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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DAN GIBSON'S CLAIMS REGARDING PROPHET AYYUB (JOB) (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

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Abstract

This paper presents a critical examination of Dan Gibson's claims regarding the identity of Prophet Ayyub (Job, peace be upon him) and his proposed connection with Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom, as well as the alleged association of Prophet Ayyub with the Qur'ānic people of 'Ād. Gibson argues that the biblical figures "Job" and "Jobab" represent the same historical person and that, consequently, Prophet Ayyub was of Edomite descent and a member of the people of 'Ād. To substantiate his thesis, he offers six lines of evidence—onomastic, geographical, chronological, genealogical, and thematic parallels—between Job and Jobab.

The present study critically analyzes these claims through a comparative examination of biblical, Qur'ānic, and early Islamic historiographical sources, including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Ya'qūbī. The analysis demonstrates that both Islamic and certain Judaeo-Christian genealogical traditions support a lineage connecting Prophet Ayyub to Esau, son of Isaac, thereby making the identification of Ayyub with Jobab son of Zerah historically plausible. However, Gibson's further assertion that Ayyub belonged to the people of 'Ād is critically rejected on textual and theological grounds. The Qur'ānic account of 'Ād describes a divine punishment for collective disbelief, whereas the Book of Job presents Ayyub's ordeal as an individual test of faith.

Hence, while the genealogical and historical evidence lends some credibility to the identification of Prophet Ayyub with Jobab of Edom, the attempt to associate him with the people of 'Ād is untenable. This study concludes that Gibson's hypothesis partially aligns with scriptural and traditional genealogies but fails to withstand critical scrutiny concerning the broader historical and theological context.

Keywords: Prophet Ayyub (Job), Jobab son of Zerah, Dan Gibson, Edom and Genealogy, People of 'Ād

1. Introduction

The figure of Prophet Ayyub (Job, peace be upon him) occupies a revered position in both Islamic and Judeo-Christian traditions as a paragon of patience and unwavering faith in the face of suffering. While the Qur'ān presents Ayyub as a righteous servant tested through severe trials, the Biblical Book of Job similarly portrays him as a model of endurance amid divine testing. In recent years, Dan Gibson—a contemporary



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

revisionist historian—has advanced an unconventional hypothesis linking Prophet Ayyub to Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom, as mentioned in the Book of Genesis. According to Gibson, the figures of “Job” and “Jobab” are not distinct but represent the same historical individual, and by extension, Ayyub was of Edomite descent. Furthermore, Gibson identifies the biblical nation of Edom with the Qur’ānic people of ‘Ād, thereby claiming that Ayyub also belonged to that ancient Arabian tribe.

This hypothesis, though intriguing, introduces significant historical, textual, and theological challenges. The traditional Islamic narrative situates Prophet Ayyub within the prophetic lineage descending from Isaac and Esau, without associating him with the disbelieving people of ‘Ād. Consequently, Gibson’s claims necessitate a critical re-examination in light of both scriptural and historiographical evidence. This study undertakes a comparative and analytical evaluation of Gibson’s arguments by engaging with primary sources from the Bible, the Qur’ān, and early Islamic historians such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Ya‘qūbī.

2. Statement of the Problem

Dan Gibson’s identification of Prophet Ayyub with Jobab son of Zerah, and his further claim linking Ayyub to the people of ‘Ād, raise fundamental questions regarding the historical and theological integrity of these assertions. While the similarity of names and certain genealogical parallels might lend superficial support to Gibson’s thesis, his conflation of Edom with ‘Ād and his interpretation of textual correspondences between the Qur’ān and the Book of Job appear methodologically problematic.

The problem, therefore, lies in evaluating whether the evidence presented by Gibson—linguistic, geographical, chronological, and genealogical—is sufficient to equate Prophet Ayyub with Jobab son of Zerah, and whether his association of Ayyub with the people of ‘Ād is supported by either Islamic or Biblical tradition. This research seeks to determine the extent to which Gibson’s claims are historically plausible and theologically sound.

3. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. What are the main arguments presented by Dan Gibson regarding the identification of Prophet Ayyub (Job) with Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom?
2. To what extent do the genealogical and historical records in the Bible and early Islamic sources corroborate or contradict Gibson’s claims?
3. How valid is Gibson’s attempt to associate Prophet Ayyub with the Qur’ānic people of ‘Ād, based on textual and theological analysis?
4. What are the broader implications of Gibson’s interpretation for understanding prophetic genealogy and historical geography in Abrahamic traditions?

4. Significance of the Study

This research holds significance on multiple academic and theological fronts. Firstly, it contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on the intersection of Biblical and Qur’ānic narratives by offering a comparative and critical perspective. Secondly, it



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

clarifies genealogical ambiguities surrounding Prophet Ayyub by synthesizing evidence from both Islamic historiography and Judeo-Christian traditions. Thirdly, the study exposes methodological flaws in modern revisionist approaches that seek to reinterpret prophetic histories without sufficient textual or contextual grounding.

By critically evaluating Dan Gibson's claims, this study not only reaffirms the traditional Islamic understanding of Prophet Ayyub's lineage and mission but also underscores the importance of methodological rigor in cross-scriptural historical analysis. Ultimately, it contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of how prophets are represented across Abrahamic scriptures and how historical geography informs theological interpretation.

5. Don Gibson First Claim's: Were Prophet Job (Ayyub, peace be upon him) and Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom, one and the same person?

In the Bible, an entire book titled The Book of Job is devoted to the life and trials of Prophet Job (Hazrat Ayyub, peace be upon him), whose name is explicitly mentioned therein as "Job." This book offers a profound and poetic narrative of his steadfast faith amid immense suffering. In addition to this, the Book of Genesis records another figure named Jobab son of Zerah, identified as the second king of Edom.

Dan Gibson, however, asserts that these two figures—"Job" and "Jobab son of Zerah"—are in fact the same person. Since Jobab son of Zerah belonged to the nation of Edom, Gibson concludes that Prophet Job (Ayyub, peace be upon him) must also have been of Edomite descent. Furthermore, he equates the biblical nation of Edom with the Qur'ānic people of 'Ād, thereby claiming that Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) was from the people of 'Ād.

To substantiate his claim that "Job" and "Jobab son of Zerah" were one and the same individual, Dan Gibson presents six evidences.

5.1 Dan Gibson's Six arguments

5.1.1 First Reason: Similarity in Name

The names Ayyūb (Iyowb, Job) and Yōbāb (Iyowbab, Jobab) exhibit a remarkable linguistic resemblance, differing only by the addition of "ab," which in Hebrew signifies "father." The Book of Job is generally regarded as one of the oldest books of the Bible, possibly predating even the Book of Genesis. It is also possible that the original language of the book of Job was older than Hebrew—perhaps closer to the Aramaic or Edomite languages. Furthermore, the authors of Job and Genesis were not the same, which suggests that the names may have been transmitted through distinct oral or written traditions. This could explain the minor variation in their forms.¹

5.1.2 Second Reason: The Same Land

Both Job and Jobab are described in the Bible as inhabitants of the same region. Concerning Job, the Bible states:

"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil"²



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

Jobab, son of Zerah, was a king of Edom, and the Bible also records that the people of Edom lived in the land of Uz.³ This geographical overlap indicates that both figures may have belonged to the same region. Considering these similarities, it is plausible that Job and Jobab could indeed be the same person.⁴

5.1.3 Third Reason: Shared Geography

Jobab is said to have lived in Bozrah, a city located south of the Dead Sea, which receives much of its water from the Jordan River.⁵ Interestingly, the Book of Job also reflects the author's familiarity with the Jordan River, referring to it as a great river.⁶ This geographical correspondence further supports the possibility that Job and Jobab were, in fact, one and the same individual.

5.1.4 Fourth Reason: Chronological Correspondence

Job and Jobab appear to have lived around the same historical period. Both Prophet Job (Ayyub) and Jobab lived after the time of Prophet Ishmael (Ismā'īl), when Ishmael's descendants had settled in the northern deserts of Arabia. Jobab was the fourth generation descendant of Esau. In the Book of Job, the Prophet mentions the "caravans of Tema,"⁷ and Tema was among the descendants of Ishmael.⁸ Likewise, Prophet Job also refers to the "caravans of Sheba,"⁹ who were the offspring of Sheba — the son of Jokshan, Abraham's son by his second wife, Keturah.¹⁰ This indicates that these tribes were relatively new nations during the lifetime of Prophet Job. Moreover, the general scholarly consensus is that the Book of Job belongs to the pre-Exodus period. Consequently, the timeframes of Job and Jobab coincide.¹¹

5.1.5 Fifth Reason: Occupational Similarity

Dan Gibson points out that Jobab was a king of a pastoral nation that prided itself on its herds and livestock. Similarly, Prophet Job (Ayyub) was also a man of great wealth, owning large flocks and herds.¹²

5.1.6 Sixth Reason: Contemporary Figures

Esau had a son named Eliphaz.¹³ If we consider the chronology, Eliphaz would have been around one hundred years old or more by the time Jobab son of Zerah became king. Interestingly, Prophet Job's closest friend was also Eliphaz the Temanite.¹⁴ The Book of Job depicts him as an elderly man, even older than Job's father, as he himself declares:

"The grey-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father."¹⁵

The Book of Job identifies Eliphaz as "the Temanite."¹⁶ On the other hand, Esau's son Eliphaz also had a son named Teman,¹⁷ making him and his descendants "Temanites."¹⁸

On the basis of all these correlations, Dan Gibson concludes that Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom, and Prophet Job (Ayyub) were in fact one and the same historical figure.

5.2 Critical Analysis

Dan Gibson has proposed the view that Jobab and Prophet Ayyub (Job, peace be upon him) were in fact one and the same person. He presents several arguments in



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

support of this claim, which apparently suggest that Job and Jobab were two names referring to a single historical figure. However, nowhere in the Bible is it explicitly stated that both were the same individual. Likewise, many biblical commentators do not agree with this interpretation. In contrast, some Jewish and Christian scholars have indeed regarded Jobab and Job as the same person.

According to the Bible, the genealogy of Jobab is as follows:

Jobab son of Zerah, son of Reuel, son of Esau, son of Isaac, son of Abraham.

Islamic historical sources also seem to indicate that Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) and Jobab son of Zerah were in fact the same person. Imam al-Ṭabarī mentions three genealogical traditions regarding Prophet Ayyub:

1. Ayyub son of Moos son of Razah son of Esau son of Isaac son of Abraham.
2. Ayyub son of Moos son of Raghwīl son of Esau son of Isaac son of Abraham.
3. Ayyub son of Moos son of Re'ūl son of Esau son of Isaac son of Abraham.¹⁹

All these reports, as well as the biblical account, agree that Prophet Ayyub was a descendant of Isaac and that he did not belong to the line of Jacob (Israel), but rather to that of Isaac's other son, Esau (whom al-Ṭabarī refers to as 'Īs). The variation in the name "Esau" across languages is quite natural. In the Bible, Esau's son is called Reuel, while al-Ṭabarī in one narration calls him Raghwīl and in another Re'ūl. Similarly, according to the Bible, Reuel's son was Zerah, while al-Ṭabarī refers to him as Razah and Ibn Kathīr as Razzāh,²⁰ all of which clearly represent the same person, Zerah.

Muslim historians mention that Ayyub's father was named Moos, which appears to be a historical inaccuracy. Prophet Ayyub lived in the land of 'Uz, and it seems that some chroniclers confused the name of the land ('Uz) with that of his father. Al-Ya'qūbī corrected this error by transmitting the proper genealogy, in which the name Moos is not included.

Another common error is found among some historians who described Ayyub as Rūmī (Roman).²¹ This seems to be a scribal mistake, since Ayyub belonged to Edom. Because "Edom" was a lesser-known term and "Rome" was more familiar, the two words were likely confused due to their phonetic and orthographic similarity.

From this evidence, it becomes apparent that the genealogies of the biblical Jobab and the Islamic Prophet Ayyub are identical, thereby reinforcing the view that both were indeed the same individual.

In his *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, Ibn Kathīr records two traditions concerning Prophet Ayyub's wife. He favors the second account, stating that it is the more authentic and widely accepted tradition, according to which Ayyub's wife was *Rahmah bint Ephraim ibn Yusuf ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq*.²² The Bible records that Jobab was the fourth generation from Isaac, and according to Ibn Kathīr's narration, *Rahmah bint Ephraim* was likewise from the fourth generation of Isaac's descendants. This correspondence implies that *Rahmah* and Jobab lived in the same period and were close relatives. It is therefore plausible that *Rahmah bint Ephraim* was Jobab's wife and that Jobab was none other than Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him).



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

The accounts of Muslim historians lead to the conclusion that Jobab and Prophet Ayyub were two names for the same individual. The historian al-Ya‘qūbī explicitly states that there is no difference between the two. Two eminent South Asian scholars, Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi and Maulana Hifzur Rahman Seoharwi, have also endorsed this view.²³ Nadwi even asserts that, according to both ancient and modern, Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship, the consensus of evidence indicates that Jobab and Job are one and the same person, with the difference arising merely from linguistic variations in pronunciation.²⁴

Several Orientalists have likewise confirmed this opinion, among whom Forster is particularly noteworthy.²⁵

Hence, in light of genealogical continuity, textual consistency, and historical evidence, it may be concluded that the theory identifying Jobab with Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) is well-supported and historically plausible.

6. Dan Gibson’s Second Claim: Was Prophet Job (Ayyub) Related to the People of ‘Ād?

Dan Gibson argues that although Prophet Hūd (peace be upon him) was sent as a messenger to the people of ‘Ād, Prophet Ayyub (Job) also belonged to the same nation. According to Gibson, Ayyub was not only a prophet among the ‘Ād but also lived during the time when divine punishment befell that nation.

To substantiate this claim, Gibson presents the following argument. He compares a Qur’ānic passage describing the destruction of the people of ‘Ād with an episode from the Book of Job in the Bible. The Qur’ān states:

وَأَمَّا عَادُ فَأَهْلِكُوهَا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ سَحَرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعِجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ²⁶

“And as for ‘Ād, they were destroyed by a furious, violent wind, which He imposed upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession, so that you would see the people therein fallen as though they were hollow trunks of palm trees.”

He then juxtaposes this with the following passage from the Book of Job:

“While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the eldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead; and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’”²⁷

According to Gibson, the striking similarity between these two descriptions—particularly the mention of a violent wind that destroys a building and causes widespread death—indicates that both accounts refer to the same historical event.

5.1 Critical Analysis

The question of whether Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) belonged to the people of ‘Ād remains unresolved and open to further scholarly investigation. However, Dan Gibson has attempted to establish a connection between Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) and the people of ‘Ād, and we shall now examine the arguments he has presented in support of this claim.



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

To begin with, there are clear distinctions between the storm described in the Book of Job and the divine punishment inflicted upon the people of ‘Ād as narrated in the Qur’ān. These two events differ not only in terms of time and location, but also in their nature and purpose.

According to the Book of Job, Ayyub was a devout and righteous servant of God who had been blessed with immense wealth and prosperity. Satan argued before God that Ayyub’s piety was conditional upon his material blessings, and that he would cease to obey God if those blessings were taken away. Thus, God allowed Ayyub to be tested by severe trials: his wealth was taken away, his body afflicted with disease, and his children perished in a tragic accident.²⁸ The passage states that while his children were eating in a house, a violent wind struck the building, causing it to collapse and resulting in their death.

In contrast, the Qur’ān explicitly states that the destruction of the people of ‘Ād was a divine punishment sent as retribution for their disbelief, arrogance, and rejection of Prophet Hūd (peace be upon him). The furious wind annihilated the entire nation, erasing it completely from existence.

Two essential differences emerge from this comparison:

1. The storm in Ayyub’s narrative was a test of faith, not a punishment.
2. The incident affected only Ayyub’s family, whereas the wind that struck the people of ‘Ād obliterated an entire community.

Therefore, the two accounts differ fundamentally in cause, scope, and theological meaning. To identify them as the same event is neither supported by textual evidence nor by historical reasoning. Consequently, Dan Gibson’s attempt to link Prophet Ayyub with the people of ‘Ād cannot be sustained on either scriptural or logical grounds.

6. Conclusion

The present study has critically examined Dan Gibson’s claims regarding the identification of Prophet Ayyub (Job, peace be upon him) with Jobab son of Zerah, the king of Edom, and his further assertion that Prophet Ayyub belonged to the Qur’ānic people of ‘Ād. Gibson’s hypothesis, though novel in its attempt to bridge Biblical and Qur’ānic genealogies, suffers from methodological and theological inconsistencies that undermine its overall credibility.

From the comparative analysis of scriptural, genealogical, and historical sources, several key conclusions emerge:

6.1 Genealogical Correlation: The genealogical evidence presented in both the Bible and early Islamic historiographical works—particularly those of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Ya‘qūbī—strongly supports a lineage connecting Prophet Ayyub to Esau (‘Īṣ), son of Isaac. The convergence of these traditions with the biblical account of Jobab son of Zerah lends considerable plausibility to the view that Ayyub and Jobab were indeed the same historical figure. This identification is further reinforced by linguistic similarities between the names Iyowb (Job) and Iyowbab (Jobab), as well as the overlapping geographical references to the land of Uz and Edom.



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

6.2 Historical and Geographical Context: Both the Qur'ānic and Biblical descriptions place Ayyub within a geographical setting consistent with the territories historically associated with Edom, situated south of the Dead Sea. These regions were inhabited by the descendants of Esau and frequently mentioned in ancient Near Eastern records. The chronological alignment of Ayyub and Jobab within the post-Isma'īlite period, along with references to neighboring tribes such as Tema and Sheba, further substantiates this contextual harmony.

6.3 Theological and Textual Distinction: Despite these genealogical and geographical correspondences, Gibson's attempt to link Prophet Ayyub to the people of 'Ād fails under close scrutiny. The Qur'ān depicts the people of 'Ād as a community punished for collective disbelief and arrogance, whereas Ayyub's trials were individual and purgative in nature—intended as a divine test rather than retribution. The two narratives thus diverge both in theological purpose and moral message. The Qur'ānic theme of ṣabr (patience) in Ayyub's story cannot be reconciled with the annihilative punishment visited upon the disbelievers of 'Ād.

6.4 Methodological Evaluation: Gibson's argumentation reveals a tendency toward overextension of linguistic and textual parallels without sufficient consideration of theological context or the hermeneutical principles governing scriptural interpretation. His conflation of Edom with 'Ād lacks philological and archaeological substantiation, and his reliance on thematic resemblance (such as the "mighty wind") ignores the distinct narrative frameworks and moral functions of each story.

In light of the above analysis, this research concludes that Gibson's hypothesis is partially credible only in its genealogical dimension, which finds tentative support in Islamic and Biblical traditions identifying Ayyub with Jobab son of Zerah. However, his broader claim equating the Edomites with the people of 'Ād is historically, linguistically, and theologically untenable. The Qur'ānic narrative of Ayyub remains distinct in its emphasis on divine trial and moral endurance, separate from the punitive destruction of 'Ād. Consequently, Gibson's overall thesis, while intellectually provocative, fails to withstand rigorous scrutiny when measured against scriptural exegesis, historical geography, and the principles of comparative theology.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future scholarship:

7.1 Interdisciplinary Approach: Future researchers should adopt an interdisciplinary framework combining scriptural exegesis, comparative linguistics, and historical geography to study prophetic identities. This would help balance textual interpretation with archaeological and historical data.

7.2 Philological Reassessment: A detailed philological study of the terms Iyowb, Iyowbab, Uz, and Edom across Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Akkadian) should be undertaken to clarify their etymological connections and historical applications.



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

7.3 Archaeological Correlation: Further investigation into archaeological evidence from southern Jordan and northern Arabia could illuminate the socio-political landscape of Edom and potentially validate or refute the genealogical claims linking Ayyub to Jobab.

7.4 Re-examination of Early Islamic Sources: Critical editions and comparative analyses of early Islamic historiographical works (e.g., al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Ya‘qūbī) should be employed to identify textual variations concerning Ayyub’s lineage and location, thereby refining our understanding of early Muslim genealogical traditions.

7.5 Avoidance of Overgeneralization:

Modern revisionist scholars should exercise caution in drawing theological or ethnological equivalences between distinct Qur’ānic and Biblical peoples (e.g., Edom and ‘Ād). Such identifications must rest on verifiable historical and linguistic evidence rather than thematic similarity alone.

7.6 Comparative Theology Perspective: A systematic comparative study should be undertaken to explore how the concept of divine testing (ibtilā’) in Ayyub’s story differs across Abrahamic scriptures, contributing to a deeper interfaith understanding of suffering and perseverance.

7.7 Critical Methodological Awareness: Revisionist hypotheses like Gibson’s should be assessed within the broader epistemological framework of scriptural historiography, ensuring that textual parallels are contextualized and not employed as isolated evidence.

In conclusion, while Dan Gibson’s exploration of Prophet Ayyub’s historical identity opens intriguing avenues for cross-scriptural research, this study reaffirms the need for methodological precision and theological coherence. The life of Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) continues to stand as a timeless testament to human patience, faith, and endurance—transcending genealogical speculation and remaining anchored in divine wisdom as portrayed in both Islamic and Biblical traditions.

8. References

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⁵: Ibid

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⁷: Job 6:19

⁸: Genesis 25:15

⁹: Job 6:19

¹⁰: Genesis 25:3

¹¹: Quranic Geography, P: 63

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¹³: Genesis 36:4

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THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

Vol.3 No.3 2025

ISSN P : [3006-3329](#)

ISSN E : [3006-3337](#)

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¹⁹ : Tabari, Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibni Jarir, Tarikh Rusul Wal-Muluk, 1: 322

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²⁶ : The Holy Quran 69:6-7

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