

= Uzair =

Uzair - most often identified with the Judeo-Christian Ezra (عزرا, 'Uzair) - is a figure mentioned in the Qur'an, in the verse 9 : 30, which states that he was revered by the Jews as "the son of God". Jews do not agree with this statement. Historically, Muslim scholars have interpreted this verse as referring to a small group of Jews making such a reverence.

Uzair lived between the times of King Solomon and the time of Zachariah, father of John the Baptist. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Quran among the prophets, Uzair is considered as one by some Muslim scholars, based on Islamic traditions. On the other hand, Muslim scholars such as Mutahhar al-Maqdisi and Djuwayni and notably Ibn Hazm and al-Samaw'al accused Uzair (or one of his disciples) of falsification of the Torah. Several sources state that the Qur'an refers to Jews who began to call Uzair a "son of God" due to his religious achievements.

Gordon Darnell Newby states it may be due to misunderstanding of Uzair's position in the Jewish faith as a Bene Elohim. Other Western scholars, relying on exegetical material from Ibn Abbas and Ibn Qutaybah, consider Uzair not to be Uzair but Azariah, mentioned in the Book of Daniel as Abednego.

= = Quranic statements about perceived Jewish exaltation = =

The Quran claims that Jews exalted Ezra as a son of God :

The Jews call Ezra a son of God, and the Christians call the Christ a son of God. That is a saying from their mouth ; ( in this ) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say . May Allah destroy them : how they are deluded away from the Truth ! ( Quran 9 : 30 )

According to Islamic sources, this Quranic verse was revealed to Muhammad at Medina in the month of Dhu al-Qi'dah in 9AH ( ~ 630 AD ). By that time, most of the Jewish population of Medina had been exiled ( or in the case of the tribe of Banu Qurayza, killed en masse ).

= = = Islamic tradition and literature = = =

In some Islamic texts, Ezra is identified as the person mentioned in Qur'an 2 : 259 :

Or ( take ) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs . He said : " Oh ! how shall God bring it ( ever ) to life , after ( this ) its death ? " but God caused him to die for a hundred years , then raised him up ( again ) . He said : " How long didst thou tarry ( thus ) ? " He said : ( Perhaps ) a day or part of a day . " He said : " Nay , thou hast tarried thus a hundred years ; but look at thy food and thy drink ; they show no signs of age ; and look at thy donkey : And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people , Look further at the bones , how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh . " When this was shown clearly to him , he said : " I know that God hath power over all things . " ( Quran 2 : 259 )

According to the classical Quranic exegete, Ibn Kathir, after Ezra questioned how the resurrection will take place on the Day of judgment, God had him brought back to life many years after he died. He rode on his revived donkey and entered his native place. But the people did not recognize him, nor did his household, except the maid, who was now an old blind woman. He prayed to God to cure her blindness and she could see again. He meets his son who recognized him by a mole between his shoulders and was older than he was. Ezra then led the people to locate the only surviving copy of Torah as the remaining were burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rotting and crumpled, so Ezra had a new copy of the Torah made which he had previously memorised. He thus renovated the Torah to the Children of Israel. Ibn Kathir mentions that the sign in the phrase "And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people" was that he was younger than his children. After this miracle, Ibn Kathir writes that Jews began to claim that Ezra was the 'son of God'.

The Quranic exegesis of Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi states : Uzair ( Ezra ) lived during the period around 450 B.C. The Jews regarded him with great reverence as the revivalist of their Scriptures which had been lost during their captivity in Babylon after the death of Prophet Solomon. So much so that they had lost all the knowledge of their Law, their traditions and of Hebrew, their national

language . Then it was Ezra who re @-@ wrote the Old Testament and revived the Law . That is why they used very exaggerated language in his reverence which misled some of the Jewish sects to make him ' the son of God ' . The Qur 'an , however , does not assert that all the Jews were unanimous in declaring Ezra as ' the son of God ' . What it intends to say is that the perversion in the articles of faith of the Jews concerning Allah had degenerated to such an extent that there were some amongst them who considered Ezra as the son of God .

Sheikh Ahmad Kutty has said this verse referred to " the Jews of Arabia " who called Ezra " the son of God " .

In A History of the Jews of Arabia : From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse under Islam , scholar Gordon Darnell Newby notes the following on the topic of Uzair , the angel Metatron and the Bene Elohim ( lit . " Sons of God " ) :

... we can deduce that the inhabitants of Hijaz during Muhammad 's time knew portions , at least , of 3 Enoch in association with the Jews . The angels over which Metatron becomes chief are identified in the Enoch traditions as the sons of God , the Bene Elohim , the Watchers , the fallen ones as the causer of the flood . In 1 Enoch , and 4 Ezra , the term Son of God can be applied to the Messiah , but most often it is applied to the righteous men , of whom Jewish tradition holds there to be no more righteous than the ones God elected to translate to heaven alive . It is easy , then , to imagine that among the Jews of the Hijaz who were apparently involved in mystical speculations associated with the merkabah , Ezra , because of the traditions of his translation , because of his piety , and particularly because he was equated with Enoch as the Scribe of God , could be termed one of the Bene Elohim . And , of course , he would fit the description of religious leader ( one of the ahbar of the Qur 'an 9 : 31 ) whom the Jews had exalted .

However , the Quranic claim that Jews consider Ezra the " son of God " is unattested either in Jewish or other extra @-@ Quranic sources. and it is improbable that the Jews of Arabia believed so . Jacob Saphir recorded that Arabian Jews had " a pronounced aversion for the memory of Ezra " and even excluded his name from their category of proper names , one theory is this could be due to their perceived reverence to Ezra . It is most likely the text was referring to a specific group of Jews found at the time in Arabia as opposed to all Jews .

= = = Jewish tradition and literature = = =

As in Islam , a fundamental tenet of Judaism is that God is not bound by any limitations of time , matter , or space , and that the idea of any person being God , a part of God , or a mediator to God , is heresy . The Book of Ezra , which Judaism accepts as a chronicle of the life of Ezra and which predates Muhammad and the Qur 'an by around 1000 years , gives Ezra 's human lineage as being the son of Seraiah and a direct descendant of Aaron . Tractate Ta 'anit of the Jerusalem Talmud , which predates Muhammad by two to three hundred years , states that ? if a man claims to be God , he is a liar . ? Exodus Rabba 29 says , " ' I am the first and I am the last , and beside Me there is no God ' I am the first , I have no father ; I am the last , I have no brother . Beside Me there is no God ; I have no son . " However the term ' sons of gods ' occurs in Genesis . The Encyclopedia of Judaism clarifies that the title of ' son of God ' is attributed a person whose piety has placed him in a very near relationship to God and " by no means carries the idea of physical descent from , and essential unity with , God " .

There is no evidence of any Jewish community venerating Ezra as the ' son of God ' in Jewish literature . The Qur 'anic verse on Ezra appears in one of Maimonides 's discussions about the relationship between Judaism and Islam where he says ? ? they [ Muslims ] lie about us [ Jews ] , and falsely attribute to us the statement that God has a son . ?

The Encyclopedia Judaica states :

" Muhammed claims ( Sura 9 : 30 ) that in the opinion of the Jews , Uzayr ( Ezra ) is the son of God . These words are enigma because no such opinion is to be found among the Jews , even though Ezra was singled out for special appreciation ( see Sanh . 21b ; Yev . 86b ) . "

The Jewish Encyclopedia states :

" In the Koran ( ix . 30 ) the Jews are charged with worshipping Ezra ( " ' Uzair " ) as the son of God ?

a malevolent metaphor for the great respect which was paid by the Jews to the memory of Ezra as the restorer of the Law , and from which the Ezra legends of apocryphal literature ( II Esd. xxxiv . 37 @-@ 49 ) originated ( as to how they developed in Mohammedan legends see Damiri , " ?ayat al @-@ ?ayawan , " i . 304 @-@ 305 ) . It is hard to bring into harmony with this the fact , related by Jacob Saphir ( " Eben Sappir , " i . 99 ) , that the Jews of South Arabia have a pronounced aversion for the memory of Ezra , and even exclude his name from their category of proper names . "

Abraham Geiger remarked the following concerning the claim that Jews believed Ezra to be the son of God : ? According to the assertion of Muhammad the Jews held Ezra to be the Son of God . This is certainly a mere misunderstanding which arose from the great esteem in which Ezra was undoubtedly held . This esteem is expressed in the following passage ? Ezra would have been worthy to have made known the law if Moses had not come before him . ? Truly Muhammad sought to cast suspicion on the Jews ? faith in the unity of God , and thought he had here found a good opportunity of so doing . ?

= = Accusations of falsification = =

Ibn Hazm , an Andalusian Muslim scholar , explicitly accused Ezra of being a liar and a heretic who falsified and added interpolations into the Biblical text . Ibn Hazm provided a polemical list of what he considered " chronological and geographical inaccuracies and contradictions ; theological impossibilities ( anthropomorphic expressions , stories of fornication and whoredom , and the attributing of sins to prophets ) , as well as lack of reliable transmission ( tawatur ) of the text " , Hava Lazarus @-@ Yafeh states . In response to attacks on the personality of Ezra , the Byzantine Emperor Leo III defended Ezra as a pious , reliable person . The Jewish convert to Islam al @-@ Samaw 'al ( d . 1175 ) accused Ezra of interpolating stories such as Gen. 19 : 30 @-@ 8 in the Bible in order to sully David ? s origins and to prevent the rule of the Davidic dynasty during the second Temple . The writings of Ibn Hazm and al @-@ Samaw 'al was adopted and updated only slightly by later Muslim authors up to contemporary times .

= = Uzayr as Azariah = =

Viviane Comerro , Professeur in Islamic literature at INALCO , considers the possibility of Quranic Uzair not being Ezra but Azariah instead , relying on Ibn Qutaybah , and identifying a confusion committed by Muslim exegetes . She declares : " There is , from muslim traditionalists , a confusion between two distinct characters , Ezra [ ' Azrà ] et Azariah [ ' Azarya ( h ) ] ( ... ) Thus , it is possible that the quranic vocable Uzayr could find its origin in Azariah 's one . "

The deuterocanonical version of the book of Daniel confirms this hypothesis . The Theodotion 's version , used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians contains the Prayer of Azariah , an apocryphal prayer added by Hellenistic rabbis in the Septuagint version of the book of Daniel , which curiously mentions Abednego by his other name , Azariah , rather than Abednego which is used in the whole chapter 3 of the Hebrew and Protestant version , without any mention of the name " Azariah " in this chapter . This mention precedes the appearance of an angel qualified by Nebuchadnezzar as having the form of the " son of god " . Legends from Jewish communities of Arabia which were using the Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel made the confusion between the fourth character , the angel who is like the son of god , and Azariah himself , as confirmed by H. Schwarzbaum . In this perspective , the Quranic narrator seems to blame the Jews who believed in such a legend and who considered Azariah as the son of God , legend which finds its origin in a confusion due to an addition in the original biblical corpus by the rabbis who elaborated the Septuagint .

= = Title of son of God in Judaism = =

The title of son of God ( servant of God ) is used by the Jews for any pious person as is evident according to Encyclopedia of Judaism which states that the title of son of God is attributed by the Jews " to any one whose piety has placed him in a filial relation to God ( see Wisdom ii . 13 , 16 , 18

; v. 5 , where " the sons of God " are identical with " the saints " ; comp . Ecclus . [ Sirach ] iv . 10 ) .  
It is through such personal relations that the individual becomes conscious of God 's fatherhood . "  
Jews consider Ezra among the pious .