



JĀBER JO'FI

JĀBER JO'FI, ABU 'ABD-ALLĀH (or Abu Mo-ḥammad b. Yazid b. Ḥāret), a Kufan traditionist and companion of the fifth and sixth Shi'ite Imams, Moḥammad al-Bāqer and Ja'far al-Šādeq. Jāber belonged to the to the first generation of Muslims after Moḥammed, likely dying in 128/745-46 (other reports date his death in 127/744-45 or 132/749-50; Moḥsen al-Amin, p. 158). He is well-known in both Sunni and Shi'ite circles, but, while his transmissions are considered reliable by some, others have suspected their accuracy or have rejected them altogether. A number of prominent Sunni traditionists, including Sofyān Ṭawri, considered Jāber honest (*ṣaduq*), a highly scrupulous traditionist, and related traditions on his authority (Ḍahabi, 1987, VIII, pp. 59-60; Ebn Ḥajar, II, p. 47; Ṭusi, p. 196), but others (e.g., Yaḥyā b. Ma'in, Abu Ḥanifa, Ebn Ḥanbal) denounced him as a liar and an extremist Shi'ite who believed in the doctrine of *raj'a* (return of the Mahdi; see Ebn Ḥajar, II, pp. 48-50; Ḍahabi, 1987, I, pp. 379-84; Ebn Qotayba, p. 480; Moḥsen al-Amin, pp. 158-59).

Among Shi'ites, his reputation is equally mixed. He was clearly a close companion of Imam Moḥammad al-Bāqer (q.v.), from whom he narrates most of his traditions. Other Shi'ites, however, reportedly questioned Imam Ja'far al-Šādeq (q.v.) about him. Imam al-Šādeq generally endorsed him as a sound transmitter from the Imams (Mofid, p. 216; Ṭusi, p. 192; Moḥsen al-Amin, p. 158), but a report from Jāber's contemporary, Zorāra b. A'yān, casts doubt on Jāber's claims of proximity to the Imams (Ṭusi, p. 191). According to Ḥasan Nawbakṭi, 'Abd-Allāh b. Ḥāret, the leader of the followers of the Talebid rebel



‘Abd-Allāh b. Mo‘āwia (q.v.), propagated such extremist ideas as metempsychosis (*tanāsokò*) and cyclical history (*dawr*) and attributed them to Jāber (Nawbakhti, p. 47, tr. p. 59), while other reports suggest that the Imam did not wish the Hadith Jāber transmitted to reach the spiritually unqualified, lest they be misunderstood (Ṭusi, pp. 192, 193). Sunni heresiographies connect him with the executed extremist Shi‘ite Moğira b. Sa‘id, who had acknowledged Imam al-Bāqer’s imamate (Aš‘ari, p. 8; Ebn Ḥazm, pp. 118-19), but at least one Shi‘ite Hadith explicitly separates Jāber from Moğira (Mofid, p. 204; Ṭusi, p. 192).

Works attributed to Jāber include a book of Qur‘ān commentary (*Ketāb al-tafsir*), likely a redaction of Imam al-Bāqer’s *tafsir* known from other sources; books on the events of the First Civil War (*Ketāb al-Jamal*, *Ketāb Şeffin*, *Ketāb al-Nahrwān*); books on the deaths of Imam ‘Ali (*Ketāb al-maqtal Amir-al-Mo‘menin*) and Imam Ḥosayn (*Ketāb al-Ḥosayn*); and other collections of praise traditions and rare Hadith or “*nawāder*” (Najāši, pp. 93-94; see Modarressi, I, pp. 94-103, for a list of extant material from these works that survive in other sources). Prominent themes among his traditions include Qur‘ānic commentary, the virtues of the believers, and the esoteric nature of the Imams’ knowledge. He is a primary transmitter of the well known Hadith that the Imams’ traditions are difficult, and that only prophets, archangels, and true believers can comprehend them (Ṭusi, p. 193; Kolayni, I, p. 466). He also reportedly heard tens of thousands of traditions from the Imams that he related to no one (Ṭusi, p. 194; Ebn Ḥajar, II, p. 48; Tostari, II, pp. 535, 542), apparently implying that they were too esoteric in nature to be shared with others; he also reportedly complained to Imam al-Bāqer that the burden of these secrets would make him appear mad (Mofid, pp. 66-67; Ṭusi, p. 194). In other accounts, Jāber is reported to have displayed public madness, with most traditions suggesting that he feigned insanity to avoid arrest by the Umayyads (Ṭusi, pp. 192, 194-95; Tostari, II, pp. 538-39, 541). A number of material and epistemological miracles are also attributed to him, undoubtedly from extremist sources (Ṭusi, pp. 195-98; Tostari, pp. 535-41).



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