

Djābir b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. Ḥarām b. Ka‘b b. Ghanm b. Salima, Abū ‘Abd Allāh (or Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, or Abū Muḥammad) al-Salamī al-Khazradjī al-Anṣārī, Companion of the Prophet. His father, ‘Abd Allāh, was one of the seventy men of Aws and Khazradj who gave the Prophet the oath of allegiance at the ‘Aḳaba Meeting and committed themselves to defend him. His father is also recorded in the list of the twelve *nukabā’*, the chosen group from among the seventy; Djābir himself attended the Meeting as a very young boy, and is therefore counted in the list of “the Seventy” and in the honourable list of those who embraced Islam together with their fathers. His father prevented him from taking part in the two encounters at Badr and Uḥud, leaving him at home to look after his seven (or nine) sisters. A report according to which he attended the battle of Badr and drew water for the warriors is denied authenticity by al-Wāḳidī and marked by him as an ‘Irāḳī tradition. On the Day of Uḥud, Djābir lost his father, his mother's brother ‘Amr b. al-Djamūḥ and his cousin Khallād. Djābir's father distinguished himself in the fight and was the first Muslim warrior killed in this battle. The Prophet did not object to Djābir mourning for him, and gave him permission to uncover his face. ‘Abd Allāh was buried according to the Prophet's ruling as a martyr on the spot where he fell, clad in his garment, with his wounds still bleeding. The Prophet personally suggested that he should act as father to Djābir and put ‘Ā’isha in his mother's place. On the day following the battle of Uḥud, Djābir asked and was granted permission to join the force dispatched by the Prophet to Ḥamrā’ al-Asad. After that Djābir accompanied the Prophet on 18 or so expeditions.

The Prophet showed great concern for Djābir and his family and often came to his dwelling. Djābir's family, who were familiar with his tastes, used to prepare for the Prophet his favourite kind of meal. On one such visit the Prophet blessed the family of Djābir and their abode, on another he cured Djābir of fever by sprinkling on him water

which he had used for ablution. The Prophet gave his approval for Djābir to marry a woman who was not a virgin and who would take care of his sisters. By his blessing he helped Djābir to pay a debt which his father owed to the Jew Abū Shaḥma and he invoked God's forgiveness for him when he bought his camel (*laylat al-ba'īr*).

After the death of the Prophet 'Umar appointed Djābir chief (*'arīf*) of his clan. During the military operations of the conquest of Damascus he was sent as a member of an auxiliary force dispatched to Khālīd b. al-Walīd. On another occasion he was dispatched by 'Umar with a small group to al-Kūfa. When the rebellious Egyptian troops advanced to Medina in order to besiege the house of 'Uthmān, Djābir was among the group sent by the caliph to negotiate with them and appease them. He is said to have fought on the side of 'Alī at Ṣiffīn (37/657) and then to have returned to Medina. During the expedition of Busr b. Arṭāt (40/660) Djābir was compelled to swear allegiance to Mu'āwiya; this he did in precautionary dissimulation (*taḳīyya*), after having consulted Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet. This is a new trait of character, indicating Shī'ī sympathies, and is one of the earliest cases of *taḳīyya* mentioned in the texts. As an indication of Djābir's attachment to Medina and to the relics of the Prophet, one may adduce the report that he and Abū Hurayra prevailed upon Mu'āwiya to leave the *minbar* of the Prophet in Medina and not to transfer it to Syria. He is said to have visited the court of 'Abd al-Malik and to have asked him for some grants for the people of Medina. When the force sent by Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya against Medina (63/683) entered the city, Djābir openly voiced his objection, circulating an utterance of the Prophet about the punishment which would befall people who affrighted the city. He was saved from death by Marwān when a man, enraged by his words, attacked him intending to kill him. After the victory of al-Ḥadjjādī over Ibn al-Zubayr (73/692), al-Ḥadjjādī ordered the hands of some of the opponents of the Umayyad rule to be stamped in the same way as was done to the *dhimmīs* and Djābir was among those opponents. Djābir's

sharp criticism and unkind words with regard to the rulers, especially al-Ḥadīdjādī, provoked the latter's caustic remark that Djābir displayed the same pride as the Jews (by which, of course, the Anṣār were meant).

Djābir died at 78/697 at the age of 94 (other reports, however, give varying dates). He is said to have been the last survivor of the group of 70 Anṣār who attended the 'Aḳaba Meeting, thus fulfilling a prediction of the Prophet. The prayer over his grave was performed by the governor of Medina, Abān b. 'Uthmān, or according to another tradition, by al-Ḥadīdjādī b. Yūsuf when he came to Medina after his victory over 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

Djābir is noted as a most prolific narrator of traditions from the Prophet. The number of those going back to him is estimated at 1,540; al-Bukhārī and Muslim recorded 210 *ḥadīths* transmitted by him in their compilations, and the subject-range of his transmission is extremely wide. Of special interest are Djābir's reports about events which he witnessed and details furnished by him about expeditions in which he took part. Djābir was highly respected by the scholars of *ḥadīth* and is counted in the lists of reliable transmitters and the *aṣḥāb al-futyā*. He used to recite his traditions in the mosque of Medina; his sessions of *ḥadīth*-transmission were attended by a wide circle of students who would discuss the traditions of their master after leaving the mosque. A composition known as *ṣaḥīfat Djābir* contained a great number of traditions recorded by him. Scholars of *ḥadīth* were eager to circulate traditions on his authority, without always observing the necessary rules of *ḥadīth* transmission. Even a distinguished pious scholar like al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was suspected of reporting some traditions on the direct authority of Djābir although he never was his disciple. The impressive list of those who transmitted his traditions includes the names of three of his sons: 'Abd al-Raḥmān,

‘Aḳīl and Muḥammad. His descendants are said to have settled in North Africa, in a place called al-Anṣāriyya.

In Shī‘ī tradition, Djābir was granted an exceptionally high rank. The *ḥadīths* recorded in Shī‘ī sources on his authority touch upon the fundamental tenets of Shī‘ī belief: the mission of ‘Alī, his qualities, his authority over the believers, the graces granted him by God, the divine virtues of his descendants and the duties of allegiance and obedience incumbent upon the believers. It was the *imām* al-Bāḳir who asked Djābir about the Tablet which God sent down to Fāṭima and which Djābir got permission to copy. In this Tablet God named the *imāms* and established their order of succession. It is noteworthy that, according to some versions, the *imām* compared the copy of Djābir with the Tablet in his possession and stated that the copy was a reliable and accurate one. In another story Djābir confirms the accuracy of the unusual report about the *ḥidjra* as told him by the *imām*. Djābir is credited with the *ḥadīth* about the appointment of ‘Alī as *waṣī*, which forms the base of the Shī‘ī interpretation of Sūra LIII, 1–4. It was he who reported the utterance of the Prophet that ‘Alī is the *ṣirāṭ mustaḳīm*, the right path to be followed. The *imām* al-Bāḳir stressed that Djābir was privileged to possess knowledge of the correct interpretation of Sūra XXVIII, 85 which, according to him, refers to the *radj‘a*, the re-appearance of the Prophet and ‘Alī. Among further Shī‘ī traditions reported on Djābir's authority is the one which states that there are two weighty things left by the Prophet for the Muslim community: the Ḳur‘ān and his Family (*al-‘itra*). Another tradition has it that the angel Djibrīl bade the Prophet proclaim the vocation of ‘Alī and his descendants, the *imāms*, and tell the Muslim community about ‘Alī's distinguished position on the Day of Resurrection and in Paradise. The Sunnī version of Djābir's report that the first thing created by God was the Light of Muḥammad had its Shī‘ī counterpart traced back to Djābir, which said that this Light was split into two parts: the Light of Muḥammad and the Light of ‘Alī,

and that it was later transferred to the succeeding *imāms*. It is on the authority of Djābir that the significant tradition which states that the last persons to be with the Prophet when he died were ‘Alī and Fāṭīma is reported. Some of his traditions relate the miracles of ‘Alī. ‘Alī ascended to Heaven in order to put down the rebellion of the wicked *djinn* who denied his authority and a luminous angel prayed in his place in the mosque. Another miracle happened when ‘Alī walked with Djābir on the bank of the Euphrates: a very high wave covered ‘Alī; when he reappeared completely dry after a short time, he explained that it had been the Angel of the Water who greeted and embraced him.

Djābir is distinguished in the Shī‘ī tradition by a significant mission entrusted to him by the Prophet: he was ordered to meet the *imām* al-Bāḳir and to convey to him the greetings of the Prophet, which he did. This created a peculiar relationship between the elderly bearer of the good tidings and the young recipient, the *imām* al-Bāḳir. According to tradition, the two used to meet, and some of the traditions transmitted by al-Bāḳir are told on the authority of Djābir and traced back to the Prophet. It is evident that the idea that the *imām* might have derived his knowledge from a human being is opposed to the principles of the Shī‘a. It had thus to be justified that it was merely done in order to put an end to the accusations of the Medinans, who blamed al-Bāḳir for transmitting *ḥadīths* on the authority of the Prophet whom he had never seen. As the traditions reported by Djābir and those independently reported by the *imām* and revealed to him by God were in fact identical, the insertion of Djābir's name between the name of the *imām* and that of the Prophet was quite a formal act with no significance. A few traditions are indeed reported with names of some Companions inserted between the *imām* and the Prophet. In one of the traditions it is explained that this insertion may make the *ḥadīth* more acceptable to people, although it is obvious

that the *imāms* knew more than that Companion whose name was inserted between the *imām* and the Prophet.

The close relationship of Djābir with the family of ‘Alī is also exposed in the story relating that Fāṭima bint ‘Alī asked Djābir to intervene and to persuade Zayn al-‘Ābidīn to cease his excessive devotional practices which might be harming for his health. It was a sign of respect and faith that, when Ḥusayn asked his enemies on the battle-field of Karbalā’ to save his life, quoting the utterance of the Prophet that he and his brother were the lords of the youths of Paradise (*sayyidā shabāb ahl al-djanna*), he referred to Djābir who would vouch for the truth of the utterance. Djābir is said to have been present at the grave of Ḥusayn shortly after he had been killed and to have met there the family of Ḥusayn who were sent back by Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya. Another Shī‘ī tradition reports about his visit to the grave of Ḥusayn and his moving speech over the grave.

Djābir had intimate relations with the family of ‘Alī and especially with the two *imāms* Zayn al-‘Ābidīn and al-Bāqir. There are some Shī‘ī attempts to link him with Dja‘far al-Ṣādiq and to fix the date of his death at the beginning of the 2nd century A.H.

Finally, the high position of Djābir in Shī‘ī tradition is expressed by the fact that he was placed in the list of the four persons who clung to the true faith and in the list of the nine persons to whom ‘Alī promised that they would be in Paradise.

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