfis.

¹ The list of Muhammad's ancestors, his *nasab*, consists of Arab forefathers descending from Ishmael, and of Biblical ones, forefathers of Ishmael; descending from Adam who was Muhammad's primogenitor. See e.g. Ibn Hishām, I, 1 ff.; Ibn Sa'd, I/1, pp. 27 ff.; Tabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 274-276; *Ma'arīf*, 51 ff.; Ya'qūbī, II, 118.

² *wa-idh akhādha rabūka min banī ādamā min zuḥūrithim dhurriyyatuhum wa-ashkhādūm 'alā anfusihim: a-lasṭu bi-rabbikum? qāla: balā, shāhidnā. an taqūlūa yawma l-qiyāmati: innā kunnā 'an dhālika ghaḥḥīn.*

² See GAS, I, 28-29.

that He was their Lord.³ Hence, the spirits recognized Allāh's lordship prior to the creation of their bodies.⁴ Mujāhid (d. 104)⁵ reportedly said that they expressed their faith in Allāh, by the words of the *Talbiya* (i.e. the response to Allāh's call uttered by the believers on their pilgrimage). This *talbiya* was passed on by Allāh to Abraham, who initiated the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁶

Another version of the same interpretation maintains that Adam's descendants were shown to him in the form of small ants.⁷ Some of these primordial entities are said to have been invested with light. One of them, namely David's spirit, was presented to Adam in a shining light.⁸ His light was brighter than that of the other prophets who also appeared as light.⁹ A tradition recorded already by Ibn Sa'd (d. 230), on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, states that on seeing David's light, Adam bestowed on him forty years of his own.¹⁰

The prophets were distinguished not only by their light. It is stated that on that day, the prophets were among Adam's descendants (shining) like lamps, and Allāh singled them out by a special covenant.¹¹ This prophetic covenant is mentioned in Qur'an xxxiii 7: "when we took from the prophets their covenant, from you (i.e. Muḥammad) and from Noah and Abraham and

³ See e.g. Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 75: "...*haddathānā kulhūm bnu jabr qāla: sa'ālu sa'āla bna jubbayr 'an qawīhi "wa-ith akhadha rabbuka..." qāla: sa'ālu 'anhā bna 'abbāsīn fa-qāla: masāda rabbuka zabba ādama fa-kharajāt kullu nasmātin huwa kālūqahā iā yawmi l-qiyāmati bi-nā māna hādha, wa-ashāra bi-yadīhi, fa-akhadha ma-wāliḥiqāhu wa-ash-haddahum 'alā anfusihim...* According to some interpretations, Allāh announced on that occasion who would enter paradise and who would enter hell; see *ibid.*, 86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 80: "an muḥammad bni kab' al-qurayzī... qāla: aqrarati l-arwāhu qabla an tukhlaqa aqsādūhā."

⁵ See GAS, I, 29.

⁶ Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 78: "...*an mujāhid qāla: ima lāha lammā akhrajāhum qāla: yā 'ibāda llāhi, aqibū lāha — wa-l-ijbānu l-tā'au — fa-qāla: qā'nā llāhumma, qā'nā llāhumma, aqā'nā llāhumma, labbayka labbayka. qāla: fa-a'tāhā ibrāhīma fi l-manāsiḥ: labbayka llāhumma labbayka. It is related, likewise, that when Abraham announced the pilgrimage he was answered by people calling the *talbiya* out of their ancestors' loins. See 'Iḥl, 419: "...*wa-lākimāhu nādā: halūmma l-hajja. fa-labbā l-nāsu min aqlābi l-rjāli: labbayka dā'iyā llāhi; labbayka dā'iyā llāhi. See also Halaḥī I, 160. Moses as well heard the *talbiya* being uttered by the Muslims in the same way. See 'Iḥl, 417-418; Khargūshī, 81^a; Qisas, 168; Jawāhir, 248-249. These traditions suggest the early nature of the *talbiya* as a pure Muslim heritage. The *talbiya* is also reported to be a *Jāhilī* way of veneration; see e.g. Ya' qūbī, I, 255-256.**

⁷ Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 76: "an sa'īdī bni jubbayr 'amī bni 'abbās... qāla: lammā khalāqa llāhu ādama akhadha dhurriyyatāhu min zahrīhi mithla l-dharrī..."

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79: "fa-'arāda 'alayhi rūḥa dāwūda fi nūrīn sā'iīn. See also *idem*, *Tārīkh*, 158.

⁹ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 155; Qisas, 38.

¹⁰ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, p. 7 compare Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 156-157; *idem*, *Tafsīr*, IX, 78. A similar tradition appears also in *The Zohar*, I, 91b, 55a, 248b. (I was referred to this source by Mr. I. Fikler, Tel Aviv).

¹¹ Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 79: "...*wa-fihimi l-anbiyā'u yawmā'ithn mithlu l-suruji wa-khassa l-anbiyā'a bi-mithāqīn akhar.*

Moses and Jesus the son of Mary. We took from them a rigid covenant..."¹² This covenant too was taken, according to Mujāhid, while the prophets still dwelt within Adam's loins (Adam himself is not counted here as a prophet).¹³

A noteworthy feature of the interpretations of the verse just mentioned is the stress laid on the superiority of Muḥammad's primordial substance, to that of the other prophets. The same tendency underlies, in fact, a large number of traditions which we shall examine hereafter. Above all it is emphasized that the substance of Muḥammad was the first prophetic entity created by Allāh. This particular Muslim view is based on the simple fact that in the Qur'anic verse at issue, Muḥammad is mentioned prior to Noah and the rest of the prophets. Qatāda (d. 118)¹⁴ reportedly used to recite with this verse a tradition, according to which Muḥammad said: "I was the first of the prophets to be created (i.e. as a primordial substance) and the last of them to be sent (as a real prophet)";¹⁵ or else: "I was the first prophet to be created and the last of them to be sent, therefore (Allāh) began with me (i.e. I was the first of those from whom He took the covenant)".¹⁶ According to a tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd, Muḥammad's covenant was taken from him as soon as Adam had been formed in clay, before Allāh breathed the spirit of life into him; it relates that Muḥammad was asked: when did you become a prophet? He said: when Adam was still between spirit and body, as soon as the covenant was taken from me".¹⁷ Commenting on this tradition, al-Qasṭallānī says that Muḥammad was drawn out of Adam's loins, as soon as the latter was formed in clay. He was made a prophet, and the covenant was taken from him. Then he was inserted back into Adam's loins, thus being the first prophet in creation. This was his prerogative, since the

¹² Cf. also Qur'an, iii 81.

¹³ Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 79: "an mujāhid fi qawī llāhi: "mīna l-nabīyyīna mithāqahum..." qāla: fi zahrī ādama."

¹⁴ GAS, I, 31.

¹⁵ Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 79: "an qatāda: gawīhu: "wa-ith akhadhnā..." qāla: wa-dhukira lanā anna nabīyya llāhi (s) kāna yaqūlu: kuntu awwala l-anbiyā'a fi l-khalq wa-akhīrahum fi l-ba'ithi; see also *ibid.*: kāna qatāda iḥā tala hadīthi l-āya... qāla: kāna nabīyyu llāhi (s) fi awwali l-nabīyyīna fi l-khalq."

¹⁶ Suyūṭī, I, 9 (from Ibn Abī Hātim, d. 327): "...*kuntu awwala l-anbiyā'a fi l-khalq wa-akhīrahum fi l-ba'ithi fa-bada'a bi-qablahum. On the other hand, some traditions state that the covenant was taken from Muḥammad together with the rest of the prophets. See Suyūṭī, I, 11: akhadha llāhu minī l-mithāqa kamā akhadha minā l-nabīyyīna mithāqahum. Furthermore, several interpretations of Qur'an xxxiii 7 hold that Muḥammad's name foretells the names of the prophets only because of his high rank, whereas chronologically Noah was the first. See Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 184: qāla rasūlu llāhi: awwaluhum niḥun thumma l-awwala fa-l-awwala, see also Bihār, XV, 3: wa-imāmā qaddāmahu li-fa'ālihi wa-sharāfīhi.*

¹⁷ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, p. 95: qāla rajūlun li-l-nabīyy: matā sturḥi'ia? qāla: wa-ādamu boyna l-rjāhi wa-l-ḥasadi, hīna ukhīdha minī l-mithāq, compare Suyūṭī, I, 11; Zurqānī, I, 39.

rest of Adam's descendants were taken out of him only after the spirit had been breathed into his body.¹⁸ Ibn Sa'd has, in fact, a further version of the same tradition: "I was a prophet — states Muhammad — as soon as Adam was between spirit and body".¹⁹

Muhammad, as the first created prophet, is sometimes entitled "the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden". These titles belong, according to Qur'an Ivi 3, to Allāh alone; yet, in some traditions they are related to the prophet. Thus, he is the first prophet in the world (as a hidden substance), and the last prophet to be sent to it.²⁰ Ibn Sa'd himself records an outspoken tradition to the effect that Muhammad was the first of all human beings to be created, and the last of them to be sent out.²¹ The same view comes forth

¹⁸ Zurgāni, I, 39: ...*fa-hādhā yaḥillu 'alā annahu min ḥini suwwira ādamu min stikhrīja minhu muḥammadin (s) wa-mubī'a wa-ukhūḥa minhu l-mithāq, thumma u'ida ilā zāhri ādamā... fa-ḥn qūla: inna stikhrīja dhurriyyati ādamā kāna ba'da nafkhi l-rūḥi fihī... qāba ba' ḍuhum bi-annahu khussa bi-stikhrījīhi min zāhri ādam qabla nafkhi l-rūḥi fihī. Still, another tradition maintains that Muhammad's primogeniture was based only on the fact that he was the first of Adam's offspring who said "yes" to Allāh, when He made them recognize His lordship, see Suyūṭī, I, 9; Zurgāni, I, 34: ...kāna muḥammadin (s) awwala man qāla *ba'da li-dhālika sāra ya'aqadādmu l-anbīyā'*, wa-huwa 'ākhiru man yub'athu.*

¹⁹ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, p. 95: *kuntu nabiyyan wa-ādāmu bayna l-rūḥi wa-l-jasadī. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33; Suyūṭī, I, 10, 11. Bayhaqī, I, 72; Khargūshī, 75^a; Zurgāni, I, 32-33. Another version is: ...bayna l-rūḥi wa-l-ḥini min ādamā see Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 95, and even: *kuntu nabiyyan wa-ādām bayna l-mā'i wa-l-ḥini. This version is rejected by al-Sakhāwī. See Zurgāni, I, 33. A more far-reaching version is: ...wa-kuntu nabiyyan wa-lā ādamā wa-lā mā'a wa-lā ḥina. This version was rejected as false by Ibn Taymiyya and others, see ibid; and cf. also Goldzher, 324-325.**

²⁰ See for instance, Khargūshī, 75^a: *wa-qāla: anā l-awwala wa-l-ākhiru wa-l-zāhiru wa-l-bāḥinu wa-ḡila: inna ḥādīthi raḥīyatu l-malā'ikati lahu laylata l-mī'rā'i. fa-sā'ala rasūlu llāhi (s) jibrīla (s) fa-qāla: mā ḥādīthi l-raḥīyatu? fa-qāla jibrīlu: anta awwala fi l-mubawwa wa-ākhiru fi l-ba'ḥāthi.*

²¹ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 96: *kuntu awwala l-nāsi fi l-khalq wa-ākhiratum fi l-ba'ḥi; Goldzher's translation (p. 326): "...und der letzte in der Auferstehung" has to be rejected. It has to be noticed here that the concept at issue has also a more rationalistic expression. It appears, to begin with, in some versions of the tradition about Muhammad's early prophethood, to the effect that his prophetic emergence was only pre-destined. Hence, some versions have *kutūb* instead of *kunūtu*. See e.g. Suyūṭī, I, 10 (from Ahmad b. Ḥanbal): '*an mayyāra l-fajri ḡāla: qūlu: yā rasūla llāhi, māla kutūba nabiyyan? ḡāla: wa-ādām bayna l-rūḥi wa-l-jasadi, compare Zurgāni, I, 33; Isrī'āb, IV, 1488 (with kunūta instead of kutūb) and see further references in Wensinck, Handbook, 163; see also Suyūṭī, ibid: inna llāhi fi ummi l-ḡābi l-akhānū l-nabiyyina wa-inna ādamā la-munḡadilūn fi ḡāthi. Hence, the traditions about the appearance of Muhammad's primordial name throughout the celestial world (see part 3), are used as an illustration for the rationalistic approach under discussion. See e.g. Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33; Ḥalabī, I, 220: ...*wa-kataba 'smi' alā l-abwābi wa-l-awrāqī wa-l-khīyāmī wa-ādāmu bayna l-rūḥi wa-l-jasadī... Al-Ghazālī, in his book al-Nafkḥ wa-l-Taḡwīya states explicitly that the tradition about the early creation of Muhammad has, in fact, no other meaning than the pre-destination of his emergence and not his actual pre-existence. See***

through a tradition based on the pattern of the abovementioned tradition concerning David's light. According to this tradition Adam saw among his future descendants a shining light. Allāh explained to him that it was the light of Muhammad, who was the first and the last.^{21a}

Due to his divine primordial substance, Muhammad is regarded as the best of Adam's offspring; hence, Adam was nicknamed after him: *Abū Muhammad*. This *kunya* was granted to Adam by Allāh, on breathing the spirit of life into him.²²

The spermatic substance of Muhammad was set in motion by the pro-creation of Adam's descendants. The course of this motion was determined by Allāh to include only the most excellent of all mankind. In a tradition recorded by al-Tirmidhī (d. 289) the prophet says: "When Allāh created the descendants of Adam, He put me within the best father of them all; when He divided them into tribes, He put me within the best tribe of them all, and when afterwards He made them into houses, He put me in the best house of them all".²³ In a similar tradition, quoted by Ibn Sa'd, the prophet says: "Allāh divided the earth in two halves putting me in the best one; that half He subdivided into three, and I was in the best third..."²⁴ According to a further tradition, also recorded by Ibn Sa'd, the prophet declared: "I was sent through the best generations of mankind, from generation to generation, till I was sent out of the generation in which I live."²⁵ This tradition included

Zurgāni, I, 36 (from al-Gazālī): ...*bi-anna l-nurād bi-l-khalqī huwa l-raḡḡnu dāna l-ḡādi. Al-Subki, on the other hand, rejects the rationalistic approach: he holds that the tradition, stating that Muhammad had been a prophet when Adam was still between clay and soul denotes the actual existence of Muhammad; therefore, Adam saw his name on the throne signifying his noble spirit, or his *ḡaḡqa*, see Suyūṭī, I, 12; Zurgāni, I, 37. A harmonizing opinion is expressed by Ibn 'Arabi who states that Muhammad actually existed as a pre-existent spirit, yet, his prophethood was then only a divine scheme for the future. See Futūḥat I, 134-135: *wa-qāla 'alayhi l-salāmū: kuntu nabiyyan wa-ādām bayna l-mā'i wa-l-ḥin. yurīdu: 'alā 'īmin bi-dhālika; fa-akhbarahu llāhu ta'ālā bi-marḡabatīhi wa-huwa rūḡun qabla ḡādihi l-ḡasama l-insāniyya. And see also ibid, 143-144: ...fa-akhbara annahu sāḡibu l-mubawwari qabla wujūdi l-anbīyā'i llādhina hum nuwwābūhu.**

^{21a} Suyūṭī, I, 97-98 (from al-Bayhaqī); *Biḡār*, XI, 152 (Ibn Ṭāwūs).

²² Khargūshī 81^b. And cf. also *Biḡār*, XI, 107; *Simt*, I, 43, 59.

²³ Khargūshī (Tübingen) 75^a: *wa-rūwiya 'ani l-nabiyyi (s) annahu ḡāla: inna llāha jalla wa-'azza lammā khalaqa dhurriyyatai ādamā ja'alani fi khayrīhim aban. thumma lammā ja'alahum qab'ila ja'alani fi khayrīhim qabilatan. thumma lammā ja'alahum buyūtan ja'alani fi khayrīhim baytan. See also Bayhaqī, I, 131-133; Suyūṭī, I, 94-95 (quoting al-Tirmidhī and al-Bayhaqī); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 77-78; Zurgāni, I, 69 (from al-Tirmidhī).*

²⁴ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 2: *inna l-nabiyya (s) ḡāla: ḡasama llāhu l-arḡda nḡḡayni fa-ja'alani fi khayrīhim, thumma ḡasama l-nḡḡa 'alā thalāthā fa-kunū fi khayri thulḡḡin minḡā... cp. Suyūṭī, I, 95.*

²⁵ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 5: '*an abi hurayrata anna rasūla llāhi (s) ḡāla: bu'īthū min khayri qurūni*

by al-Bukhārī in his *ṣahīḥ*²⁶ is regarded by al-Suyūṭī as proving that the prophet's ancestors were each the best of his generation.²⁷ Another version of this tradition is clearer, since it has *ḥumīlu* (i.e. "I was carried") instead of *bu'tihū* (i.e. "I was sent"). It runs as follows: "I was carried through (the loins of) the best generations, from generation to generation, till I emerged from my own generation".²⁸

The notion of a primordial spermatid substance wandering through pure forefathers, was already known in Arabia in pre-Islamic times. Al-Samau'al b. 'Ādiyā' speaks in his well known *Lāmiyya* about the collective essence of his tribe.

We are pure, not turbid; our hidden essence was purely preserved

By women who carried us well [i.e. conceived us] and by men;

We ascended the best backs [i.e. loins], and descended

For a while to the best wombs.²⁹

bani ādamā garran fa-garran hattā bu'tihū minā l-garni lladhī kunū fihī, cp. Bayhaqī, I, 136-137; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 77; Suyūṭī, I, 94; Zurqānī, I, 68.

²⁶ Bukhārī, IV, 229.

²⁷ Zurqānī, I, 174 (quoting al-Suyūṭī): *imānu thabūta fī l-ḥādīthi l-ṣahīḥati anna kullā jaddin min ajdālihi (ṣ) khayru garrin, ka-ḥādīthi l-bukhārī: "bu'tihū min khayrī...".* And see also al-Qasallānī, *Irshād*, VI, 31: *wa-l-murād bi-ba'thi taqalubuhū faṣṣalī l-ḥādī, aban fa-aban, garran fa-garran, hattā zahara fī l-garni lladhī wajada fihī. ay: intaqalū awwalan min ṣulbi waldī ismā'ila ḥammā min kindānata thumma min qurayshin thumma min bani hāshimīn. fa-l-fā'u fī qawlihi: "garran fa-garran" i-l-tarīthi fī l-fadli 'alā ṣabīli l-tarāqī minā l-ḥādī, minā l-ḥādī illā laqrabi fa-l-qrab, kamā fī qawlihim: khudhi l-qaḍāla fa-l-akramā wa-māli l-ḥisnā fa-l-ajmāla.*

Goldzher's explanation to this tradition does not agree with the interpretation just quoted from al-Qasallānī (see Goldzher, p. 340). His translation runs as follows: "Ich bin aus den besten Generationen der Menschen von Periode zu Periode immer wieder (von Gott) gesandt worden, bis ich endlich in der Periode, in der ich nun lebe, gesandt worden bin". Goldzher wrongly explains that "es ist derselbe Prophet der von Periode zu Periode unter den Menschen erschien, bis er zu letzt als Muhammed erstanden ist". According to Goldzher, what we have here is the gnostic idea about the recurring manifestations of the same prophetic soul through the bodies of the various prophets, including Muhammed. It means that "Nur in der äusseren Erscheinung seien die Propheten von einander verschieden; in Wahrheit aber sei es derselbe Sendung Gottes der zu verschiedenen Zeiten in verschiedenen körperlichen Erscheinungen in die Welt gesandt wurde, um Gottes Willen zu künden. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Mose, Jesu, Muhammed, seien nicht verschieden von einander, sondern dieselbe göttliche Persönlichkeit in verschiedenen körperlichen Erscheinungsformen" (*ibid*, 337). However, according to what has been said above, one can see that Ibn Sa'd's tradition deals only with the wandering of Muhammad's substance through his ancestors, and not with the reincarnation of the eternal prophetic spirit through the universal prophets.

²⁸ Khargūshī (Tübingen) 65^b: *wa-ranā abū ḥurayra anna rasūla llāhi (ṣ) qāla: ḥumīlu min khayrī qurayni bani ādamā, garran fa-garran hattā kunū minā-l-garni lladhī kunū minhu.*

²⁹ *Ḥamāsa*, I, 38: *saḥawānā fa-lam nakdār wa-akhlāḡa s-tranā / ināḥun aḡabai ḥamlanā wa-fuhāla / 'Alawānā illā khayrī l-zuhārī wa-ḥuṭṭanā / li-waqīn illā khayrī l-buḡiṭni muzūla.*

This notion is absolutely identical with what is said in Islam about Muhammad, with the exception that the Muslim sources are preoccupied with the primogeniture of the essence of Muhammad as a prophetic entity since the very creation of Adam. As we have already seen, his superiority over the other prophets consists of this primogeniture.

The importance of the women's share in maintaining the pure genealogical origin, as expressed in the *Lāmiyya*, is stressed with regard to Muhammad as well. Several traditions emphasize the pure matrimony of his mothers. The prophet stated: "a whore has never given birth to me since I came out of Adam's loins; the nations have never ceased to transmit me from father to son, till I emerged from the best two Arab clans — Hāshim and Zubra (his mother's clan)".³⁰ Similarly, Muhammad told Ibn 'Abbās that when Adams was in paradise, he, Muhammad, was in his loins. Adam descended to earth with him in his loins. He was on the ark in Noah's loins, and was thrown into the fire in his father Abraham's loins. His ancestors had never coupled in fornication. (Allāh) had never stopped transmitting him, refined, from pure loins into clean wombs; two branches had never ramified without his being in the best one.³¹ Already Muhammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146) declared that he had gone through a list of five hundred women who had given birth to Muhammad's ancestors, and did not come across one who had born a child in fornication, or according to *Jāhili* customs.³² A similar account is attributed to the prophet himself: "I emerged from (pure) matrimony and not from fornication. No fornication of the *Jāhiliyya* has ever touched me since Adam. I came out of purity".³³ The following statement is also ascribed to Muhammad: "I am the most precious of you all (*anā afṣakum*, cf. Qur'ān ix 28) in lineage, nuptials and ancestry. There has not been any fornication among my ancestors since Adam. We are all (maintaining pure) matrimony".³⁴ The spotless marriage of Muhammad's ancestors detaches them completely from the *Jāhiliyya* and draws them closer to the Islamic spirit: "I was never born" — says the prophet — "from *Jāhiliyya* fornication; what gave birth to me was no other than Islamic matrimony".³⁵

³⁰ Suyūṭī, I, 96 (from Ibn 'Asākir): *mā waladarni baghiyyun qatū munāḥu kharajū min ṣulbi ādamā wa-lam tazal tunzā'i unī l-unamū kābiran 'an kābirin hattā kharajū min ofḡāli ḥayyayni minā l-'arabi — ḥashimīn wa-zuhara*, cp. Ḥalabī, I, 42.

³¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 35; Suyūṭī, I, 93; Zurqānī, I, 67.

³² Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 31. And cf. Zurqānī, I, 66; Ḥalabī, I, 40.

³³ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 31: *imānā kharajū min nikāḥ wa-lam akhruj min ṣifāḥ; min ladunī ādamā lam yuṣabih min ṣifāḥi aḥli l-jāhiliyyati shay'un. lam akhruj illā min ṭuhra*. Cf. also Suyūṭī, I, 92; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 79; Bayhaqī, I, 136; Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 24; Zurqānī, I, 67; Ḥalabī, I, 42.

³⁴ Suyūṭī, I, 96; Zurqānī, I, 67; Ḥalabī, I, 42.

³⁵ Suyūṭī, I, 92; Zurqānī, I, 66. In spite of the special emphasis laid on the pure marriage

The view according to which the sons of Adam married their sisters (each marrying his brother's twin sister) as expressed, for instance, in the Book of Jubilees (ch. 4) is also known in Islam. A detailed account of it is given by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/151).³⁶ Sheth, for example, married his sister Ḥazūra bint Ādam.³⁷ This view of Biblical figures, regarded as Muḥammad's primogenitors, does not accord with traditions about their pure matrimony discussed above. Muslim scholars sought, indeed, to diminish this discrepancy. The central figure in this context was Sheth, Adam's successor. Thus, the Muslim sources put forward a different tradition, to the effect that Sheth, unlike his preceding brothers, was born without a twin sister.³⁸ He married in due course a woman descended from paradise (*ḥawrāʾ*). This view is particularly emphasized by Shiʿi sources, sensitive to the notion of the *ṣafwa*.³⁹ Cain and Abel are also sometimes exonerated of incest; Abel, according to this approach, married a woman from paradise, whereas Cain got his wife from amongst the demons. Abel's *ḥawrāʾ* gave birth to a son who married in due course the daughter of Sheth; from this marriage emerged the rest of mankind.⁴⁰

The substance of Muḥammad is endowed with special religious features, especially the ability to utter the *talbiya*. It is related that when the substance

of Muḥammad's ancestors, there are some deficiencies in some of these marriages, namely, *nikāh al-maqr*. This term refers to cases in which a son marries his father's former wife; it is forbidden in Qurʾān iv 22. Kināna, for instance, married Barra bint Muḥr, who was his father Khuzayma's ex-wife. She bore him his son, al-Naḍr, see *Maʿārif*, 50; Zurgāni, I, 77. Al-Jāhiz firmly rejects this tradition, claiming that Kināna did not have children with his father's ex-wife. His son, al-Naḍr, was born to another woman who had never been married to his father. See Zurgāni, I, 77; Ḥalabi, I, 40. Compare Goldzher, 332. Another case is that of Ḥāshim who married Wāqida, former wife of his father, ʿAbd Manāf. This fact cannot, however, affect the purity of Muḥammad's ancestry, since ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, the prophet's grandfather, was born to Ḥāshim by another woman from al-Madīna. See Zurgāni, I, 77; Ḥalabi, I, 40; *Maʿārif*, 50. And see *ibid.* more cases of *nikāh al-maqr*, concerning people who do not belong to Muḥammad's ancestry. And cf. also Tabari, *Tajfīr*, IV, 217 ff.

³⁶ Tabari, *Tarīkh*, I, 145–146 (quoting Ibn Ishāq); 152 (in the name of Ibn ʿAbbās).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 163. Her name was, in fact, *Azūra*. See *Book of Jubilees* iv/11. And cf. also Yaʿqūbi, I, 6; Ibn Saʿd, I/1, 10, 11; Tabari, *Tarīkh*, I, 137 ff. *Qisas*, 34–35.

³⁸ Tabari, *Tarīkh*, I, 152; *fa-dhakarā ahlu l-tawrātī anna shithan wulīda fardan bi-ghayrī tauʿam*. See also *Qisas*, 34; Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 35.

³⁹ See *ʿUlūl*, 19–20; *Biḥār*, XI, 223–226; *Iḥbāt*, 18. The Shiʿi sensitivity to the *ṣafwa* notion is based on the belief that the imāms are pure and infallible; Allāh chooses only those who possess these qualities of the *ṣafwa*. See *Biḥār*, XI, p. 11: *wa-yajibu an yakūna liadhi ṣafāhuru liahu muḥāharina ma šamīna ʿani l-qabāʾih li-annahu lā yakhtāru ʾilā man kāna kaḥlika...*

⁴⁰ *Biḥār*, XI, 226–228. See also Yaʿqūbi, I, 6; *Qisas*, 35. Abel's son is sometimes known as *hibanū ilāhi*, a surname belonging usually to Sheth alone. See *Biḥār*, XI, 246 (from *Tajfīr al-ʿAyyāshī*).

of Muḥammad dwelt in the loins of al-Yaʿs — one of Muḥammad's Arab ancestors — the *talbiya* could be heard from within his body.⁴¹ Yet, the religious faith of the human carriers themselves, is not mentioned in the traditions discussed above. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī puts it in so many words, when he states that the prophet's ancestors were chosen by Allāh only on the ground of their pure souls, regardless of their doings, since they all belonged to the *Jāhiliyya*.⁴² However, quite early in Islam, it was no longer possible to tolerate the idea that people who gave birth to the prophet should burn in hell, because of their disbelief. Thus, a Shiʿi tradition states that Allāh ordered the fire of hell not to touch a back (i.e. loins) from which Muḥammad descended to a womb, a belly that carried him, a breast that suckled him, and a lap that covered him. The lap is interpreted to be that of Abū Ṭālib and his wife.⁴³

Furthermore, early Muslim sources already state that Muḥammad's ancestors were no less than true Muslims. This approach is based on Qurʾān, xliii

⁴¹ Suhayli, I, 10; Zurgāni, I, 78–79. Al-Suhayli remarks that this subject has to be looked up in al-Waqidi's *Kitaḥ al-Mawlid*. See also Ḥalabi, I, 17.

⁴² Zurgāni, I, 68; *qāla al-ḥakīm al-tirmidhī: innamā tāla l-ʿarḍa li-ṭalabi l-nuḥfī l-ḥāḥirātī l-ṣāfiyātī l-muʾazzakkiyya bi-mulāḥasni l-ḥakhlāqī wa-lam yanzur il-l-ʿmāli li-annalum kānu aḥla jāhiliyya.*

⁴³ *ʿUlūl*, 177: *inna l-nabiyya qāla: atāni jibrīlu fa-qāla: inna ilāha ʿazza wa-jalla ḥarama l-nāra ʿalā zahrin anzalaka wa-baḥnin ḥamalaka wa-thadyn arḍa ʿaka wa-ḥajrin kaḥlakā.* Compare *Jawābir*, 218–220; *Biḥār*, XV, 108, 126. The Sunni reaction to this Shiʿi approach comes forth through a tradition, quoted by Muslim, to the effect that Muḥammad was asked once where his father was. He replied: “my father and your father are in hell”, see Muslim, I, 132–133; Suhayli, I, 194; Zurgāni, I, 179 (from Muslim). The words: “my father”, mentioned in this *ḥadīth*, are interpreted sometimes as referring to Abū Ṭālib, father of ʿAlī, by whom the prophet was brought up. See Zurgāni, I, 179: *wa-ʿarāda bi-abīhi annahu abū ṭālib wa-li-annahu rabbūhu; wa-l-ʿarādu tusammī l-murabbīyya aban.* Al-Nawawī remarks that Muslim's tradition proves that whoever died as an unbeliever would enter hell and would not be saved by his blood relations. See Zurgāni, I, 180: *qāla l-nawawī fīhi: inna nan māna ʿalā l-ḥakīfi fa-huwa fī l-nārī wa-lā tanfāhu ihu qarābahu l-muqarabīn.* Moreover, another tradition claims that the prophet prohibited to boast of ancestors who had died in the *Jāhiliyya*. See, Ḥalabi, I, 29: *la tafakhru bi-dāʾikum liadhin māū fī l-jāhiliyya.* Yet, there is a further view which holds (like the above mentioned Shiʿi view) that Muḥammad's ancestors were saved from hell. According to this view Muḥammad interceded for his parents, as well as for Abū Ṭālib, who consequently came back to life and embraced Islam. They returned to the dead as true believers. Cf. several traditions about it in Zurgāni, I, 166 ff.; Suhayli, I, 194–195; *Biḥār*, XV, 108 ff. This view, apparently Shiʿi as well, also had a Sunni reaction. Several traditions maintain, on the ground of Qurʾān ix 113, that Muḥammad was not permitted by Allāh to ask forgiveness for his parents. See Zurgāni, I, 177 ff.; Suhayli, I, 194; Tabari, *Tajfīr*, XI, 31. Particularly anti-Shiʿi are those traditions holding that Qurʾān ix 113 prohibited to ask forgiveness for Abū Ṭālib alone. See Zurgāni, I, 178; Tabari, *Tajfīr*, XI, 30–31. Cf. also Goldzher, 331.

28, where it is stated that the descendants of Abraham (including Muḥammad's forefathers), always preserved Abraham's "word" (*wa-ja'alahā kalimatā baqiyatan fi 'aqibihī*). Some of the commentators say that the "word" of those descendants was the recognition of Allāh's unity, or even the explicit embracing of Islam.⁴⁴ The *Jāhili* customs of Mecca are, accordingly, reported to have been first introduced by an Arab who did not belong to the line of Muḥammad's ancestors — namely, 'Amr b. Luḥayy of Khuzā'a. This leader who ruled Mecca in early times is presented as the first Arab who acted according to *Jāhili* customs, mentioned in Qur'ān, v 103.⁴⁵

Another Qur'anic verse, used for the same goal, is ix 28. This verse declares that the unbelievers are impure (*imamā l-mushrikīna najasun*). This verse, combined with traditions about the purity of Muḥammad's ancestors mentioned above, proves according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606), that these ancestors could not possibly have been unbelievers.⁴⁶ This opinion about Muḥammad's ancestors was held, according to al-Rāzī, by Rāfi'ī Shī'īs.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See Tabari, *Tafsīr*, XXV, 38–39: 'an mujāhidi: "wa-ja'alahā kalimatān baqiyatan fi 'aqibihī" — qāla: la tāhaka illā llāhu... wa-qāla ākharu: al-kalīma llati ja'alahā llāhu fi 'aqibihī 'smu l-islām... qāla: aslamtu li-rabbī l-'ālamīn. Cf. also Biḥār, XV, 172 (from al-Kāfī): 'an 'abī 'abdallāh qāla: inna l-'araba lam yuzā'ū 'ala shay'in minna l-ḥanfiyya. See more about pre-Islamic Arabs, having the religion of Abraham, in Ibn Hishām, I, 237 ff.; Ma'ārif, 27–29; *Murūj*, I, 65 ff.; Simṭ, I, 247 ff.

⁴⁵ Ibn Hishām, I, 78–79; Ḥalabī, I, 10–11; Tabari, *Tafsīr*, VII, 56 ff.
⁴⁶ Zurqānī, I, 174 (from al-Rāzī's *Asrār al-Tanzīl*): wa-nimnā yadullu 'alā anna abā'a muḥammadin (ḡ) mā kānā mushrikīna gawluhu (ḡ): "lam azal unqalu min aṣṣābi l-ḥānīna... wa-qāla tā'ālā: "imamā l-mushrikīna najasun" fa-wajūba allā yakūna aḥadun min ajdādihī mushrikān. See also, Rāzī, XXIV, 174. Compare Goldzher, 332–333.

⁴⁷ Rāzī, XXIV, 173: wa-'lam anna l-raḡda dhakabū illā anna abā'a l-nabīyyi (ḡ) kānā mu'minīna. See also Abū Ḥayyān, VII, 47; Zurqānī, I, 176 (from Abū Ḥayyān). And see also Biḥār, XV, 117: qāla l-shaykhū abū ja'far: i'tiqādunā fi abā'i l-nabīyyi (ḡ) annahum muslimīna min ādam illā abī' 'abdillāhī, wa-anna abā' talībīn kāna muslimān wa-dhūnata umma rasūli llahī (ḡ) kānā muslimīn. The Shī'a emphasises in particular the religious integrity of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. It is related that he never used to cast lots by arrows, nor did he worship idols, nor eat meat offered to the idols. He used to say: "I am of the religion of my father Abraham". See Biḥār, XV, 127. A tradition holds that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib will rise from the dead on the day of resurrection, as a nation in itself (*ummatan waḥidah*). See Biḥār, XV, 157 (from al-Kāfī). 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib stated that neither his father nor his grandfather, nor Ḥāshim nor 'Abd Manāf did ever worship an idol. Biḥār, XV, 144. This Shī'i view about Muḥammad's forefathers, penetrated the Sunnī literature as well. Al-Zurqānī says that Ash'arī writers also held this opinion about the prophet's ancestors. See Zurqānī, I, 177. He points out that al-Suyūfī composed six works on the subject. See *ibid* 186. Compare Goldzher, 333–334. See also Ḥalabī, I, 43. Thus, traditions about the monotheism of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, for instance, occur indeed in Sunnī sources as well. See Ḥalabī, I, 4: wa-raḡada fi ākhirī 'umrthi 'itādāna l-aṣnāmī wa-waḥhada llāha. This statement occurs already in al-Ya'qūbī, II, 10. Cf. also *Murūj*, II, 131.

Their fundamental support in this view was Qur'ān, xxvi 219: *wa-taḡallubaka fi l-sājidīn*. This verse is usually interpreted as referring to Muḥammad's prayer among the Muslims, who are called *sājidīn*, i.e. worshippers. However, according to Shī'i interpretations, as reported by al-Rāzī, the word *sājidīn* stands for Muḥammad's ancestors who are introduced as worshippers, hence believers. *Tagallubaka* means for the Shī'a the wandering of Muḥammad's primordial substance through those *sājidīn*.⁴⁸

As a matter of fact, we find already in Ibn Sa'd traditions presenting Muḥammad's ancestors as proper Muslims; "do not curse Mudār" — demands one of those traditions, ascribed to the prophet — "for he has embraced Islam".⁴⁹ A similar statement is made concerning al-Ya'a's.⁵⁰

A large number of traditions of the same nature is included in Abū al-Baḡā's book *al-Manāḡib al-Mazaydiyya*. About Ma'add it is said: "Do not curse Ma'add for he held the *ḥanfiyya* of Ibrāhīm".⁵¹ Ma'add, it is added, feared Allāh and used to give Him many thanks.⁵² Allāh once ordered the prophet Jeremiah to take Ma'add to his own country, lest the troops of Nebuchadnezzar who was about to raid Arabia, would kill him. Ma'add was thus saved for the sake of Muḥammad, his future offspring. Ma'add returned later to Mecca accompanied by several Israeli prophets performing the pilgrimage.⁵³ Another tradition about Ma'add relates that Allāh revealed to Moses that the descendants of Ma'add were his worshippers, and that a prophet would emerge from amongst them.⁵⁴ In one of his preachings, Ma'add urged his children to fear Allāh and thank him.⁵⁵ Nizār too urged his sons to fear Allāh.⁵⁶ About Mudār it is said that prophethood, honour and purity

⁴⁸ Rāzī, *ibid*, 174: ... annā ḥadithī l-ḡayru fa-qāla: gawluhu: "wa-taḡallubaka fi l-sājidīn" yaḥtamli l-wuḡyha llati dhakarṭum, wa-yahamliu an yakūna l-murādū anna llāha tā'ālā naḡala rūḥahu min sājidīn illā sājidīn kamā naḡalūhu nahnu. Compare Abū Ḥayyān, *ibid*. See names of Muslim authors elaborating this doctrine in *Murūj*, II, 130–131; al-Mās'ūdī calls them *Ghulāt*, who have borrowed their ideas from Greeks, Indians, Dualists, Zorostrians, Jews and Christians. Cf. also M. E. S. Hodgson, s.v. "Ghulāt", *ETJ*, II, 1093 ff.

⁴⁹ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 30: *lā tasubbū muḡara fa-imahu kāna ḡad aslama*. See also Ḥalabī, I, 17. Other versions of this tradition mention Rabi'a alongside with Mudār. See *Aḥsāb*, I, 31; Ya'qūbī, I, 226; Zurqānī, I, 79; Ḥalabī, I, 17.

⁵⁰ Suhaylī, I, 10. Compare Ḥalabī, I, 17.
⁵¹ Abū al-Baḡā', 48. The same is stated about Qays, Asad b. Khuzayma, Tamīm and al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b. See *ibid*, 54, 58, 59.

⁵² *Ibid*, 48.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 48–49. See also Tabari, *Tārīkh*, I, 560; *Qisṣa*, 288; *Simṭ*, I, 151; Suhaylī, I, 11; Ḥalabī, I, 17–18. About Nebuchadnezzar's raid against the Arabs, see Jerem. xlix 28 ff.

⁵⁴ Abū al-Baḡā', 52, cp. Ḥalabī, I, 18 (quoting al-Ṭabarānī).

⁵⁵ Abū al-Baḡā', 53. Ma'add is also mentioned as the first to put the stone-marks of the *Ḥaram* around Mecca. See Biḥār, XV, 170 (from al-Kāfī).

⁵⁶ Abū al-Baḡā', 54.

dwelt among his descendants.⁵⁷ Muḍar ordered his son al-Ya's to fear Allāh.⁵⁸ Khuzayma was the first to say: "there is no God except Allāh". He too ordered his son to fear Allāh and to cling to the heritage of Abraham and Ishmael.⁵⁹

Traditions of the same nature may be found in other sources as well. Kināna — it is reported — foresaw the appearance of a prophet in Mecca, named Ahmad. He ordered his people to follow that prophet.⁶⁰ Another ancestor, namely Ka'b b. Lu'ayy, also foretold Muḥammad's emergence in his preachings. He came to know about him through books belonging to Jews and Christians.⁶¹

The Muslim sources take special interest in the faith of Muḥammad's biblical ancestors, namely, Adam and his descendants. The Qur'ān does not express a clear opinion in this matter. Particularly obscure is verse ii 213: "The people were one nation (*ummatan wāḥida*), then Allāh sent the prophets with good tidings and with warnings". This verse deals with the state of mankind before the beginning of prophetic activities in the world. Various interpretations were suggested for the expression *umma wāḥida* — one nation. According to one interpretation, this expression refers to the people who had lived before God sent Noah and Abraham, when they were all united in disbelief.⁶² However, the interpretation that has become widely accepted in Islam, takes *umma wāḥida* as referring to people who were united in true faith.⁶³ Thus we find already in Ibn Sa'd a tradition, recorded on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, to the effect that all the ancestors between Adam and Noah were Muslims.⁶⁴ Adam himself, who was driven from paradise because of

his sin, is presented sometimes as a true believer. Sa'īd b. Jubayr declared: "far be it from me to claim that Adam was an unbeliever".⁶⁵

A special problem stems from Qur'ān ix 114, presenting Abraham's father as an enemy of Allāh; his name was Āzar (Qur'ān vi 74). This religious disadvantage of one of the prominent ancestors, is explained away by Muslim scholars, maintaining that Āzar was actually Abraham's uncle; he was referred to as father, only because of his close relation with Abraham. Abraham's real father was Terah. According to al-Rāzī, this solution is also of Shi'ī origin.⁶⁶

Muḥammad's Arab ancestors belong to the northern descendants of Ishmael. It is quite to be expected that partisan-southern traditions would claim similar virtues, such as true Islamic faith, for this southern forefathers as well. Thus, a tradition of a pattern already known to us, claims that the prophet stated: "Do not curse Tubba', for he was a believer".⁶⁷ Or else: "Do not curse Tubba' for he has already embraced Islam".⁶⁸ This view about Tubba' is anchored in Qur'ān I 12-14, where "the people of Tubba'" is mentioned along with the people of Noah, as well as with other people who turned down their prophets (and see also: Qur'ān xliiv 37). The commentators deduced from this verse that Tubba', like Noah and others, belonged to those believers who tried, in vain, to spread the true faith among their peoples.

The Tubba' of the above mentioned traditions is usually identified with the Himyarite king Tubān As'ad Abū Karīb, who once passed near Yaṭrib and Mecca on an expedition to the north.⁶⁹ Thus, a further tradition in the prophet's name, declares: "Do not curse As'ad of Himyar for he was the first to supply the coat of the Ka'ba".⁷⁰ To this Tubba' some verses are ascribed, in which their author foresees Muḥammad's emergence and expresses his wish to join him.⁷¹ These verses are sometimes combined with the text of a certain testament, in which the listeners are ordered to transmit from generation to generation the tidings of Muḥammad's future appearance.⁷²

⁵⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁰ Ḥalabī, I, 16.

⁶¹ Ya'qūbī, I, 236; *Ansāb*, I, 41; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 73-74; Suyūṭī, I, 69-70; Suhaylī, I, 8; Zurgānī, I, 74-75; Ḥalabī, I, 15; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 16; *Bihār*, XV, 221-222. The same story is related also concerning Quṣayy. Zurgānī, I, 75. See some more traditions about prophets and other people — both Arabs and non-Arabs — foretelling Muḥammad's emergence in Ibn Hishām, I, 217 ff.; Māwardī, 129 ff.; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 36 ff.; Suyūṭī, I, 26 ff.; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 16 ff.; Ḥalabī, I, 183 ff.; Bayhaqī, I, 277 ff.; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 93^b ff., 1^a ff.; *Bihār*, XV, passim.

⁶² *Bihār*, XI, 9; *fa-qīla: imnahum kānu 'alā l-kufrī. fa-qāla l-ḥasanu: kānu kuffārān bayna ādamā wa-nūḥin. wa-qīla: ba'da nūḥin ilā an ba'athā llāhu ibrahīma wa-l-nabīyyīna min ba'dihī.*

⁶³ *Bihār*, XI, 10; *fa-qāla hu 'abbās: kānu bayna ādam wa-nūḥin 'alā shar'atīn minā l-ḥaqīqī. Compare Ḥalabī, I, 11. See also Tabarī, Taḥṣīr*, II, 194 ff. (with more variations).

⁶⁴ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 18; *wa-nā bayna nūḥin ilā ādamā minā l-abbā'i kānu 'alā l-islāmī. See also ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁵ Tabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, 149-150: 'an sa'īd bni jubayr qāla: qīla lahu: ashraḥka ādamu? qāla:

a'ūdhu bi-llāhi an az'ama ādamā 'alayhi l-salāmu ashraḥka.

⁶⁶ Rāzī, XXIV, 174. Compare Abū Ḥayyān, VII, 47. See also Zurgānī, I, 174; 176; *Bihār*,

XV, 117; Ḥalabī, I, 29-30.

⁶⁷ Suhaylī, I, 36: *wa-ruwiya 'anhu amnahū qāla: lā tasūbbū tubba'an fa-innahū kāna nu'mīnan. See also, Tabarī, Taḥṣīr*, XXXV, 77: *wa-kānat 'ā'isha taqūl: lā tasūbbū tubba'an*

fa-innahū kāna rajulan ṣāliḥan.

⁶⁸ Zurgānī, I, 178; *Bihār*, XV, 183; Tabarī, *Taḥṣīr*, XXXVI, 98.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibn Hishām, I, 19 ff.

⁷⁰ Suhaylī, I, 36.

⁷¹ *Ma'ārif*, 28; *Tijān*, 297; Suhaylī, I, 35; *Bihār*, XV, 181-182, 214; *Murūj*, I, 68.

⁷² *Aṣma* I, 42.

Some traditions maintain that it was already the first Tubba' who knew of Muhammad's emergence and believed in him. He too, was, reportedly, in the Hijāz passing across the future place of Yathrib. On passing there while returning from the north, some people whom he had brought along with him from several countries decided to stay and settle there. They knew from their books the importance of that place as the future town of the prophet. Tubba' left a letter for Muhammad with them, in which he recognized his prophethood.⁷³ This first Tubba' has also some verses ascribed to him, in which he foresees Muhammad's emergence.⁷⁴

The descendants of the Tubba's were, likewise, true believers awaiting Muhammad's appearance. In San'a', it is reported, the bodies of Tubba's daughters were found in a grave, together with a golden inscription announcing their faith in Allāh's unity.⁷⁵ Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, one of the last kings of Himyar, conveyed the tidings of Muhammad's forthcoming appearance to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who had come to congratulate him on his victory against the Abyssinians.⁷⁶ This knowledge was handed down to him through the chain of preceding Tubba's.⁷⁷

It is most interesting to observe that Muhammad's pure ancestors, the carriers of his primordial substance, are sometimes presented not only as true Muslims, but, at least some of them, are presented also as prophets. This view, like others discussed before, is brought forth through an early interpretation of a Qur'anic verse. The verse, already mentioned above, is xxxvi 219: *wa-taqallibakā fi l-sājida*. Already Ibn Sa'd records, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, through 'Ikrima (d. 105), an interpretation regarding *ṣajidin* not as mere Muslim believers, but as prophets carrying the substance of Muhammad. It runs as follows: "(Allāh saw your — i. e. Muhammad's — wandering) from prophet to prophet and from prophet to prophet, till He drew you out as a prophet".⁷⁸

⁷³ Khargūshī (Tübingen) 95^a-95^b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 17-18; *Biḥār*, XV, 223-224. This Tubba' also built the house of Abū Ayyūb, in which Muhammad was to settle after his arrival in al-Madīna. See *Sīma*, I, 312. And see also M. J. Kister, "Ḥaddīthū 'an banī isrā'īl", IOS, II, 1972, p. 233.

⁷⁴ Subayhī, I, 36.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* (from Ibn Abī al-Dunayā).

⁷⁶ Ya'qūbī, II, 12; Bayhaqī, I, 29 ff.; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 122-128; Suyūṭī, I, 202-204; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 20-21; *Sīma*, I, 240-242; Khargūshī, 16^b-17^b; *Aghānī*, XVI, 76-77; Subayhī, I, 161-162; *Biḥār*, XV, 146 ff., 186 ff.

⁷⁷ *Asma* 'ī, 43; *wa-balaghani annahu lam yakun li-sayfi bni dhi yazanin dhālika l-'ilmu fi anni l-nabiyi* (S) *illā min jihatī tubba' in wa-mā tanāhā ilayhi*...

⁷⁸ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 5: *wa-min nabiyin ilā nabiyin wa-min nabiyin ilā nabiyin, hattā akhrajaka nabiyān*. Compare Zurqānī, I, 67, 176; Ḥalabī, I, 29. Goldzher tries to impose

More outspoken variants of this interpretation, quoted from al-Bazzār (d. 292) and other authors, mention also the word "loins" (*asfāb*), thus elucidating that the word "prophets" refers indeed to his ancestors, who transmitted his substance through their bodies: "from Ibn 'Abbās: he said: this verse means his (i. e. Muhammad's) wandering from the loins of a prophet to the loins of (another) prophet, till (Allāh) drew him out as a prophet".⁷⁹ Or else: "Allāh saw his wandering through the loins of the prophets, from prophet to prophet, till he made him emerge from the loins of his father, out of matrimony, pure since Adam".⁸⁰ The following version is the most straightforward: "The prophet has never stopped wandering through the loins of the prophets, till his mother gave birth to him".⁸¹

These versions of Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation exceed, in fact, the common Shi'ī outlook. The Shi'a draws, usually, a clear line between those ancestors of Muhammad who were actually prophets (all of them Biblical figures), and the rest of his ancestors, who are supposed to carry the prophetic heritage only as *'awsiyā'* (sing. *awsiyy*). This term refers mainly to Muhammad's Arab ancestors descending from Ishmael, who were successors to the preceding prophets; they are designed to link between the preceding prophets and the forthcoming one. It means that Muhammad's Arab ancestors, linked Ishmael — the last prophet among his forefathers — with Muhammad himself. Al-Majlisī explains this view clearly in his *Biḥār*: "The Imāmite Shi'īs are unanimous that the prophet's parents, as well as all his ancestors till Adam, were Muslims; moreover, they were righteous — whether sent prophets, or infallible *'awsiyā'*".⁸²

This distinction between prophets and *'awsiyā'* among Muhammad's ancestors, finds its way to some other versions of the above-mentioned interpretation of Ibn 'Abbās. These versions make clear that not all the carriers on the text of Ibn Sa'd the Neo-Platonic idea of the transmigration of the prophetic spirit through all the universal prophets, including Muhammad (Goldzher, 340). It is, however, quite clear that this tradition deals only with the wandering of the spermatic substance of Muhammad, through his ancestors. And see also above, note 26.

⁷⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, V, 215: *'ani bni 'abbāsīn gāla fi hādhihi l-āya: ya'ni taqallibahu min sulbi nabiyin ilā sulbi nabiyin*. And see also al-Qunmī, II, 125: *gāla: fi asfābi l-nabiyīna*. Cp. *Biḥār*, XV, 3.

⁸⁰ *Biḥār*, XV, 3: *gāla: yarā taqallibahu fi asfābi l-nabiyīna, min nabiyin ilā nabiyin, hattā akhrajahu min sulbi abīhi, min nikāḥin ghayrī ṣifātin min ladunī ādama*.

⁸¹ Suyūṭī, I, 94: *ma zāla l-nabiyu yataqallabu fi asfābi l-nabiyā'i hattā waladhu ummuhu* (from al-Bazzār and al-Tabarānī). Cp. Zurqānī, I, 67; Ḥalabī, I, 29.

⁸² *Biḥār*, XV, 117: *itifaqati limāniyyayū 'alā anna wālidayī l-rasūli wa-kulla ajdāthi ilā ādama 'alayhi l-salām kanū mustimna; bal kanū minna l-sādiqīna — innā anbiyā' mursalin aw awsiyā' ma šūmin*.

of Muḥammad's substance, were actually prophets.⁸³ One of these versions runs as follows: "Ibn 'Abbās said: the verse means your wandering through the loins of the prophets, from prophet to prophet, till He made you manifest as prophet in this nation (i.e. among the Arabs)".⁸⁴ It is suggested here that Muḥammad was the first to emerge as a prophet among the Arabs, while his Arab forefathers are not regarded as such. A similar approach comes forth in al-Zurqānī's remark: "Ibn 'Abbās means the wandering of Muḥammad through the loins of the prophets, though it was through the loins of intermediates, as well".⁸⁵ Other versions of the same interpretation, simply refrain from entitling Muḥammad's ancestors "prophets", thus avoiding the core of the problem: "Ibn 'Abbās said: it means that (Muḥammad wandered) through the loins of the ancestors, Adam, Noah and Abraham, till (Allāh) made him manifest as a prophet".⁸⁶ Or a further version: "Ibn 'Abbās said: through the loins of Adam, Noah and Abraham, till you emerged".⁸⁷

A question deserving further examination is, who amongst Muḥammad's biblical ancestors was actually a prophet (and not only a *wasīy*). The problem centres mainly around Adam. Some Qur'anic verses exclude him from the list of prophets, mentioning Noah as the first of them.⁸⁸ A tradition on the authority of Ma'mar b. Rāshid reports, likewise, that Noah was the first of all prophets sent.⁸⁹

On the other hand, the Qur'ān itself mentions also prophets, preceding Noah; among them one finds Idrīs (Qur'ān xix 56) who is usually identified with Enoch, and Adam, who is represented as primogenitor of a prophetic race (Qur'ān, xix 58); Adam is also said to be the first of all people who were chosen by Allāh to be above all mankind (Qur'ān iii 33). Some early traditions, referring to Adam as a prophet, are based on this view. It is related that Abū Dharr asked Muḥammad who was the first prophet. Muḥammad

⁸³ And see also Ḥalabi, I, 29: *wa-hādha, kamā lā yakfī, lā yunāfi wuqū'a man laysa nabīyyan fī abā'ihi, fa-l-murād wuqū'u l-nabīyā'i fī nasabihī, kamā 'alimta dūrāra anna abū 'aḥu kullāhum laysū anbiyā'.*

⁸⁴ *Tafsīr al-Kāzīm*, V, 107; *wa-qāla bnu 'abbās: arāda: wa-taqalibahu fī aslābi l-nabīyā'i, min nabīyīn ilā nabīyīn, hattā akhrajahu fī hādhihi l-ummah. Cp. ibid.*, Baghawī (in the name of 'Atā', d. 114f).

⁸⁵ Zurqānī, I, 176: *fa-fassara (bnu 'Abbās) taqalibahu fī l-sajātin bi-taqalubihī fī aslābi l-nabīyā'i, wa-law ma'a l-wasā'i'i.*

⁸⁶ Qurṭubī, XIII, 114: *wa-qāla bnu 'abbās: ay fī aslābi l-ābā'i — ādamā wa-nūḥin wa-ibrāhīma hattā akhrajahu nabīyyan.*

⁸⁷ Abū Ḥāyān, VII, 47: *wa-qāla bnu 'abbās: fī aslābi ādamā wa-nūḥin wa-ibrāhīma hattā kharajta.*

⁸⁸ See Qur'ān iv 163, vi 84, xxxiii 7, xlii 13, lvii 26.

⁸⁹ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 178: *fa-kāna awwala nabīyīn bu'tiha nuḥun 'alayhī l-salam. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 27; Zurqānī, I, 125.*

said that it was Adam to whom Allāh spoke.⁹⁰ Wahb b. Munabbih states that Adam was the first of all messengers, while Muḥammad was the last of them all.⁹¹

The presentation of Adam as a prophet contradicts, in fact, his Qur'anic descriptions as a rebel against Allāh (Qur'ān xx 121). The commentators reconcile this divergence by showing that the sin of Adam in paradise had taken place before he became an infallible prophet.⁹²

The prophets succeeding Adam were, according to one tradition, Sheth, Idrīs, Noah and Abraham.⁹³ Ishmael is also regarded as a prophet.⁹⁴ Sheth, however, is sometimes excluded from the line of early prophets, Idrīs being the first prophet counted after Adam.⁹⁵

According to the Shi'i outlook Noah, regarded as the first of *ulā l-'azm* (Qur'ān xlvī 35), was the first to appear as a prophet, since the preceding prophets had to hide their mission because of persecution by Cain's descendants.⁹⁶

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF MUḤAMMAD AS LIGHT

The most exalted representation of Muḥammad's primordial substance is light.

This light is mentioned already in early Muslim sources, mainly in traditions dealing with events that took place before the prophet's birth. The central figure in these traditions is 'Abdallāh, the prophet's father. 'Abdallāh is said to have transmitted to his wife his divine prophetic sperm, that in due time brought about the birth of Muḥammad. As long as this sperm dwelt in his body, there was a blaze shining on his forehead. This blaze attracted several women who hoped to obtain the virtue of becoming the prophet's mother. The woman who won the contest at last, was 'Āmina of the Qurashi clan of Zuhra. She was married to 'Abdallāh who invested her with his light. Consequently, she conceived Muḥammad. Having transmitted the light 'Abdallāh was no longer of interest to the other women, since not a trace of it was left on his forehead.

One of the earliest biographers of Muḥammad who dealt with the light

⁹⁰ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 10, 26. Cf. Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 151 (from Ibn Ishāq).

⁹¹ *Mā'arīf*, 26.

⁹² *Bihār*, XI, 164.

⁹³ *Mā'arīf*, 26.

⁹⁴ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 314 (from Ibn Ishāq); *Qisas*, 82; Ḥalabi, I, 18, 21.

⁹⁵ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 16; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 170 (from Ibn Ishāq).

⁹⁶ See, for instance, *Ithbār*, 24. On *ulā l-'azm*, see also *Ilal*, 122-123; *Bihār*, XI, 33-36.

of 'Abdallāh, was al-Zuhrī (d. 124). In a tradition quoted on his authority by Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 154), 'Abdallāh is described as the most handsome man ever seen in Quraysh. One day he came across a group of Qurashi women. One of them said: "women of Quraysh, which one of you will marry this man and seize the light resting between his eyes?" and indeed there was a light resting between his eyes. Āmina bint Wahb of the clan of Zuhra married 'Abdallāh, and in due time she conceived the messenger of Allāh.¹

Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150-151) account on the subject is more detailed. 'Abdallāh's light is described in his *Sira* not in its relation to his physical beauty, but in a more elevated context. The light according to Ibn Ishāq, was a prophetic symbol of 'Abdallāh's future son, therefore it attracted the women who strove to be the prophet's mother. Ibn Ishāq's version, unlike that of al-Zuhrī, mentions also the disappearance of the light from 'Abdallāh's forehead, after he had invested Āmina with it. His version, quoted by Ibn Hishām,² runs as follows: On his way to marry Āmina, 'Abdallāh was stopped by a woman near the *Ka'ba* (her name was Ruqayya, Ruqayqa or Qutayla).³ She was a sister of Waraqa b. Naufal — a scholar, well versed in the Holy Scriptures. Knowing from her brother, who had embraced Christianity, that a prophet was about to emerge among the Arabs, and seeing 'Abdallāh's light, she concluded that the future prophet was hidden in his loins. Thereupon she offered him a hundred camels for possessing her. 'Abdallāh, who was accompanied by his father, could not comply with her request.⁴ Instead, he proceeded and married Āmina. On that very day he transferred his light to her. Later, when he returned to Waraqa's sister, she observed that his light was gone, and lost interest in him.

The version of Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199), one of Ibn Ishāq's *rāwīs*, is almost identical with that of Ibn Hishām (transmitted from Ibn Ishāq through al-Bakkā'i, d. 183). The only difference consists of some extra verses in Yūnus' version, attributed to Waraqa's sister. In these verses she maintains that the light had gone from 'Abdallāh' coming to rest with the clan of Zuhra, i.e. Āmina's clan. She also describes the prophet about to be born as one who is guided, with light leading his way.⁵

A similar tradition is recorded by Ibn Sa'd on the authority of al-Wāqidī.

¹ Bayhaqi, I, 74 (from a general account about Muhammad's early years, transmitted through Ma'amar); Suyūfī, I, 104 (from al-Bayhaqi and Abū Nu'aym).

² Ibn Hishām, I, 164-165; Tabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 243-244 (Ibn Ishāq); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 86-87.

³ Suhaylī, I, 180; Halaḥī, I, 39; Zurqānī, I, 101.

⁴ 'Abdallāh's trial of temptation is sometimes compared with that of Joseph. See Zurqānī, I, 110.

⁵ Bayhaqi, I, 84-86 (from Yūnus b. Bukayr).

The woman, it is stated, could read the future in people's faces (*wa-kunārat tanzurru wa-ta'wīfu*), and thus understood the meaning of 'Abdallāh's blazing light.⁶ A further tradition, ascribed to al-Wāqidī, states that 'Abdallāh's light came to rest between Āmina's breasts, leaving a trace on 'Abdallāh's forehead like a *Dirham* coin.⁷

Ibn Ishāq himself has an additional tradition on the subject. It relates that the woman who tried to receive 'Abdallāh's light was one of his own wives. On intending to lie with her one day, his wife told him to wash himself of the traces of silt with which he had been working. Having washed he preferred to lie with Āmina, who consequently conceived the prophet. Then he returned to his first wife, but now she rejected him, saying: "No! you have passed across me with a white blaze on your forehead. I invited you, but you came first to Āmina and she has taken it away!"⁸

Other traditions state that the woman who wanted 'Abdallāh's light was Fāṭima bint Murr.⁹ According to al-Ṭabari, she was a *Kāhina* of Khath'am, a Jewess from the people of Tabāla (or: Tubāla). She is presented as extremely beautiful, young, modest and well-versed in books. On 'Abdallāh's forehead she discovered the "light of prophethood" (*nūr al-nubuwwa*).¹⁰ According to Ibn Sa'd, it shone up to the sky.¹¹ Ibn Sa'd quotes some verses ascribed to Fāṭima, in which the light is described as a lightning among the clouds, shining like dawn. Āmina, it is stressed, robbed it from 'Abdallāh without his notice. In other verses she describes 'Abdallāh, after having lied with Āmina, as being left like a smoking wick that was snuffed out. She declares that the loss of 'Abdallāh's light was a determined fate, independent of man's activity or inactivity.¹²

The divine religious nature of the traditions discussed above is entirely missing from another tradition, quoted from Ibn 'Abbās, through 'Ikrima, about the Khath'amite woman. According to this tradition, the woman was a mere whore, who used to come to Mecca to look for men performing their

⁶ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 58-59; Suyūfī, I, 104-105 (from Ibn Sa'd).

⁷ *Bihar*, XV, 282-283.

⁸ Ibn Hishām, I, 166: "...*qālat: lā, mararā bi wa-bayna 'aynayka ghurraim baydā'u: jad'awilkā fa-abayta 'alayya wa-dakhilā 'alā āminā fa-dhahabat bihā.* Compare, Tabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 244 (Ibn Ishāq); Bayhaqi, I, 86 (Yūnus b. Bukayr). This woman was named Laylā from the clan of 'Adīyy. See Suyūfī, I, 100-101; Suhaylī, I, 180; Halaḥī, I, 40; Zurqānī, I, 102 (from Ibn Qutayba).

⁹ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 59-60; *Sira*, I, 242; Suhaylī, I, 180.

¹⁰ Tabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 244. See also Suyūfī, I, 101; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 87; Zurqānī, I, 102; Halaḥī, I, 39.

¹¹ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 60; Suyūfī, I, 103 (Ibn Sa'd).

¹² Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 59-60; *Anasīb*, I, 79-80; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 26-27; Zurqānī, I, 102; *Bihar*, XV, 114-115; Tabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 244-246; Suyūfī, I, 101-103; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 87-88.

pilgrimage. When she saw 'Abdallāh, one day, she was attracted by his unusual beauty. 'Abdallāh, who was ready to lie with her, came first to his wife, who consequently conceived Muḥammad. When he came back to that woman, she could not recognize him since his light was missing.¹² The light in this version is mainly part of 'Abdallāh's physical beauty, sexually attractive to that woman who knew nothing about its prophetic significance.

Āmina's marriage to 'Abdallāh which brought about the transmission of the prophetic light to a member of the Qurashi clan of Zuhra, was predestined.¹³ It is related by Ibn Sa'd that a Jewish scholar already foresaw this marriage through his scriptures. When 'Abd al-Muttalib was in al-Yaman, this scholar examined his body and found in it signs of prophethood and kingdom. He urged him to marry a woman of Zuhra. 'Abd al-Muttalib acted accordingly, taking one Zuhra woman for himself, and one — namely Āmina — for his son, 'Abdallāh.¹⁴ Consequently, all the disappointed women of Quraysh became sick, and two hundred of them died of grief.¹⁵

The transmission of 'Abdallāh's light to Āmina was, likewise, predestined. Thus, a further tradition about 'Abdallāh's light relates that after having transmitted his light to Āmina, the disappointed woman said to him: "I have seen the light that was with you yesterday, and I wanted it to be within me. However, Allāh was determined to put it only where He wanted it to be; only where He wanted it to be."¹⁶

The moment of the transmission of the prophetic light to Āmina, had a cosmic significance. The gates of heaven and paradise opened, and the tidings about Muḥammad's light that had entered Āmina's womb, were sent down.

¹² Bayhaqi, I, 87-88 (from Dāwūd b. Abi Hind); Suyūṭī, I, 103-104 (from al-Bayhaqi, Abū Nu'aym and Ibn 'Asākir).

¹³ The clan of Zuhra were always proud of their close relation to the prophet through his mother, Āmina; they used to point out that they were his only uncles on his mother's side. See *Ma'ārif*, 57; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 86b.

¹⁴ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 51; Khargūshī, 136a; Bayhaqi, I, 87, 88-89; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 84-85; Suyūṭī, I, 99-100; Zurgānī, I, 103; Suhayli, I, 178-179; *Bihār*, XV, 218; Ḥalabī, I, 43-44. According to another tradition, Āmina was married to 'Abdallāh after her father had seen angels descending to help 'Abdallāh; it happened when the latter was attacked by seventy Jewish scholars coming from Syria to kill the father of the future prophet and seeking to prevent Muḥammad's emergence. When Āmina's father witnessed this miracle, he decided to give his daughter to 'Abdallāh. See *Ihbāṭ*, 106; Khargūshī, 18^a-18^b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 27; *Bihār*, XV, 97-98; 111.

¹⁵ *Ihbāṭ*, 106-107; Khargūshī, 18^b; Zurgānī, I, 103. A similar story is also related about the marriage of Kitāb b. Murra. See al-Wazīr al-Maghribī, *K. al-Ḥās bi 'Iḥmī l-Anṣab*, B. M. Or. 3620, fol. 49^a ff.

¹⁶ *Simt*, I, 242: "...wa-inmanā ra'aytu l-nūra l-hadhī kāna mā'aka bi-l-amsi fa-aradu an yakāna fīyā fa-abū l-lahu an yaj'alahu illā haythu shā'a, illā haythu shā'a. See also, Ḥalabī, I, 40.

All the idols of Quraysh, as well as those all over the world, were turned upside down. Iblis was thrown off his chair, and fled to the mountain of Abū Qubays, where he acquainted the demons with the news about the near appearance of the prophet and their own end¹⁷. A further account, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, relates that on the first night of Āmina's pregnancy all the beasts of Quraysh could suddenly talk. They conveyed to one another the tidings of Āmina's pregnancy, announcing that "the safeguard and shining lamp of all mankind" was about to be born. Foretellers were cut off from their demonic sources of information. The chairs of all kings were turned upside down, and the tidings of the near appearance of *Abū l-Qāsim* (i.e. Muḥammad) were announced throughout heaven and earth.¹⁸

The dwelling of the prophetic light in Āmina's body also originated some wondrous events. Ibn Ishāq reports that Āmina, after conceiving Muḥammad, was told that she had conceived the master of the Arab nation. She was ordered to name him Muḥammad.¹⁹ This version of Ibn Ishāq does not disclose in what state Āmina was during this revelation. Other traditions, however, state that it took place when she was half asleep,²⁰ or actually dreaming.²¹

During her pregnancy Āmina saw another prophetic vision, as well. It was a vision of light emerging from her body. Ibn Hishām relates, on Ibn Ishāq's authority, that the light illuminated the palaces of Buṣrā in Syria.²² It was, in fact, a prelude to the actual emergence of Muḥammad's prophetic light

¹⁷ *Ihbāṭ*, 107; Khargūshī, 19^a. See also *Simt*, I, 246; Zurgānī, I, 104-105; *Bihār*, XV, 102-103. Similar events took place before Muḥammad's actual birth. See e.g. Suyūṭī, I, 117-118; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 176.

¹⁸ *Ihbāṭ*, 109; Khargūshī, 19^b; Suyūṭī, I, 118-119; *Simt*, I, 253; Ibn Kathīr, 575; Zurgānī, I, 108; Ḥalabī, I, 47; *Muhādāra*, II, 14. See also *Bihār*, XV, 261-262, 296-297.

¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, I, 116: "...fa-qila laha: innaki qad hamalti bi-sayyidi hadhihi l-umma... *thumma sammayhi muḥammadan*. See also, *ibid*, 174; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 156, 160; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 7^b.

²⁰ *bayna l-nā'imī wa-l-yuḡzān*. See Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 60; *Anṣab*, I, 80-81; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 88; Suyūṭī, I, 105; Zurgānī, I, 106; Ḥalabī, I, 46.

²¹ Suyūṭī, I, 106, 119 (Abū Nu'aym); Ibn Kathīr, 576; Khargūshī, 30^a; *Simt*, I, 254; Zurgānī, I, 111; *Muhādāra*, II, 15.

²² Ibn Hishām, I, 166: *wa-ra'at fīha hamalat bihi annahu kharaja minhā nūrun ra'at bihi qasā'a buṣrā min arḍi l-shā'imī*. See also *ibid*, 174; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 156, 160. This tradition, as well as several others, put forward the future importance of Syria after the Muslim expansion. A tradition states that it was announced already in the Torah that Muḥammad would be born in Mecca, immigrate to al-Madīna and establish his kingdom in al-Shām. See e.g. Ibn Sa'd, I/2, 87; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 67^b; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 38; Suyūṭī, I, 28, 33, 34; Zurgānī, I, 118; *Bihār*, XV, 213. See further traditions on Syria as a centre of the prophetic light in *Kanz al-'Ummal*, XIII, 243 ff.

that was due to take place on his birth.²³ This light, according to other traditions, seemed to Āmina as if it reached the eastern and the western ends of the earth.²⁴

The tradition about Āmina's vision of light is sometimes combined with another tradition about prophets who anticipated Muḥammad's appearance. Qur'ān ii 129 mentions Abraham's prayer about Muḥammad's emergence among the Arabs, and Qur'ān lvi 6 speaks about Jesus's tidings of him. An early tradition based on these verses, runs as follows: "The prophet was asked: what was the beginning of your prophethood? The prophet answered: the prayer of my father Abraham; and Jesus has conveyed tidings of me".²⁵ The amalgamated form of this tradition — including the tradition of Āmina's vision — is recorded already by Ibn Ishāq: "The prophet said: I am the prayer of my father Abraham, and the tidings of Jesus; and my mother saw, when she conceived me, a light coming out of her body, illuminating the palaces of Buṣrā in Syria".²⁶ Moreover, the early tradition about the primogeniture of Muḥammad's prophetic substance within Adam's body (see above), is also combined with the early traditions at issue: "The prophet said: I was the servant of Allāh and the seal of prophets, when Ādam was still just clay. I shall inform you about it: the prayer of my father Abraham, the good tidings of Jesus about me, and the vision that my mother has seen; all mothers of prophets see (such visions)".²⁷ We are confronted here with an early systematization of the concept about the prophetic, luminous substance of Muḥammad. The beginning of its wandering — in Adam's loins — and its end on Muḥammad's birth — are integrated here into one whole.

The actual appearance of the light on Muḥammad's birth, is described in detail in traditions frequently related in the name of Āmina. She says that Muḥammad left her body with light that illuminated the castles of Syria and

²³ According to Yūnus b. Bukayr's version, Āmina was only informed that the light would appear on Muḥammad's birth, without her actually seeing it during her pregnancy; see Bayhaqī, I, 70, 92; Suyūṭī, I, 115. It is frequently stressed that the actual appearance of the light took place on Muḥammad's birth, whereas before it, Āmina had seen this light only in her dream; see Suyūṭī, I, 114–115; Zurgānī, I, 117; Ḥalabī, I, 47.

²⁴ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 161; Zurgānī, I, 107; *Bihār*, XV, 396–397.

²⁵ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 96: *qila: yā rasūla llāhi, mā kāna bad'u amrika? qāla: da'waru abi ibrahīma wa-bashara bi 'isā bi mā naryama*. See also Suyūṭī, I, 23–24.

²⁶ Ibn Hishām, I, 175; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 165 (Ibn Ishāq); Bayhaqī, I, 71 (Yūnus b. Bukayr). And see also Suyūṭī, I, 114, 11; Ḥalabī, I, 47, 48–49.

²⁷ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 96: *inni 'abdu llāhi wa-khātamu l-nabiyyīna wa-inna ādama la-munṣafūn fi tihāthi; wa-sa-ukhbrukum min dhālika: da'waru abi ibrahīma wa-bishāratu 'isā bi wa-fu-yā ummi llāhi ra'a; wa-kadhālika ummahātu l-nabiyyīna yarayna*. And see also Bayhaqī, I, 71, 68–70; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 36; Suyūṭī, I, 114; Zurgānī, I, 116. (Āmina's vision of light is sometimes connected, in these sources, to Muḥammad's actual birth). See more about wondrous events preceding Muḥammad's birth, Zurgānī, I, 111 ff.; *Bihār*, XV, 257 ff.; Ḥalabī, I, 70 ff.

its markets, till she saw the necks of the camels in the markets of Buṣrā.²⁸ Other traditions maintain that it illuminated the whole region between Syria and al-Yaman,²⁹ or even the whole world, to its eastern and western ends.³⁰ According to another tradition, the light shone so intensely, that it frightened her.^{30a}

Mothers of some of the prophet's companions reportedly shared the vision of light on his birth. In contrast to traditions asserting that Āmina was alone when Muḥammad was born,³¹ a tradition states that the mother of 'Uthmān b. Abī al-'Āṣ was also present. She saw light emerging from every corner of the room; the stars descended till she feared that they would come down on her.³² According to another tradition, Muḥammad came out of his mother's womb straight into the hands of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf's mother. She heard a voice greeting the boy, and saw light reaching one of the palaces of Byzantium. She also heard the voices of the angels carrying the boy all over the world. Consequently, she was among the first to embrace Islam.³³

A Shi'ī tradition puts forward the part played by 'Alī's mother in the same scene. She attended Muḥammad's birth, and saw the same vision of light which Āmina had seen. On the next morning she told her husband, Abū Ṭālib, about the light that illuminated the palm trees of Ḥājar. Abū Ṭālib assured her that, in due course, she would give birth to a son, in the same way Āmina had done.³⁴

The appearance of the prophetic light on Muḥammad's birth is the final and most elevated stage of the wandering of Muḥammad's primordial entity, beginning with Adam. Already early poets detailed the eternal course of its wandering. Some early verses are those ascribed to al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the prophet's uncle. Sometimes, however, they are ascribed to al-'Abbās b. Mirdās, who used to compose verses in praise of him,³⁵ or to Ḥassān b. Thābit, the prophet's poet.³⁶ The early nature of these verses

²⁸ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 63; Ya'qūbī, II, 9; Khargūshī, 30^b; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 94, 95; Suyūṭī, I, 115, 116; Zurgānī, I, 116, 117; Ḥalabī, I, 56.

²⁹ Khargūshī, 89^b.

³⁰ Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 63; Suyūṭī, I, 115, 116; Zurgānī, I, 115; Ḥalabī, I, 56. Detailed accounts are frequently quoted from Abū Nu'aym. See Suyūṭī, I, 117–118, 122, 126, 127; see also Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 30.

^{30a} Ya'qūbī, II, 9: *...ra'yitu lammā waḍa'uhu nūran badā minī sā'i an haṭṭā qfzā'ant*.

³¹ Khargūshī, 30^a; Zurgānī, I, 111 (from al-Khargūshī); Ibn Kathīr, 576.

³² Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 156–157; Bayhaqī, I, 91–92; Suyūṭī, I, 113–114; Zurgānī, I, 116; Suhayrī, I, 181; Ḥalabī, I, 58.

³³ Suyūṭī, I, 116–117 (Abū Nu'aym); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 94–95; Zurgānī, I, 119–120; Ḥalabī, I, 63.

³⁴ *Iḥbār*, 129. See also *Bihār*, XV, 295 (from al-Kāfī).

³⁵ *Tarīf*, II, 817 ff.

³⁶ Zurgānī, I, 117.

becomes quite evident through their content. The basic notion is identical with the early traditions about Muḥammad's primogeniture in substance, discussed in the first part of this study. The tradition ascribing these verses to al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, maintains that he composed them when the prophet was on his way back from Tabūk. A tradition to this effect is already recorded by Ibn Qutayba (d. 279).³⁷ The verses are:

Before that [i.e. before your appearance on earth], you dwelt well among shadows [of paradise],

Deposited where leaves were stitched [i.e. the loins of Adam];

Then you descended to earth, not as a human being,

Nor as a morsel or congealed blood —

But as a drop of sperm [within Adam's loins].³⁸ You sailed in the ark

While the flood had reached the mouth of "Nasr"³⁹ and his followers.

You were transmitted from loins to wombs;

When people of one generation passed away, there came a [new] generation.

You entered the fire of Abraham, hidden,
How could he be burnt, with you in his loins?

— Till your trustworthy clan dwelt within

Khindif, on high mountains with [wide] areas beneath.⁴⁰

When you were born, the earth shone

And the horizons beamed with your light;

We proceed fast in this brightness

And light, and in the right paths.

The same idea is expressed in some verses of the Shi'i poet, Kumayr (d. 125).

³⁷ *Adab al-Karīb*, 333 (quoting one verse only); Suyūfī, I, 97 (from al-Hakīm and al-Tabarānī); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 35; *Murūj*, II, 130; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 27; Zurqānī, I, 117 (two final verses only), III, 83–85 (with interpretations); Ḥalabī, I, 56 (two final verses); *mja qabliha ḥibta fī l-ʿilālī wa-fī mustawāda'in kayrihu yukhaḥqu l-waraqū / thamma habayta l-bilāda lā basharun / anta wa-lā muḥḥatun wa-lā 'alagū / bal nufḥatun; tarkabu l-safina wa-qad / aljanna nasran wa-dilālu l-gharaqū / tungalu min sābiḥin ilā raḥimih, / idhā maḍā 'ālamun badaḍa tabaḡa. / waraḍta nāwa l-khalīlī mustairan, / fī sulbīhi anta kayfa yahḥarūqū? / ḥatā hawā bayrakā l-muḥayminu min / khindifa 'ayyā tahḥā l-murūqū / wa-anta lamnā wulīdta, ashraqat l- / arḍa wa-dāḍat bi-nūrīka l-wuḡūqū / fa-nahnu fī dhālika l-ḡayḍī wa-fī l-nūrī wa-sulbī l-rashadī nakḥtarūqū.*

³⁸ The sperm, the congealed blood, and the morsel, mentioned in Qur'an xxii 5 and xxiii 14, are three stages in the process of the creation of the human being. Cf. Bukhārī, IX, 165; Muslim, VIII, 44 ff.; *Ibid.*, 345.

³⁹ *Nasr* (i.e. eagle) was one of the five idols in Noah's times mentioned in Qur'an lxxi 23. This idol was worshipped by some Himyarite tribes. See Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXXIX, 62.

⁴⁰ i.e. the clan of Muḥammad was most honoured among the clans of Khindif who was the wife of al-Ya's b. Mudār. The substance of Muḥammad is conceived here as forming part of the collective substance of his tribe.

These verses were discussed already by Goldzihier:⁴¹

When your lineage is mentioned, your long branched tree blooms [spread-
ing out] between Eve and Āmina.

You were transmitted from generation to generation,

And you have got from her [i.e. from Āmina] white silver and gold [i.e.
you have got your light from your mother at your birth]

Goldzihier has explained that

Wir können dies nicht anders verstehen, als dass die edle Substanz des Propheten, schon von Eva her bestanden habe, und dass sie (hier mit glänzendem Silber und Gold verglichen) von Generation auf Generation in ununterbrochener Folge übergeben ward. Also die Substanz des Propheten sei von Adam her präexistent, und als edler Stoff von dem Träger der einen Generation in den der folgenden gewandert, bis sie in Muhammed in offene Erscheinung trat.⁴²

According to a more elaborate outlook, the substance of Muḥammad appeared openly as light, not only shortly before Muḥammad's birth, but long before it. Hence, not only 'Abdallāh, but also former ancestors had the prophetic blaze on their foreheads. Al-Wāḡidī (d. 207) already mentioned, reportedly, the light of 'Abd Manāf: "On him was the light of the messenger of God, and in his hand was the banner of Nizār and the bow of Ishmael".⁴³ Other traditions refer to the same light as seen on Khuzayma's forehead,⁴⁴ as well as on Mudrika's⁴⁵ and Nizār's.⁴⁶

In fact, the blaze is conceived to be shining on the foreheads of Muḥam-

⁴¹ Goldzihier, 335 (from Kumayr's *Hāshimīyyāt*, ed. Horowitz, 84, 39 ff.). *mā boyra hawwā'a in nusibta ilā / āminata tamna nabruka l-hadabī; / qarḥan fa-qarḥan tamaskakḥāka, laka / l-fāḍānu minhā bayḡā wa-l-dhahabū.*

⁴² Goldzihier goes on to remark "dass Kumei hier für diese Übergabe das Wort *tanāwukh* gebraucht, der richtige Ausdruck für den Begriff der Metempsychosis der auch in der späteren Literatur eben für die Transmission des göttlichen Seelenteils von einem Imam auf den anderen regelmässig gebraucht wird". This remark completely ignores the fact that Kumayr's verses deal with the wandering of Muḥammad's substance through his ancestors, and not with the transmigration of the imāni spirit. We shall discuss the differences between the two doctrines in the third part of this article. As for the word *tanāwukh* it has to be noted that it does not fundamentally denote the transmigration of souls. It is used for the wandering of the spermatic substance as well. See, e.g. *Nahj*, II, 180: *fa-stawāda ahum fī ḡḡāli mustawāda in wa-aqarrāhum fī khayri mustaqarrin. tanāwukhātum karā'imu la-ḡābi ilā muḥabharātī l-arḥāmī.*

⁴³ Zurqānī, I, 73: *qāla l-wāḡidī: wa-kāna fihī nūru rasūli ilāhi (s) wa-fī yadīhi liwā'u nizarīn wa-qawsu ismā'īla.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 77 (from *T'arīkh al-Khamsī*).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 79; Suhayl, I, 10; Ḥalabī, I, 17.

mad's ancestors as early as Adam. Detailed traditions about the wandering of this shining light through all Muḥammad's ancestors are included in a book written by al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346), the *Iḥbāt al-Wasiyya li-l-Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*.⁴⁷ These very traditions, with some omissions, are also recorded by al-Khargūshī (d. 406) in his *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*.⁴⁸

Some important elements of these traditions are found already in the early sources dealing with Muḥammad's birth. A most prominent element is the presentation of the ancestors as mere successive vehicles designated for a continuous transmission of the light through their bodies. The light is forwarded from one to another as a whole, without leaving a trace in the body of the former carrier. The actual transmission takes place only during an intercourse that brings about the birth of the forthcoming carrier. Thus, an account similar to that concerning 'Abdallāh, is recorded in the *Iḥbāt* concerning Adam. It relates that Adam used to order Eve to wash herself whenever he intended to lie with her, lest his light would come to rest within an impure body. On conceiving Sheth the light left Adam's forehead and appeared in her own body. When Sheth was born that very light shone on his forehead,⁴⁹ whereas on the birth of Sheth's elder brothers the light kept on shining on Adam's forehead.⁵⁰ Similarly, the light did not leave Kedar's forehead before his wife conceived his successor Hamal.⁵¹ The same is related about Hāshim who transferred his light to his wife only when she conceived 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.⁵² 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, likewise, begot Abū Ṭālib and al-Zubayr, transmitting his light to neither of them. Only when his wife Fātima conceived 'Abdallāh did she absorb the whole light into her body.⁵³

The *Iḥbāt* traditions lay a special emphasis on the purity of the light-bearers — both males and females. This, also, is similar to what is said in the early traditions concerning Muḥammad's birth: Ibn Ishāq states that 'Āmina came of the noblest strain of all Quraysh.⁵⁴ The light itself is described as a blaze (*ghurra*) resembling the blaze seen on the foreheads of noble horses.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ *Iḥbāt*, 90–113; and cf. also *Murūj*, I, 37 ff.

⁴⁸ Khargūshī, 7^a ff. Parallel fragments, found in further sources, will be mentioned hereafter.

⁴⁹ *Iḥbāt*, 90–91. The parallel text of al-Khargūshī is shortened.

⁵⁰ *Simt*, I, 33, 64, 67. Cf. also *ibid.* 96 ff., about the birth of Methuseelah.

⁵¹ *Iḥbāt*, 96; Khargūshī, 10^b.

⁵² *Bihār*, XV, 39 ff. (from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī).

⁵³ *Iḥbāt*, 104–105; *Bihār*, XV, 77 (al-Bakrī).

⁵⁴ Ibn Hishām, I, 165: *wa-hiya yawma idhān aḡḡalu mar'atin min qurayshin nasaban wa-mawḍi'an.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 166: *wa-badya 'aynaji ghurraṭun mithlu ghurraṭi l-farasi.*

The same description is given in the *Iḥbāt* to the light on Adam's forehead,⁵⁶ as well as on that of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.⁵⁷

The pure race of the light-bearers is elevated in the *Iḥbāt* traditions to a rank of an exalted ideality. The strict preservation of the pure race is a Divine decree, committed already to Adam. It was handed down successively to all the following ancestors of Muḥammad. Consigning this command of purity to Adam, Allāh said: "Take this light together with My covenant and contract so that you will deposit the light only within the pure wombs".⁵⁸ For warding the same order to his successor, Sheth, Adam said: "My son, Allāh has ordered me to impose on you a covenant and a compact for the sake of the light on your face, to the effect that you shall deposit it only within the purest woman of all mankind. Let it be known to you that Allāh has put upon me a rigid covenant concerning it".⁵⁹ Gabriel and ninety thousand angels witnessed this commandment being written. It was written with a pen brought from paradise, and was sealed with Gabriel's seal. Sheth was dressed with two purple robes of light.⁶⁰ Sheth, in due time, passed this commandment (*wasīyya*) on to Enosh, Enosh to Kenan, Kenan to Mahalaleel and so on.⁶¹

The pure race was preserved by Muḥammad's Arab ancestors as well. According to the *Iḥbāt*, every Arab ancestor used to write down a covenant for his successor, to the effect that he should marry only the purest woman of his time. The covenant was hung in the Ka'ba, since the days of Ishmael, up to the year of the elephant.⁶²

The spiritual purity of the light-carriers is also emphasized in the *Iḥbāt*. Sheth for instance, was protected on his birth from *Iblis* by several veils of light drawn around him by Allāh. *Iblis* was thus isolated till the boy was seven years old; all this time a cosmic column of light was towering between heaven and earth.⁶³ A similar column ('*amūd*'), denoting the righteousness of the new-born in its universal sense, was also erected on the birth of Abraham.

⁵⁶ *Iḥbāt*, 90; Khargūshī, 8^a. Compare, *Simt*, I, 40.

⁵⁷ *Iḥbāt*, 102; Khargūshī, 13^b, 14^a.

⁵⁸ *Iḥbāt*, 90; Khargūshī, 7^b–8^a; *Simt*, I, 43–44.

⁵⁹ *Iḥbāt*, 91. See also Ḥalabi, I, 31; *Simt*, I, 73.

⁶⁰ *Iḥbāt*, 91–92; Khargūshī, 8^a; *Bihār*, XV, 35 (al-Bakrī).

⁶¹ *Iḥbāt*, 92, and see also *Simt*, I, 88, 97; Zurgānī, I, 65.

⁶² *Iḥbāt*, 98. The pure race of the women who were married to prophets or to their descendants is stressed in the Book of *Tobit* iv 12; cf. about it in J. M. Grintz, *Chapters in The History of The Second Temple Times*, Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 54–55.

⁶³ *Iḥbāt*, 91; Khargūshī, 8^a; *Bihār*, XV, 34 (al-Bakrī). Veils were, likewise, drawn around Noah (*Simt*, I, 98), Abraham (Suyūṭī, III, 114) and Jesus (*Qisṣa*, 319; Ḥalabi, I, 70). When Jesus was born Iblis was barred from three heavens; when Muḥammad was born he was barred from all seven. See Suyūṭī, I, 127; *Bihār*, XV, 257; Ḥalabi, I, 68.

In order to preserve the predestined course of the wandering substance, each of its human carriers had a revelation, by which he came to know who was his destined woman, meriting his light. Usually, these revelations took the form of a dream. The traditions about Kedar, the son of Ishmael, are most typical. The *Ithbāt* traditions relate that Kedar presumed that his destined woman was one of the daughters of Isaac. However, though he married two hundred of them the light did not forsake his body for two hundred years. Only after having a dream in which he was ordered to marry a woman from among the Arabs — namely al-Ghādīra — did the light come to rest in her womb, and she conceived his son, Hamal.⁷¹ This tradition presents the merits of Muḥammad's Arab ancestry, stressing that his primordial prophetic substance was destined to pass only through Arabs, after Ishmael and Kedar.⁷²

Ḥashim, too, was intimated in a dream of the identity of his pure chosen wife, after having turned down several proposals coming from both Arabs and non-Arabs.⁷³ 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was, likewise, ordered in his dream to marry Fāṭima bint 'Amr, the mother of his successor, 'Abdallāh.⁷⁴

Adam, as Muḥammad's primogenitor, was the first to have the substantial blaze on his forehead. The traditions about it deserve a special examination. Already early Muslim sources are familiar with the view that Adam and Eve were clad in "clothes of light" in paradise.⁷⁵ A more detailed tradition, quoted in the name of Wahb b. Munabbih, relates that Allāh coated Adam with a very beautiful nail substance that shone like the sun. After Adam committed his sin this coating was reduced, surviving only on his finger-tips.⁷⁶

The major element of Adam's brightness is said to have been the light of Muḥammad, shining on his forehead. "Allāh", says a tradition, "covered Adam with clothes of paradise, adorned with various ornaments, with light emerging from their folds, like sunshine". "The light of the prophet", it is added, "shone on his forehead like a full moon".⁷⁷

The explanation to this is that Muḥammad was not a cause for Allāh's activities, but an aim that had to be achieved through the creation of the world; see Zurqānī, I, 45: "...*uḥū bi-anna l-āḥira minna l-adīlati ta'īlu ba'ā'ī l-af'ā'ili bi-l-ḥukmi wa-l-maḡālihi liati hiya ghāyatan wa-manāfi'u li-af'ā'ilihi ta'ā'ī, lā bawā'ithu 'alā iqādamihī wa-lā 'ilālu maḡraḡayatin li-ḡā'itayāthi.*"

⁷¹ *Ithbāt*, 94–95; Khargūshī, 10^a–10^b.

⁷² This tradition seems to be a reaction to the contrary view about the divine spirit manifested through Muḥammad's body after having dwelt in the bodies of the universal prophets, all of them non-Arabs. See also below.

⁷³ *Ithbāt*, 49; Khargūshī, 13^a; *Bihār*, XV, 39–40 (al-Bakrī).

⁷⁴ *Ithbāt*, 104–105; Khargūshī, 18^a.

⁷⁵ Ya'qūbī, I, 5: *wa-kāna libās ādam wa-ḥawwā' ihīyāban min nūr.*

⁷⁶ *Mā'ārif*, 8.

⁷⁷ *Qiyās*, 23: "...*wa-nūru nabīyyina (s) fi jabḥihī ka-l-qamari laylata l-badri.*"

The blaze shining on Adam's forehead represents the substance of Muḥammad, infused into his loins; this substance is conceived in our sources as having been created separately. Traditions about its separate creation are found in the *Ithbāt*, and with some more details, in al-Tha'labī's *Qiyās al-Anḥiyā'*. This substance was created in accordance with the early concept, already known to us, when Adam was still between clay and soul, that is, before Allāh breathed the spirit of life into his body. The substance of Muḥammad on its creation is identified in these traditions with a cosmic pearl, possessing independent creative powers. Al-Tha'labī's tradition runs as follows: When Allāh wanted to create Adam He commanded Gabriel to fetch Him dust from the earth. After it was taken from the four ends of the earth, it was plunged into water and became clay.⁷⁸ Then, Allāh ordered Gabriel to descend once more and bring Him a handful of pure and luminous dust for the creation of Muḥammad. Gabriel brought this dust from the place of Muḥammad's future grave at al-Madīna.⁷⁹ The dust was mingled with the water of the *Tasnim*,⁸⁰ and was shaken till it became a white pearl. The pearl was plunged into the water of all heavenly rivers. When it was pulled out again Allāh looked at it, and it dripped a hundred-and-fourteen thousand drops; from each drop Allāh created a prophet. Then it was set in motion throughout the heavens and earth, so that the angels came to know Muḥammad before knowing Adam. Afterwards, Allāh kneaded the pearl into the clay of Adam. When Allāh breathed soul into Adam's body and accomplished his creation, the light of the Pearl of Muḥammad appeared on his forehead. It was transmitted through the loins of his ancestors till Muḥammad himself was born.⁸¹

⁷⁸ This is the common tradition about Adam's creation. See, e.g., Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 89 ff. All human beings are said to have been created in a similar way. Allāh, says a tradition, has two angels of creation. He sends them to fetch dust from the earth. This dust is mixed with the sperm dwelling in the womb. See *'Ilal*, 300–301.

⁷⁹ It is generally believed that the dust (*turbā*) for the creation of the human being is taken from the future place of his grave; see Zurqānī, I, 43: *turbatu l-shakhsī maḡfūhu*. It is important to note here that other traditions maintain that Muḥammad's dust was taken from Mecca. See Zurqānī, I, 43; Ḥalabī, I, 147: *wa-qaḍ qāda bunū 'abbās: qalu finai rasūli lillāhi (s) min surrai l-arḡi bi-makka*. And see also M. J. Kister, "You shall only set out for Three Mosques", *Le Muséon*, LXXXII, 1–2 (1969), p. 187, note 63. Mecca is even believed to be the origin and the centre of the whole earth. See *Qiyās*, 3; Zarkashī, 79; Zurqānī, I, 43; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 49 ff.; Khargūshī, 167^b; Ḥalabī, I, 146 (with a tradition granting the same merit to *bayt al-maqdis*). A harmonizing explanation is given by al-Suhrawardī (d. 632) in his *'Awā'if al-Ma'ārif* to the effect that Muḥammad's dust was taken from Mecca, yet, the pearl that was created from it was thrown in the direction of al-Madīna, which became thus the place of his future grave; see Zurqānī, I, 43–44. Cf. also Ḥalabī, I, 147.

⁸⁰ A celestial spring; see Qur'ān lxxxiii 27. And cf. also Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 69–70.

⁸¹ *Qiyās*, 20–21; see also (on the authority of Ka'b al-Aḥbār): *Ithbāt*, 90; Khargūshī, 7^b; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 34–35; Zurqānī, I, 42–43; *Bihār*, XV, 26–27 (from al-Bakrī). A further

