

**THE DAJJAL IN ISLAMIC PROPHETIC TRADITION: BETWEEN LITERALISM AND SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION****Muhammad Zaini**

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Email: muhammad.zaini@ar-raniry.ac.id**ABSTRACT**

The figure of the Dajjāl has long stood as a compelling yet contested subject within Islamic eschatology. While numerous ḥadīths describe his characteristics and role in the end times, scholars remain divided over whether the Dajjāl should be understood as a literal being or as a symbolic representation of deception and corruption. This study examines a selection of Prophetic traditions concerning the Dajjāl, focusing on their textual meaning and contextual interpretation within Islamic thought. Drawing upon the six canonical collections of ḥadīth (*Kutub al-Sittah*), the analysis explores both the literal attributes attributed to the Dajjāl—such as his one eye and false claims to divinity—and broader readings that link him to ideological, civilizational, or moral threats in history. The study finds that while classical scholars tended toward literal interpretations, modern Muslim thinkers often adopt a symbolic approach, framing the Dajjāl as a reflection of systemic injustice and spiritual misguidance. Ultimately, the article argues that the Dajjāl tradition, whether interpreted literally or metaphorically, serves as an enduring ethical warning about the dangers of falsehood, the fragility of faith, and the importance of moral discernment in times of trial.

Keywords: *Dajjāl, Islamic eschatology, ḥadīth interpretation, theological symbolism***ABSTRAK**

Sosok Dajjal telah lama menjadi topik yang menarik sekaligus kontroversial dalam eskatologi Islam. Meskipun banyak hadis Nabi yang menggambarkan ciri-ciri dan peran Dajjal menjelang hari kiamat, para ulama berbeda pendapat mengenai apakah Dajjal harus dipahami sebagai figur nyata atau sebagai simbol penyesatan dan kerusakan moral. Kajian ini menelaah sejumlah hadis Nabi tentang Dajjal dengan menitikberatkan pada makna tekstual dan interpretasi kontekstualnya dalam pemikiran Islam. Dengan merujuk pada enam kitab hadis kanonik (*Kutub al-Sittah*), analisis ini mengungkap baik atribut-atribut lahiriah yang dinisbatkan kepada Dajjal—seperti buta sebelah mata dan klaim ketuhanannya—maupun pendekatan tafsir simbolik yang mengaitkan Dajjal dengan ancaman ideologis, peradaban, atau krisis moral dalam sejarah umat manusia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sementara ulama klasik cenderung memahami Dajjal secara harfiah, pemikir Muslim kontemporer lebih sering mengartikannya secara simbolik sebagai representasi ketidakadilan sistemik dan penyimpangan spiritual. Pada akhirnya, artikel ini menegaskan bahwa tradisi tentang Dajjal, baik dipahami secara literal maupun metaforis, berfungsi sebagai peringatan etis



yang abadi tentang bahaya kebohongan, rapuhnya keimanan, dan pentingnya ketajaman moral dalam menghadapi fitnah zaman.

Kata Kunci: *Dajjal, eskatologi Islam, interpretasi hadis, simbolisme teologis*

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious discourse surrounding the signs of the approaching Day of Judgment has long captured the attention of Muslim scholars and lay believers alike.¹ Among these eschatological signs, the figure of the Dajjāl stands out as one of the most frequently discussed and debated. Interest in this topic is especially pronounced among scholars of ḥadīth and Islamic theology, given the substantial number of Prophetic traditions that mention the Dajjāl's appearance. These ḥadīths vary in terms of transmission strength and completeness, leading to differing levels of acceptance and interpretation. While some readers accept these narrations at face value—often relying on literal meanings without thoroughly examining the isnād (chain of narrators) or contextual depth—a more rigorous academic inquiry reveals the complexities embedded within these texts.² Such inquiry is crucial for uncovering the theological and symbolic layers contained in ḥadīths about the Dajjāl.

The subject of the Dajjāl also intersects with broader issues of 'aqīdah (Islamic creed), a field that demands a high standard of evidentiary certainty.³ In principle, matters of belief are to be established on the basis of definitive (qat'ī) proofs, typically derived from mutawātir traditions—reports transmitted by such a large number of narrators at each level that fabrication is deemed impossible. However, the ḥadīths concerning the Dajjāl generally fall into the category of āḥād (solitary reports), which do not reach the level of definitive proof.⁴ This raises theological questions regarding the extent to which Muslims are obliged to accept such narrations. For those who affirm the reliability of these ḥadīths—regardless of whether they are mutawātir or āḥād—the narratives are often embraced as a legitimate part of the Prophet's teachings.⁵ Yet, embracing these narrations also requires careful

¹ Abdul Qadir Bin Thahir Al-Bagdadi, *Al-Farq Bainal Firaq* (Dar al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000).

² Pipin Armita and Jani Arni, 'DINAMIKA PEMAHAMAN ULAMA TENTANG HADIS DAJJAL (Dari Interpretasi Tekstual Ke Interpretasi Kontekstual)', *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 25.2 (2017), p. 208, doi:10.24014/jush.v25i2.2398.

³ Abdul Halim, Uqbatul Khoir Rambe, and Muhammad Sofian Hidayat, 'Dajjal Dalam Perspektif Hadis (Analisis Hadis Tentang Dajjal Dalam Kitab Sunan Ibnu Majah)', *Ilmu Kewahyuan*, 3.2 (2020), pp. 107–32 <<http://repository.uinsa.ac.id/id/eprint/2311/>>.

⁴ Qari Aziz Haider and others, 'An Analytical Study of Hadiths on Dajjal (Antichrist) Interpreted by Peer Mehr Ali Shah Gilani: An Analytical Study', *Journal of World Researches (JWR)*, 2.1 (2022) <<https://www.openaccessjournal.com/article-file/202309061519381296853publ.pdf>>; Ridan Ozhukur, 'Hadiths about Dajjal: Exploring the Scholars' Interpretations', *Islamonline*, 2024 <<https://en.islamonline.net/hadiths-about-dajjal-exploring-the-scholars-interpretations>>.

⁵ Jamaluddin Al-Qasimy, *Qawa'id At-Tahdits Min Funun Musthalah Al-Hadits* (Mathba'ah Ibnu Zaidan, 2002).



interpretation to avoid misleading literalism. This is where the practice of ta'wīl (figurative or allegorical interpretation) becomes necessary, enabling believers to reconcile traditional texts with reason and contemporary understanding.

The varying interpretations of the Dajjāl tradition have significant implications for Muslim communities. This highlights the need for calm, scholarly reflection and the development of a contextual approach that preserves the integrity of the ḥadīths while making them accessible and meaningful in the modern world. For students of religion and general readers alike, such an approach is essential to ensure that eschatological themes are not reduced to speculative myths or exploited for ideological purposes. In light of these considerations, this study seeks to explore the textual and contextual meanings of ḥadīths concerning the appearance of the Dajjāl. Rather than merely cataloging narrations or asserting doctrinal positions, this research aims to understand how different scholars have approached these texts over time, and what underlying theological, social, or hermeneutic concerns have shaped their interpretations. By doing so, the study hopes to contribute to a more balanced and nuanced discourse on one of the most enigmatic figures in Islamic eschatology.

To explore these questions, this study adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in library-based research. The analysis focuses on ḥadīths drawn from the canonical Sunni collections—known as *Kutub al-Sittah*—including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. These texts are examined both in terms of their textual content (*matn*) and their historical transmission (*isnād*), with particular attention given to how scholars have interpreted them across different periods and intellectual traditions. Supplementary literature from both classical and contemporary Muslim thinkers is used to contextualize the narrations, assess their theological implications, and trace the interpretive evolution of the Dajjāl motif in Islamic thought.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Hadiths about the Dajjāl

The theme of the Dajjāl occupies a significant place within the corpus of Islamic eschatological ḥadīths and is extensively referenced across the major canonical collections. Any serious discussion about the Dajjāl must therefore be anchored in the authentic Prophetic traditions, as failing to do so may lead to erroneous or speculative assertions. Despite explicit mentions of the Dajjāl in numerous ḥadīths, there remains a lack of tangible knowledge about his actual physical form. Many of the reports concerning him adopt an eschatological tone, portraying the Dajjāl as the ultimate adversary of the Muslim community and as a source of profound tribulation. Scholars of ḥadīth categorize these narrations under the chapters of *al-Fitan wa Ashrāt al-Sā'ah*



(Trials and Signs of the Hour), situating the Dajjāl within a broader framework of apocalyptic events.⁶

A broad range of ḥadīths about the Dajjāl can be found within the *Kutub al-Sittah*. While the wording (*lafẓ*) of these narrations may vary from one collection to another, their core meaning remains consistent, a phenomenon that reflects the widespread practice of transmitting ḥadīths *bi al-ma'nā*—through meaning rather than exact phrasing. This stylistic feature is particularly prevalent in narrations dealing with eschatological matters, where the urgency of the message often outweighs the need for verbatim accuracy. Among the six canonical books most frequently cited for ḥadīths on the Dajjāl are: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*.

This study focuses on five key narrations that provide a representative overview of the Prophetic discourse on the Dajjāl. These narrations include: (1) the statement that every prophet has warned their people about the Dajjāl, (2) the appearance of thirty great deceivers before the final Hour, (3) descriptions of the Dajjāl's deceptive powers, (4) the Dajjāl's inability to enter Makkah and Madīnah, and (5) the narration regarding the location of his emergence between Shām and Iraq. These five ḥadīths will serve as primary textual evidence for examining both the literal and contextual dimensions of Dajjāl-related narratives.

One of the most widely transmitted ḥadīths about the Dajjāl is the declaration that every prophet throughout history warned their community of his coming. This notion emphasizes the universal significance of the Dajjāl as a symbol of ultimate falsehood and tribulation. Imām al-Bukhārī includes this narration in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*:⁷

حدثنا أبو اليمان أخبرنا شعيب عن الزهري قال أخبرني سالم بن عبد الله أن عبد الله بن عمر أخبره
فقام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في الناس... ثم ذكر الدجال فقال اني أنذركموه وما من نبي الا وقد
أنذره قومه لقد أنذره نوح قومه ولكني سأقول لكم فيه قولا لم يقله نبي لقومه تعلمون أنه أعور وأن الله
ليس بأعور

This ḥadīth is also transmitted, with slight variations in wording, by Imām Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd. Despite these textual differences, the essence of the message remains consistent.⁸ In this narration, the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have addressed his companions during a sermon, warning them of the severe trial posed by the Dajjāl. He stated that no fitnah (trial) from the time of Adam until the end of time would surpass the tribulation of the Dajjāl. What sets this ḥadīth apart is the Prophet's assertion that all prophets prior

⁶ Abdul Wahab Abdus Salam Thawilah, *Al-Masih Al-Muntazhar Wa Nihayatu Al-'Alam* (Darussalam, 2002); Lilik Agus Saputro, *Fitnah Dajjal Dan Ya'juj Ma'juj Mengungkap Misteri Kemunculan Dajjal Dan Ya'juj Ma'juj* (Araska, 2019).

⁷CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Bukhary*, Hadis no. 5707

⁸CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Muslim*, Hadis no. 5215, *Sunan Ibnu Majah*, Hadis no. 4067, *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadis no. 23938, *Sunan Abu Daud*, Hadis no. 4129, *Sunan al-Turmuzi*, Hadis no. 2160.



to him—beginning with Nūḥ (Noah)—had also warned their followers about the Dajjāl. However, the Prophet Muḥammad added a unique clarification not mentioned by his predecessors: that the Dajjāl is one-eyed (*a'war*) and that God is not one-eyed. This physical description serves as both a distinguishing feature and a symbolic reminder of the Dajjāl's flawed nature. The ḥadīth also refers to a mark on the Dajjāl's forehead—*kāfir* (disbeliever)—which, according to other narrations, will be legible to every believer. These descriptions highlight the Dajjāl's fraudulent claim to divinity and underscore the critical importance of discernment and faith in resisting his deception.

Another significant ḥadīth that deepens the eschatological discourse on the Dajjāl is the report concerning the emergence of numerous impostors—approximately thirty in number—who will each claim prophethood in the period leading up to the Hour. These individuals are collectively referred to as “lesser Dajjāls,” and their appearance is considered one of the major signs indicating the approach of the Day of Judgment. This ḥadīth is narrated by Imām al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*:⁹

حدثنا أبو اليمان أخبرنا شعيب حدثنا أبو الزناد عن عبد الرحمن عن أبي هريرة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لا تقوم الساعة حتى تقتتل فئتان عظيمتان يكون بينهما مقتلة عظيمة دعوتهما واحدة وحتى يبعث دجالون كذابون قريب من ثلاثين كلهم يزعم أنه رسول الله

This narration is also found, with slight variations, in the works of Imām Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd. While the exact wording may differ, the thematic consistency across these narrations underscores the centrality of this warning in the Prophetic tradition.¹⁰ According to this ḥadīth, the Final Hour will not arrive until two great factions within the Muslim ummah engage in a massive and bloody conflict—despite both claiming the same cause—and until a succession of liars appear, nearly thirty in total, each claiming to be a messenger of God.

The mention of two large warring factions can be interpreted in various ways. Some scholars suggest that it refers to historical civil wars within the Muslim community, while others view it as a general warning about ideological fragmentation. The statement that each of these impostors will assert divine or prophetic authority points to a recurring theme of religious exploitation and manipulation. These false claimants are not merely political figures, but rather individuals who seek spiritual legitimacy in order to lead people astray. The cumulative effect of their appearance is to desensitize believers, making it increasingly difficult to recognize the truth—a condition that, in turn, paves the way for the final, most dangerous deceiver: the Dajjāl himself.

Beyond merely claiming prophethood, the Dajjāl is described in numerous ḥadīths as possessing deceptive powers that blur the boundaries between truth and falsehood. Among the most unsettling of these deceptions is the portrayal of the Dajjāl arriving with what appears to be a paradise and

⁹CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Bukhary*, Hadis no. 6588

¹⁰CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Muslim*, Hadis no. 5205, *Sunan Abu Daud*, Hadis no. 3772, *Sunan al-Turmuzi*, Hadis no. 2144.



a hellfire—yet, according to the Prophet, their realities are the opposite of what they seem. This profound imagery reinforces the idea that the Dajjāl’s greatest weapon is not physical force, but illusion and confusion. The following narration is found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:¹¹

حدثنا أبو نعيم حدثنا شيبان عن يحيى عن أبي سلمة سمعت أبا هريرة رضي الله عنهم قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ألا أحدثكم حديثاً عن الدجال ما حدث به نبي قومه انه أعور وانه يجيء معه بمثال الجنة والنار فالتى يقول انها الجنة هي النار واني أنذركم كما أنذركم به نوح قومه

A similar narration appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:¹²

حدثني محمد بن رافع حدثنا حسين عن محمد حدثنا شيبان عن يحيى عن أبي سلمة سمعت أبا هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ألا أخبركم عن الدجال حديثاً ما حدثه نبي قومه انه أعور وانه يجيء معه بمثال الجنة والنار فالتى يقول انها الجنة هي النار واني أنذرتكم به كما أنذركم به نوح قومه

And in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, the narration is extended with added theological and practical advice:¹³

حدثنا علي ابن محمد حدثنا عبد الرحمن المحاربي عن اسماعيل بن رافع عن أبي رافع عن أبي زرعة السيباني يحيى بن أبي عمرو عن عمرو بن عبد الله عن أبي أمامة الباهلي قال خطبنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فكان أكثر خطبته حديثاً حدثناه عن الدجال وحذرناه فكان من قوله أن قال انه لم تكن فتنة في الأرض منذ ذرأ الله ذرية آدم أعظم من فتنة الدجال... وإن من فتنته أن معه جنة ونارا فناره جنة وجنته نار فمن ابتلي بناره فليستغث بالله وليقرأ فواتح الكهف فتكون عليه بردا وسلاما كما كانت النار على إبراهيم

These narrations present one of the most potent symbolic depictions of the Dajjāl’s misguidance. His ability to reverse spiritual perception—presenting hell as heaven and vice versa—serves as a metaphor for the seductions of falsehood masquerading as truth. In a world increasingly shaped by appearances, this ḥadīth warns believers to look beyond external realities and rely on divine guidance. In particular, the advice to seek refuge in God and to recite the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Kahf* (the “Cave”) links scriptural literacy with spiritual protection.

Theologically, this inversion of paradise and hell represents a broader moral disorientation, where evil is glamorized and virtue appears outdated or even dangerous. The Dajjāl is thus not only a personal figure but also a symbol of moral collapse, systemic deception, and the distortion of sacred values. His power lies in his capacity to exploit human desire and fear, using them to draw people away from truth under the illusion of salvation.

Another recurring motif in ḥadīths about the Dajjāl is the divine protection granted to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Unlike the rest of the world, which the Dajjāl is said to traverse freely, these two sanctuaries are explicitly mentioned as being off-limits to him. This exclusion is not merely

¹¹CD Mausu’ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Bukhary*, Hadis no. 3090

¹²CD Mausu’ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Muslim*, Hadis no. 5227

¹³CD Mausu’ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Sunan Ibnu Majah*, Hadis no. 4067



geographical but serves to emphasize their spiritual sanctity and the active guardianship of the divine over these cities. The narration from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* clearly expresses this idea:¹⁴

حدثنا إبراهيم بن منذر حدثنا أبو عمرو حدثنا إسحاق حدثني أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنهم عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ليس من بلد إلا سيطؤه الدجال إلا مكة والمدينة ليس له من نقابها ثقب إلا عليه الملائكة صافين يحرسونها ثم ترجف المدينة بأهلها ثلاث رجفات فيخرج الله كل كافر ومنافق

This narration is echoed in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal:¹⁵

حدثنا بهز وعفان قالا حدثنا حماد بن سلمة حدثنا إسحاق بن عبد الله بن أبي طلحة عن أنس بن مالك قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يجيء الدجال فيطأ الأرض إلا مكة والمدينة فيأتي المدينة فيجد بكل ثقب من نقابها صفوفًا من الملائكة فيأتي سبخة الجرف فيضرب رواقه فترجف المدينة ثلاث رجفات فيخرج إليه كل منافق ومنافقة

The narration found in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* expands further on this point:¹⁶

حدثنا علي بن محمد حدثنا عبد الرحمن المحاربي عن إسماعيل بن رافع أبي رافع عن أبي زرعة السيباني يحيى بن أبي عمرو عن عمرو بن عبد الله عن أبي أمامة الباهلي قال: خطبنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فكان أكثر خطبته حديثًا حدثناه عن الدجال وإنه لا يبقى شيء من الأرض إلا وطئه وظهر عليه إلا مكة والمدينة لا يأتيهما من ثقب من نقابها إلا لقيته الملائكة بالسيوف صلتة حتى ينزل عند الظريب الأحمر عند منقطع السبخة فترجف المدينة بأهلها ثلاث رجفات فلا يبقى منافق ولا منافقة

Although the exact phrasing differs across narrators, all three versions converge on several key themes: the absolute impossibility of the Dajjāl entering Makkah and Madinah, the angelic protection surrounding every path into the cities, and the eschatological “shaking” or upheaval that will occur within Madinah itself. This seismic event serves to expel the hypocrites and disbelievers from among its inhabitants, signifying a moment of divine purification and a reaffirmation of the city's sacred status.

Notably, the narration in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* adds a dramatic detail: the angels are described as wielding unsheathed swords, standing guard at every entry point. This militaristic imagery reinforces the idea of spiritual warfare and divine intervention at a critical juncture in human history. Moreover, the mention of the Dajjāl encamping at *al-Zarīb al-Aḥmar*—a location near the outskirts of Madinah—suggests that his influence will reach perilously close to these sanctuaries, but divine decree will ultimately bar his entry.

These narrations collectively serve to reassure believers of the protection afforded to the holiest sites in Islam. They also highlight the spiritual symbolism of Makkah and Madinah as bastions of faith, immune to the

¹⁴CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Shahih Bukhary*, Hadis no. 1748

¹⁵CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, Hadis no. 12517

¹⁶CD Mausū'ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Sunan Ibnu Majah*, Hadis no. 4067



deceptions and chaos the Dajjāl brings. For believers, this reinforces the necessity of aligning oneself with these protected spaces—both physically and spiritually—as a means of safeguarding faith during the end times.

The final narration selected for this study addresses the location from which the Dajjāl is prophesied to emerge. Unlike previous narrations that emphasize his characteristics or influence, this report situates his initial appearance geographically—specifically in the region between Shām (Greater Syria) and Iraq. This spatial detail has intrigued classical and contemporary commentators alike, as it carries implications for both historical interpretation and symbolic meaning. The narration is recorded in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* as follows:¹⁷

حدثنا علي بن محمد حدثنا عبد الرحمن المحاربي عن إسماعيل بن رافع أبي رافع عن أبي زرعة السيباني يحيى بن أبي عمرو عن عمرو بن عبد الله عن أبي أمامة الباهلي قال: خطبنا رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم فكان أكثر خطبته حديثا حدثناه عن الدجال وإنه يخرج من خلة بين الشام والعراق فيعيث يمينا ويعيث شمالا

A similar transmission is also found through another isnād:

حدثنا هشام بن عمار حدثنا يحيى بن حمزة حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن جبير بن نفيير حدثني أبي أنه سمع النواس بن سمعان الكلبي يقول: ذكر رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم الدجال إنه يخرج من خلة بين الشام والعراق فعاث يمينا وعاث شمالا

In both versions, the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) describes the Dajjāl as emerging from a specific region: a narrow pass between Shām and Iraq. The Arabic expression “يعيث يمينا ويعيث شمالا” (“he will spread corruption to the right and to the left”) conveys the extent of his movement and the chaotic influence he will exert in all directions. This expansive phrasing suggests that the Dajjāl’s mission is not limited by physical boundaries but is characterized by widespread disruption, spiritual confusion, and the distortion of truth wherever he goes.

The identification of Shām and Iraq in the narration has led some scholars to speculate about the political or symbolic significance of these lands during the Prophet’s time and in later Islamic history. Some interpret the mention of these regions as coincidental, while others see it as alluding to centers of political instability or ideological divergence. In either case, the mention of a concrete geographic origin—unlike other narrations which focus on behavior or destiny—invites a deeper reflection on the material and symbolic landscapes of fitnah (tribulation).

Although no other ḥadīth as explicitly names this location as the place of emergence, the consistent appearance of this narration in respected collections like *Sunan Ibn Mājah* lends it weight in the broader corpus of eschatological literature. Nonetheless, it is important to note that some scholars question the reliability of ḥadīths that attach prophetic events to specific places—especially when such designations may be read as polemical

¹⁷CD Mausu’ah al-Hadits al-Syarif, *Sunan Ibnu Majah*, Hadis no. 4065 dan 4067



or politically motivated. This skepticism is grounded in a methodological caution that seeks to preserve the ethical and theological integrity of the Prophetic tradition by avoiding interpretations that may serve temporal agendas.

Regardless of interpretive stance, this narration reinforces the central theme of Dajjāl's widespread disruption. From the moment of his appearance between Shām and Iraq, he is portrayed as an agent of chaos whose reach extends globally, leaving no land untouched except for the divinely protected cities of Makkah and Madinah.

2. Interpretive Analysis (Sharḥ) of the Ḥadīths on the Dajjāl

Although the Dajjāl is not explicitly mentioned by name in the Qur'an, some scholars interpret certain verses as referring to his presence in an implicit or allusive manner. One such verse is found in Sūrat al-An'ām (6:158). Some exegetes argue that the phrase "*some of the signs of your Lord*" (*ba'd āyāt rabbik*) alludes to eschatological figures like the Dajjāl. While not universally accepted, this interpretation situates the Dajjāl within a Qur'anic framework of divine signs and end-time phenomena. Among ḥadīth scholars, there is a long-standing debate concerning the epistemological status of Dajjāl-related narrations. Many maintain that these ḥadīths reach the level of mutawātir (mass-transmitted), thus granting them strong theological weight. However, others classify them as āḥād (solitary reports), which do not carry the same level of certainty in matters of creed. One such critical voice is that of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who in his *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīth* questioned the binding status of certain eschatological ḥadīths that do not reach mutawātir status.¹⁸

Furthermore, the Dajjāl-related ḥadīths exhibit significant variation in wording, despite being judged authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) by many ḥadīth scholars. This phenomenon—known as *riwāyah bi al-ma'nā* (narration by meaning)—demonstrates the flexibility with which early transmitters approached verbal precision, particularly in narrating content of symbolic or metaphorical nature. These differences do not negate the core message but reflect the differing recollections and theological emphases of the transmitters.

Islamic tradition paints the Dajjāl as a deeply frightening figure—one whose appearance will mark a critical turning point in human history. He is described as claiming prophethood and ultimately divinity, possessing unusual physical features such as being one-eyed and bearing the word "kāfir" (disbeliever) on his forehead. The belief in the Dajjāl's emergence is widely accepted as a major sign of the Hour (*'alāmah min 'alāmāt al-sā'ah*), and many scholars consider his appearance to be one of the greatest trials (*fitan*) humanity will face.

The etymology of the term "Dajjāl" offers further insight into its meaning. Derived from the Arabic root *da-ja-la*, it connotes the act of covering, deceiving, or mixing truth with falsehood. In essence, the Dajjāl represents

¹⁸ Muḥammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah Baina Ahli Al -Fiqhi Wa Ahli Al-Hadis* (Dar al-Syuruq, 2015).



confusion, misguidance, and the veiling of spiritual clarity.¹⁹ The full title *al-Masīh al-Dajjāl* contrasts sharply with the messianic title of ‘Īsā (Jesus), who is referred to as *al-Masīh al-Ṣādiq* (the True Messiah). While Jesus symbolizes divine truth and guidance, the Dajjāl embodies falsehood and delusion. In classical works such as *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, it is mentioned that the Dajjāl is called *al-Masīh* because one of his eyes is *mamsūḥah* (obliterated or wiped out), further reinforcing the image of spiritual and physical defect.²⁰

The themes that emerge from these ḥadīths highlight several theological warnings. First, the Prophet emphasized that every messenger before him warned about the Dajjāl, which underscores the gravity of the trial he represents. Second, the Dajjāl’s physical attributes—such as his one eye and the mark on his forehead—are symbolic of his distorted vision and false claims. Third, he is presented not only as a singular figure but also as a phenomenon that includes the emergence of multiple impostors, each contributing to the spiritual destabilization of society. Finally, his inability to enter the sanctuaries of Makkah and Madinah underscores the enduring sanctity of these holy sites and the divine protection granted to them in times of crisis. While the Dajjāl shares characteristics with other apocalyptic figures—such as Ya’jūj and Ma’jūj—his uniqueness lies in the depth of deception he represents. His tools are not only physical or military but deeply psychological, exploiting human weaknesses through illusion, ideology, and misplaced faith. It is within this frame that Islamic eschatology warns of his coming not merely as a historical event, but as an ethical and spiritual test across time.

3. Contextual Interpretations of the Ḥadīths on the Dajjāl

Interpretive divergence among Muslim scholars concerning the Dajjāl centers primarily on whether he should be understood as a real, physical entity or as a symbolic construct representing deeper moral or societal threats. Across centuries, this debate has persisted within the fields of ḥadīth, theology (*kalām*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), shaped by differing epistemological frameworks and historical contexts. For many scholars, the Dajjāl is one of the unequivocal eschatological figures whose appearance is part of divine decree. These scholars take the ḥadīths about the Dajjāl at face value, viewing him as a literal human being who will appear at the end of time, endowed with miraculous powers and the capacity to deceive masses. His characteristics—such as being one-eyed and bearing the word *kāfir* on his forehead—are seen as tangible signs rather than allegories.

However, another current within Islamic scholarship offers a more contextual or symbolic reading of the Dajjāl traditions. This perspective interprets the Dajjāl not as a physical person, but as a recurring archetype or moral force that manifests in various historical and cultural forms. In this

¹⁹ Muhammad Muhlisin, *Story Of Dajjal Dan Ya'juj Ma'juj*, (Araska, 2019).

²⁰ Armita and Arni.



framework, the Dajjāl becomes a symbol of tyranny, falsehood, materialism, and ideological misguidance—forces that threaten human dignity and divine truth. This view has gained traction among modern Muslim intellectuals who see the Dajjāl as a metaphor for corrupt leadership, hegemonic systems, or even exploitative technologies.

Some scholars reconcile these views by distinguishing between the “lesser Dajjāls” (*al-Dajjālūn al-ṣiḡhār*)—individuals who spread falsehood and corruption throughout history—and the “greater Dajjāl” (*al-Dajjāl al-akbar*), who is to appear in the eschaton.²¹ The former represent the recurring presence of deceit and injustice, often called the “minor apocalypses” (*ṣaḡhīrat al-sā‘ah*), while the latter signifies the climax of this corruption in one final, devastating trial. This reading is supported by a ḥadīth in *Ṣaḡhīḡ Muslim*, narrated from Jābir ibn Samurah, in which the Prophet Muḡammad states: “Indeed, before the Hour, there will be many liars.” This hadith reinforces the idea that moral and spiritual decay is not confined to a single figure, but rather unfolds gradually across generations.

A particularly notable example of symbolic interpretation comes from the modernist scholar Rashīd Riḡā. When asked about the Dajjāl, Riḡā argued that he was not an actual individual, but rather a symbol of falsehood and superstition. In his view, the Dajjāl embodied the forces of corruption and ignorance that distort religion and moral clarity. Riḡā went further by suggesting that the Dajjāl may also represent specific political or civilizational phenomena—in particular, the exploitation of science and technology for domination, as seen in the geopolitical power of Zionism and its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. By linking the Dajjāl to such modern forces, Riḡā’s interpretation pushes readers to see the ḥadīths not as distant predictions, but as living texts with enduring ethical relevance.

Other contemporary scholars have extended this line of thought by viewing the Dajjāl as a metaphor for modern Western civilization—specifically its materialism, secularism, and detachment from the sacred. In this view, the “one-eyed” nature of the Dajjāl represents a worldview that is blind to the spiritual realm and focuses solely on the temporal and tangible. The promise of paradise and threat of hellfire that he carries, as mentioned in the ḥadīths, becomes a metaphor for seductive but deceptive ideologies that reverse moral realities: what appears pleasurable may lead to destruction, and what seems painful may be salvific.²²

It is important to note that such contextual readings of the Dajjāl tend to emerge in the 20th century and beyond, often in response to the challenges of modernity. These interpretations do not necessarily negate the possibility of a literal Dajjāl, but they highlight the moral and educational value of the Prophetic warnings. At the same time, a number of scholars reject the Dajjāl

²¹ Faiz Karim Fatkhullah, Tajudin Nur, and Undang Ahmad Darsa, ‘THE RECEPTION OF DAJAL STORY IN THE SAIFU AD-DHARIB’, *Humanus*, 17.1 (2018), p. 37, doi:10.24036/humanus.v17i1.8779; D Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam (Darwin Press, 2002).

²² Ozhukur.



traditions altogether on the basis that they fall under the category of solitary reports (*āḥād*), which, in their view, do not meet the criteria of certainty in theological matters.

From a theological perspective, the primary function of these ḥadīths is not to invite speculation about specific individuals or geopolitical regions, but to cultivate awareness of spiritual deception, urge moral vigilance, and warn against the seductions of worldly power. As such, many of the Dajjāl traditions can be interpreted as ethical allegories that resonate with the Qur’anic command to “enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong,” especially in times of widespread confusion and societal fragmentation.

C. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the concept of the Dajjāl remains one of the most complex and contested themes within Islamic eschatology. Across various ḥadīth collections—particularly the *Kutub al-Sittah*—the figure of the Dajjāl is portrayed as a central sign of the approaching Day of Judgment. However, Muslim scholars have long differed in their interpretations of these narrations. Some uphold a literal reading, emphasizing the Dajjāl as a real, physical individual who will emerge at the end of time to mislead humanity through extraordinary signs and trials. Others, particularly from later and more modernist traditions, interpret the Dajjāl symbolically—as a representation of tyranny, deception, or corrupt systems of knowledge and power. The analysis of key ḥadīths has revealed that this divergence is rooted not only in differing hermeneutical approaches but also in theological commitments regarding the nature of *āḥād* reports and their role in shaping core beliefs. The literalist perspective tends to emphasize the prophetic authority of the ḥadīths, focusing on physical signs such as the Dajjāl's one eye, his claim to divinity, and his inability to enter Makkah and Madinah. In contrast, the contextual and symbolic interpretations often draw on historical experiences and sociopolitical realities, treating the Dajjāl as an archetype of ideological falsehood, civilizational imbalance, or modern spiritual crisis.

Both approaches, however, converge on one essential point: the Dajjāl represents a profound test of faith, discernment, and moral integrity. Whether understood literally or figuratively, the Dajjāl challenges believers to remain grounded in the Qur’an, the Prophetic tradition, and ethical consciousness in the face of confusion and seduction. The enduring relevance of these narrations lies not in their sensationalism, but in their ability to inspire vigilance, humility, and spiritual resistance. Ultimately, the plurality of interpretations reflects the dynamism of Islamic intellectual tradition, which accommodates both textual fidelity and contextual sensitivity. While no definitive consensus has been reached regarding the Dajjāl’s ontological status, the discussion itself serves as a fertile space for reflection on the nature of truth, the function of religious authority, and the ethical responsibilities of Muslims in times of trial. As long as the threat of deception remains part of human experience, the lessons contained in the ḥadīths of the Dajjāl will continue to hold spiritual and intellectual relevance for the ummah.

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