

Research Article

The Transmissional Methodology of Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī

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Abstract: This study examines the transmissional methodology of Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064) as a unified critical framework governing his engagement with ḥadīth, historical narration, and the scriptures of the People of the Book. Although modern scholarship has examined his legal and theological views, it has largely overlooked the epistemic unity underlying his treatment of transmitted reports. The central problem addressed here is how Ibn Ḥazm’s ḥadīth-based epistemology -grounded in isnād continuity, narrator uprightness (*‘adālah*), and precision (*ḍabt*)- shapes both his ḥadīth criticism and his wider approach to historical and scriptural material, particularly the Torah. Methodologically, the study undertakes close textual analysis of Ibn Ḥazm’s major works in ḥadīth, history, and comparative religion, situating them within the Andalusian intellectual milieu and the methodological heritage of the early muḥaddithūn, and then tracing points of convergence with later Jewish and Western biblical criticism. The findings show that Ibn Ḥazm consistently refuses to accept any report without rigorous external verification and careful examination of its wording and implications, extending classical ḥadīth criteria from prophetic reports to historical narratives and to the Old Testament. He thus emerges as an early architect of a dual

critique that combines isnād-based external criticism with close textual scrutiny, anticipating elements later systematized by figures such as Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Ezra, and Spinoza. The study concludes that Ibn Ḥazm's method constitutes a coherent and original contribution to the history of ḥadīth criticism and historical methodology, and that his role in the genealogy of scriptural criticism deserves renewed scholarly attention.

Keywords: Ibn Ḥazm; ḥadīth transmission; isnād criticism; historical methodology; Torah criticism; Andalusian scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064) is widely recognized as one of the most intellectually vigorous figures of the fifth Islamic century, distinguished by his deep engagement in the political and cultural life of al-Andalus and by his prolific contributions across law, theology, logic, literature, history, and comparative religion. His scholarly output reflects not a passive transmitter of inherited knowledge, but a critical and analytical mind marked by methodological rigor and an exceptional capacity to interrogate, reassess, and reconstruct transmitted materials.

Although modern scholarship often characterizes Ibn Ḥazm as "encyclopedic," such a description inadequately captures the internal coherence of his intellectual project. His writings reveal a unified epistemic framework grounded in two complementary pillars: the stringent verification principles developed by the muḥaddithūn and the demonstrative reasoning of the logicians. Through this dual framework, he subjected transmitted reports, historical accounts, and textual traditions—Muslim and non-Muslim alike—to rigorous scrutiny aimed at grounding knowledge in verifiable evidence. His polemical writings, his critiques of Jewish and Christian scriptures and his detailed historical observations attest to a scholar who both shaped and challenged the intellectual landscape of his age.

Despite the breadth of Ibn Ḥazm's contributions, contemporary studies have examined his legal and theological doctrines more extensively than the methodological unity that governs his approach to transmitted knowledge. While individual aspects—such as his strict isnād verification or his textual criticism of the Torah—have been discussed, these analyses often remain fragmented. What is still lacking is a comprehensive account of the integrated transmissional methodology that underpins his work across disciplines. This research therefore addresses a central problem: the absence of a systematic study that elucidates how Ibn Ḥazm's verification-based epistemology informs both his ḥadīth criticism and his historiographical practice.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to examine Ibn Ḥazm's transmissional methodology and to clarify the ways in which his unwavering commitment to

verification shaped his treatment of prophetic reports, historical narratives, and scriptural texts. The investigation is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the methodological foundations upon which Ibn Ḥazm evaluates transmitted reports?
2. How does he apply the criteria of isnād continuity, narrator uprightness, and precision in the domain of ḥadīth criticism?
3. To what extent does this methodological framework extend to his historical writings and to his critique of sacred texts, particularly the Torah?

To address these questions, the study analyzes Ibn Ḥazm's major works in ḥadīth, history, and comparative religion, situating them within the Andalusian intellectual milieu and the broader methodological heritage of the early muḥaddithūn. The research is organized into two principal sections:

- I. Transmission and Critique of Ḥadīth in Ibn Ḥazm's Methodology.
- II. Historical Narration and Critical Method in Ibn Ḥazm.

Through this examination, the study aims to demonstrate the coherence, originality, and enduring significance of Ibn Ḥazm's methodological contribution to both hadith criticism and historical research.

Ibn Ḥazm's Transmission and Critique of Ḥadīth

Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī stands among the most prominent scholars in whom a robust critical disposition toward transmitted reports (*akhbār*) took shape, both at the level of *riwāyah* (transmission) and *dirāyah* (critical understanding). His intellectual formation in the household of his father, a vizier whose home functioned as a meeting place for scholars and dignitaries, provided him with an environment of intense scholarly activity. From an early age, he was able to study directly with leading authorities and to gain wide access to the works of his contemporaries and of earlier generations. This background left a clear imprint on his *ḥadīth* methodology: he combined wide reading, powerful memorization, and a capacity to compare and weigh reports, to the point that he was counted among the *ḥuffāz al-ḥadīth*.

His engagement with *ḥadīth* and its sciences did not remain at the level of collection and compilation. Rather, it shaped the core of his scholarly persona, leading him to subject all incoming knowledge to rigorous verification. His method in *ḥadīth* criticism rests on three major pillars:

1. privileged access to *ḥadīth* compilations and other sources,
2. mastery of the craft of *ḥadīth* in both transmission and critical analysis,
3. scientific competence and qualification to judge reports and distinguish the sound from the unsound.

The following pages outline these pillars and highlight the distinctive features of his approach.

1. Access to *ḥadīth* compilations

Ibn Ḥazm had access to numerous sources in both private and public libraries, to the extent that he was able to obtain valuable works of his era that had not yet spread in al-Andalus. Concerning this, he said:

"Among them are works that remained unknown to those who cited proofs, due to the absence of transmitters for them, their limited use, or their recent arrival and appearance in our land. The scholars of our region did not transmit them, nor did they concern themselves with them, nor had they heard of them from those before them..."

In another passage, he stated:

"By Allah's grace, through our transmission and verification, we have obtained every report authentically transmitted from the Messenger of Allah—peace be upon him—through clear and evident proof..." (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 3: 81).

He then mentioned an important collection of sources and commented:

"...All of these compilations are in our possession—praise be to Allah—through our transmission, verification, and authentication. That is Allah's bounty and favor..." (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 3: 87-88).

He also pointed out his distinct access to works that were rare, little used, or newly introduced in al-Andalus. This was due to his diligence in tracking down written compilations and reading what they contained out of passion for knowledge and dedication to its pursuit—qualities that made him a primary source for the examination of documents and early references.

It is well known that discussing the content of *ḥadīth* compilations and other works cannot be based on unverified manuscripts, for that would inevitably lead to scholarly errors. This was the consistent practice of *ḥadīth* scholars: they would verify the texts they received by checking and correcting them either through collation (*muqābala*) or reading sessions (*'arḍ*). They stressed the necessity of this. Al-Awzā'ī, for example, said:

"The one who writes but does not collate (yu' āriḍ) is like the one who enters the lavatory and does not purify himself..." (Ibn Abdel Barr, 1: 78; al-Qādī 'Iyād, 160; Klaina, 2002, 38-40).

Regarding their use of textual comparison, Abū al-Zinād said:

"In my father's book: This is what I heard from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Hurmuz al-A'raj. He said: After each ḥadīth, he would draw a circle and say: 'Thus for the whole book.'" (al-Rāmahormuzī, 606).

This was their established method—an area in which they excelled and subsequently influenced scholars of other disciplines, who followed their example. Ibn Ḥazm was among the distinguished preservers of knowledge who took great care to verify and accurately check the books he received, in order to avoid deviation or error. This becomes very clear from his own emphasis when he said: *"...through our transmission, verification, and authentication."*

2. Mastery of the Ḥadīth Discipline and Its Critical Sciences

Perfecting the craft of ḥadīth criticism requires a precise and comprehensive command of the methodological framework developed by the early muḥaddithūn - whether in the domain of *riwāyah* (transmission) or *dirāyah* (comprehension and analysis). This framework, initially pioneered and systematized by the founders of ḥadīth scholarship, was consciously adopted and rigorously applied by Ibn Ḥazm. Through this adoption, he emerged as an exceptionally incisive critic of earlier doctrinal, historical, and sectarian narratives, including those preserved in the literature of *ahl al-milal wa-al-niḥal*. For Ibn Ḥazm, ḥadīth methodology was not merely a technical protocol but a holistic **epistemic discipline** - a mode of reasoning and an intellectual habitus shaping both method and mindset.

Fully aware of the epistemological weight of this tradition, Ibn Ḥazm employed its principles across the entire spectrum of his scholarship -whether in ḥadīth assessment, historical inquiry, linguistic analysis, or other fields in which he made substantial contributions. His argument for the "sphericity of the earth" in *al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wa-al-ahwā' wa-al-niḥal* and his innovative, unconventional treatment of Aristotelian logic in *al-Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-mantiq* both clearly demonstrate his methodological originality, analytical rigor, and independence of thought.

Central to this methodology is a strict reliance on transmitted reports supported by **sound, continuous isnāds**, narrated by **upright and reliable transmitters**, and ultimately traceable to the Messenger of Allah -peace be upon him. Within this disciplined framework, Ibn Ḥazm structures his critique of reports around several key considerations, each of which operates as a critical gate through which any narrative must pass before being granted epistemic legitimacy.

a. Continuity of the *Isnād*

A continuous chain constitutes the essential criterion for evaluating reports. Through it, the sound is distinguished from the unsound; without it, no information can be reliably upheld. Reports devoid of proper chains fall into the category of rumor-mongering -forms of misinformation that have historically misled societies and generated illusions.

The early adoption of this principle is illustrated in the well-known statement of Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/729):

"They did not ask about the isnād, but when the fitnah occurred they said: 'Name to us your transmitters'; thus the reports of the people of Sunnah were accepted, while those of the people of innovation were not." (Muslim, 2007, 1/14-15).

The *isnād* serves as the primary tool for establishing the identity and reliability of each transmitter, verifying actual transmission from one link to the next, and detecting possible errors in the narrated material.

This methodological commitment to chains of transmission is a distinctive feature of Islamic scholarship. Muslims uniquely systematized this practice,

especially because the reports of the Prophet peace be upon him constitute religion itself and may not be distorted. The Prophet peace be upon him warned -through a *mutawātir* narration- against fabricating reports about him: “Whoever tells a lie against me then surely let him occupy his seat in Hell-fire.” (al-Bukhari, 1997, 2: 220-221, no. 1291; Muslim, 2007, 1: 45, no. 2).

b. Uprightness (*ʿAdālah*) of the Transmitters

By *ʿadālah*, Ibn Ḥazm means the moral integrity required of transmitters - manifested in performing obligatory acts and avoiding prohibited ones¹ (Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1: 144). One who possesses these qualities would not dare to lie about the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him or distort what he transmits, for such behavior would constitute misguidance and deceit, and the warning of such a person would carry no weight.

Ibn Ḥazm therefore examines the transmitters of each chain, offering judgments of criticism (*jarḥ*) and approval (*taʿdīl*) in conjunction with his assessment of isnād continuity. Only when a transmitter is free from factors that undermine his uprightness does he accept the report; otherwise, it is discarded.

c. Precision (*Ḍabt*) of the Transmitters

Precision constitutes a fundamental condition for accepting a narrator’s report, for transmission is a trust, and its corruption is a form of betrayal. Precision includes clarity in modes of reception and delivery, avoiding practices such as *tadlīs*, and ensuring that the transmitter does not create the false impression of having heard what he did not actually hear.

Ibn Ḥazm discusses precision within his treatment of uprightness, considering it an essential component of *ʿadālah*: one who fails to preserve accurately what he narrates cannot be deemed upright, for uprightness presupposes trustworthiness in transmission (Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1: 144).

He illustrates this through a well-known analogy (Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1: 139-140):

- The “**fertile soil**” represents the narrator who both preserves the wording and comprehends its meaning, returning disagreements to the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.

¹ Scholars have stipulated ***muruʿah*** (upright moral conduct) as a condition for reliability. Al-Ghazālī defined *ʿadālah* (uprightness) in this context by saying:

“It is the expression of the integrity of one’s conduct and religion, and its essence returns to a firmly established disposition in the soul that compels adherence to both piety and muruʿah, such that trust in the truthfulness of the narrator is attained.” (Al-Ghazālī, 1: 100).

Before him, Imām al-Shāfiʿī had drawn attention to the pillars of *muruʿah*, identifying four foundational qualities: **good character, generosity, humility, and devotion**.

For a detailed discussion of this issue and Ibn Ḥazm’s refutation of the requirement of *muruʿah*, see:

(Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1:143–145).

- The **“coarse but water-retaining soil”** represents those who preserve accurately-whether through memorization or writing- yet lack insight into meanings and methods of reconciling disagreements.
- The **“barren land”** represents those who neither memorize nor record what they hear. Such transmitters produce reports are of no value.

For this reason, Ibn Ḥazm occasionally differs from earlier ḥadīth critics in their assessments of certain narrators, due to his strict and uncompromising application of the principle of *ḍabt* (precision). A deficiency in precision is, in itself, a valid ground for declaring a transmitter unreliable - employs certain technical terms -such as *majhūl*- in a personal sense, using it to refer to someone unknown to him individually, rather than in the technical sense intended by the broader ḥadīth tradition. Thus, we find transmitters who are classified as trustworthy (*thiqaḥ*) in the major ḥadīth corpora, yet Ibn Ḥazm describes them as “unknown” simply because he had not personally encountered them.

As for his methodological foundation, Ibn Ḥazm maintains that the report of a trustworthy transmitter may not be rejected except in one of three specific cases (Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1: 137):

1. The transmitter himself admits that he erred.
2. A witness who attended the same session of transmission testifies that he made a mistake in what he narrated.
3. Direct observation clearly indicates that he erred in what he reported.

Beyond these cases, he holds that rejecting the report of a trustworthy transmitter is impermissible, whereas the report of anyone lacking this status is rejected outright.

4. Scholarly Competence in Evaluating *Ḥadīth* Reports

In principle, no one should venture into assessing ḥadīth -classifying reports as sound or weak, judging transmitters as reliable or unreliable, or determining whether isnāds are connected or disconnected- unless they are duly qualified, well-versed in the methodology of the muḥaddithūn, and firmly grounded in its principles. Ibn Ḥazm was a learned, memorizing, and critically discerning scholar, which means he possessed the qualifications necessary for issuing judgments worthy of consideration. Yet this does not imply that everything he stated must be accepted without examination; for a sound evaluation of a ḥadīth requires a comprehensive study of all its transmission routes, and a careful distinction between the varying states of its transmitters. A narrator may exhibit precision in one period of his life but not in another due to later change, or he may depend primarily on his written notes because he lacks strong memorization- making his narrations from his book acceptable, while his narrations from memory may not be.

Such scenarios occurred with several transmitters, and the ḥadīth critics highlighted them to distinguish between the different states of narrators, to consider corroborating indicators, and to determine preference between conflicting reports.

However, these detailed distinctions developed within the tradition of ḥadīth criticism do not appear explicitly in Ibn Ḥazm's assessments; for in his view, a trustworthy narrator remains trustworthy in all circumstances, and his report is not to be rejected except on the basis of sound, decisive evidence. Otherwise, he does not accept criticism against him -an approach in which he differed from the majority of scholars (Klaina, 1988, 427-489).

Accordingly, Ibn Ḥazm authenticated certain reports which he considered corrections to those authenticated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and he criticized some authentic ḥadīths based on his methodological principles—though in such cases the correct position lies with others. His strict adherence to the *ẓāhirī* orientation also influenced a number of the legal conclusions he drew from ḥadīths, leading scholars to critique him; yet none of this undermines his scholarly stature, nor his status as a ḥadīth memorizer, nor the maxim: *"Everyone's statements may be accepted or rejected except the one in this grave."*

The transmissional method likewise had a profound impact on his approach to other disciplines. His foundational maxim -*"If you transmit, provide verification; and if you claim, provide evidence"* -was ever-present in his work. It appears across his writings in literature, history, politics, law, and *uṣūl*, giving his scholarship a distinctive character rarely found in others. He is even regarded as one of the earliest pioneers of comparative religious studies, as demonstrated in his work *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa-al-Ahwā' wa-al-Niḥal*. His contribution in this field stems from the same critical methodology he applied throughout his scholarship: a method grounded in rigorous isnād-based verification, textual scrutiny, and a careful examination of opposing sources. In doing so, he anticipated several principles that would later become foundational in modern comparative approaches to the study of religions.

All these elements shaped Ibn Ḥazm's intellectual personality, marked by a powerful critical faculty throughout his writings. The ḥadīth methodology he adopted played a decisive role in his intellectual brilliance, for he consistently insisted on grounding his conclusions in sound evidence, applying this rigor to his method of reasoning and his analysis of historical realities. Moreover, once we recognize that he was deeply engaged in the political life of al-Andalus, we better understand the precision and insightfulness of his historical observations.

Conclusion of the Section

Ibn Ḥazm's ḥadīth methodology rests upon a coherent and rigorously applied set of critical principles. It begins with a meticulous scrutiny of the isnād and a precise evaluation of each narrator's uprightness and accuracy. On this basis, he upholds a strong presumption in favor of the trustworthy transmitter -whose report, in his view, cannot be dismissed without decisive, demonstrable evidence -and he subjects the *matn* to systematic examination to ensure its harmony with Qur'ānic

foundations, authenticated Prophetic teachings, and sound empirical and rational considerations.

This methodological framework shaped not only his ḥadīth criticism, but also his jurisprudence, his historical analysis, and his study of other religious traditions. Ibn Ḥazm thus emerges not merely as a transmitter of reports, but as a critical scholar whose intellectual project is grounded in the purification of transmission and the establishment of evidence. These two pillars constitute the basis of his critical genius and provide the necessary foundation for understanding his approach to historical narratives in the following section.

HISTORICAL NARRATION IN THE THOUGHT OF IBN ḤAZM

Ibn Ḥazm was distinguished by a consistently critical mode of thinking that permeated all his writings. The *ḥadīth*-based methodology he adopted had a profound impact on his intellectual acumen, for he was a man who refused to build upon anything except sound, verified evidence. This orientation shaped his manner of reasoning and his analysis of historical realities. In addition, when we recall that he was an integral part of the political life of al-Andalus rather than a distant observer, we understand why his historical judgments display such remarkable precision.

Ibn Ḥazm devoted specific treatises to history, in addition to the carefully argued critical remarks scattered throughout his works. However, limited in quantity compared to the size of his corpus and the output of contemporaries such as Ibn Bassām, author of *al-Dhakhīra*, and Ibn Ḥayyān, author of *al-Muqtabas*, these writings -both prose and verse- hold substantial weight. In them, he relies on his own direct observations (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 1: 87, 107, 110, 124...), what he heard from trustworthy transmitters (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 1: 87, 101, 120, 150...), the correspondence he received (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 33), and his personal experiences (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 1: 101, 118, 119, 130...), in addition to the knowledge he acquired from the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, the literature of *sīra* and *maghāzī*, books on other religions, and the numerous historical and other works available in his rich library. All these elements contributed to a historical insight rarely found among other scholars.

One example illustrating the precision of his historical criticism is his rejection of the claim made by a man who presented himself as Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam al-Mu'ayyad, while in reality he was Khalaf al-Ḥuṣarī. Ibn Ḥazm demonstrates -on the basis of established historical facts -that this man claimed to be Hishām twenty-two years after Hishām's death. Yet despite this impossibility, people pledged allegiance to him, his name was invoked in the Friday sermon from the pulpits of al-Andalus at various times, blood was shed, and armies clashed in his name (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983 2: 97).

Another aspect of his originality appears in his study of the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-Wadā'*). He examined it in a manner that gives the reader the

impression of following a historical narrative, while at the same time subjecting its reports to critical scrutiny to distinguish the sound from the unsound and derive legal rulings. He was thus meticulous in everything he transmitted and did not restrict himself to merely citing *isnāds*. In this, he differed from predecessors such as al-Ṭabarī in his *Tārīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* and his Qur'ānic commentary, where it was customary to provide the chains of transmission and leave to others the task of verifying their authenticity, following the principle: "Whoever provides an *isnād* has discharged his responsibility." Ibn Ḥazm's approach therefore represents a new orientation in writing the Prophetic biography as well as in historical writing more broadly.

The influence of his approach is evident in the works of later Andalusian scholars such as Abū al-Qāsim Ṣā'id (d. 463 AH), author of *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*; and Abū Naṣr al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488 AH), who accompanied Ibn Ḥazm, maintained close association with him, and learned extensively from him (Ibn Bashkuwāl, 1989, 2: 560; al-Ḍabbī, 1967, 123), as seen in his *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis fī Tārīkh 'Ulamā' al-Andalus*. Ibn Bashkuwāl (Abū al-Qāsim Khalaf b. 'Abd al-Malik, d. 578 H) later used this work as a principal source in his *al-Ṣīla*, where he explicitly states that the material he transmits from al-Ḥumaydī is drawn directly from *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis* (Ibn Bashkuwāl, 1989, 1: 24).

After him came al-Ḍabbī (Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn 'Amīra, d. 599 H), whose *Bughyat al-Multamis fī Tārīkh Rijāl Ahl al-Andalus* relies on *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis* even more extensively -so much so that the first part of his book up to the year 450 AH appears almost as a rewritten continuation of al-Ḥumaydī's work. Al-Ḍabbī himself acknowledges this reliance in the preface:

"Among the works of those before me, I found no book more suitable than that of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Ḥumaydī; yet he concluded it at the year 450, so I relied on most of what he recorded, added what he omitted, and completed what he left off." (al-Ḍabbī, 1967, 1).

Ibn al-Abbār (d. 659 H) likewise relied on al-Ḥumaydī in his *Takmilat al-Ṣīla*, explicitly noting this at the beginning of his work (Ibn al-Abbār, 1979, 1: 6).

Our purpose in mentioning this is to highlight Ibn Ḥazm's role in stimulating scholarly production and influencing leading thinkers -an influence clearly visible in the numerous works that enriched Andalusian and Islamic libraries.

A survey of Ibn Ḥazm's diverse writings shows the clear presence of his critical spirit, including in historical matters. His approach is built on a method with well-defined features, from which it is possible to extract several principles that governed his critique of historical narration, as will be explained below.

First: Ibn Ḥazm's Personal Observations and Experiences

Ibn Ḥazm explicitly highlights his method of relying on direct observation in the poetry he composed on historical matters. He wrote: "...and in this treatise I shall

include verses I composed regarding events I personally witnessed." (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 1: 87). His firsthand observations thus became a primary source for many of his historical critiques, which fill the works that survived the ravages of time. For this reason, we find his poems about Abū 'Āmir ibn Abī 'Āmir, Mūsā ibn 'Āṣim ibn 'Amr, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā al-Thaqafī the poet, and others -all of which have strong historical relevance. Perhaps the most significant of his historical poems is his *mīmiyyah*² (Ibn Khayr, 1963, 417), written in response to the poem of Nikephoros, known as al-Dumustuq (d. 352 AH), which was sent to the caliph al-Muṭī' bi-llāh attacking Islam and threatening to seize its lands. Ibn Ḥazm replied to him with mastery and eloquence, prompting Ibn Kathīr to say:

"...Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhirī later rose to answer it, and he responded with brilliance and precision, refuting every false claim with truth and sound reasoning. May Allah fill his grave with mercy and make Paradise his abode." (Ibn Kathīr, n.d., 11: 240).

He also recounts the calamities his family endured during the turmoil of al-Mahdī's time (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 1: 147), which forced them to leave their old home and move to a new one (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 126-127).

Second: Reliance on the Consensus of Historians

Ibn Ḥazm considered the consensus of historians to constitute valid proof. For this reason, he frequently cited their agreement when establishing a point -such as determining a person's lineage. In this matter, he observes that historians attribute a person not to his birthplace but to the land to which he migrated and settled permanently until his death. Commenting on the lineage of Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Warrāq, he writes that although he was born in Qayrawān, he was Andalusian in origin, descent, and upbringing; his ancestors came from Wādī al-Hijārah, he was buried in Córdoba, and he had settled there. Ibn Ḥazm states:

"It is necessary to provide evidence for what I have mentioned here, for our intention is to build upon it later, Allah willing. All the historians, among our earlier and later scholars alike -without exception- rated, where he settled permanently, and from which he did not depart until he died." (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 2: 175).

Third: Reliance on Authentic Reports

Ibn Ḥazm divides reports into two categories:

1. **Certain (definitive) reports**, i.e., *mutawātir* reports, transmitted by large groups in every generation back to the Prophet peace be upon him. Such reports, he argues, are unanimously acknowledged by Muslim scholars as obligatory to accept and as conveying certain, definitive knowledge. Through this category of

² Its full text is preserved in al-Subkī, 1413 H, 3: 214–222, and in Ibn Kathīr, n.d., 11: 247–252. It consists of 107 verses.

transmission, we ascertain that the Qur'ān was brought by Muḥammad Peace be upon him, we ascertain the authenticity of his prophethood, the number of prayer units, and other essential elements of the religion. Ibn Ḥazm explains in *al-Fiṣal* that rational necessity compels accepting *mutawātir* transmission, for it is through it that we know events, lands, past nations, and the biographies of prophets, scholars, philosophers, kings, battles, and writings. Whoever rejects this is akin to one who rejects sensory knowledge, and he must logically deny that he had parents, or that he was born from a woman (*Ibn Ḥazm*, 1404 H, 1: 100).

2. **Ahād reports (khabar al-wāḥid)**. These must be accepted—and believed—if they are transmitted through a continuous chain of upright narrators, back to the Prophet peace be upon him. For Ibn Ḥazm, this rule applies not only to *ḥadīth* but also to historical reports, which must be taken from trustworthy transmitters, while the reports of the untrustworthy are categorically rejected (*Ibn Ḥazm*, 1404 H, 1: 103).

Ibn Ḥazm's writings are filled with discussions on the acceptance of reports, insisting on transmitting only from reliable narrators and rejecting non-trustworthy sources. He refuses to dismiss the report of a trustworthy narrator without evidence (*Ibn Ḥazm*, 1404 H, 1: 133).

He explains: since all humans except prophets are fallible, a single narrator may deliberately lie -as is known through sensory experience- and groups may collude on a lie under pressure or motivation, but such collusion eventually becomes apparent once they disperse (*Ibn Ḥazm*, 1404 H, 1: 120).

Because of this, Ibn Ḥazm rejects the notion of "*coincidental poetic resemblance*" (*tawārud al-khawāṭir*) often claimed by some poets. He saw such claims as mere plagiarism and theft, denouncing their narrators as unreliable and rejecting what contradicts established poetic norms. He wrote:

"What I have no doubt about—indeed, what is rationally impossible—is that two poets independently produce an identical poem, or even two identical lines. Poetry is a type of speech, and every speech has a unique structure. What the rhetoricians report about multiple poets producing identical verses is fabricated, unsupported, and unconnected; it is nothing but theft and raiding by some poets against others." (*Ibn Ḥazm*, 1404 H, 1: 103).

Fourth: Appealing to the Self-Evident Judgments of Sense and Reason

Ibn Ḥazm does not merely transmit historical reports; he subjects them to critical evaluation, comparing them to established truths and to the self-evident judgments of reason and sensory experience. In debate, he states:

"To the one who claims that nothing can be known except through transmitted reports, we say: Are all reports true, or all false, or some true and some false? If he says they are all false, he contradicts his own claim. If he says they are all true, we confront him with reports that refute his position, obliging him to abandon it. Thus, only one

possibility remains: that some reports are true and some false. If so, one cannot know the truth of any report merely by its form, since the form of true and false reports is identical. It is therefore necessary to have a criterion distinguishing between them - and that criterion is none other than reason." (Ibn Ḥazm, 1404 H, 1: 20-21).

This rational critique appears in his rejection of the genealogists' claim that al-Ḥakam b. 'Abd al-Malik died young. Ibn Ḥazm discovered praise poetry for him by Ru'bah b. al-'Ajjāj-something impossible for a child who had not yet reached an age worthy of commendation (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 86).

This rational-historical method places Ibn Ḥazm ahead of many earlier historians and anticipates later approaches. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH) was clearly influenced by him, adopting his emphasis on testing reports against rational possibility and citing identical examples -such as exposing contradictions in biblical histories³.

When demonstrating the virtues of al-Andalus, Ibn Ḥazm argued that the Prophet peace be upon him described the ancestors of the Maghribī and Andalusian warriors as "*kings on thrones*"⁴-a conclusion he derived from historical evidence (Ibn Ḥazm, 1983, 2: 173-174). Here, he applies both external criticism (chain analysis) and internal criticism (textual analysis).

Fifth: Critique of the Sacred Writings (the Torah)

Ibn Ḥazm's critique of the Torah rests on two dimensions:

1. **External criticism**, relating to its transmitters.
2. **Internal criticism**, relating to the text itself.

In *al-Fiṣal*, he notes that Jews possess no continuous chains of transmission for their scripture; what they have are mere found manuscripts. He further reports that the Israelites apostatized seven times between the death of Moses and the reign

³ Compare what is found in Ibn Ḥazm, *n.d.*, 1: 261 ff., with Ibn Khaldūn, 2001, p. 14 ff.

⁴ He is referring to the ḥadīth of Anas b. Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him), in which he said that he heard him say: "Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to visit Umm Harām hint Milhān, who would offer him meals. Umm Haram was the wife of 'Ubāda bin A-Sāmit. Allah's Messenger (PBUH), once visited her and she provided him with food and started looking for lice in his head. Then Allah's Messenger slept, and afterwards woke up smiling. Umm Harām asked, "What causes you to smile, O Allah's Messenger?" He said, "Some of my followers who (in a dream) were displayed before me as fighters in Allah's Cause (on board a ship) amidst this sea cause me to smile; they were as kings on the thrones (or like kings on the thrones)." (Ishāq, a subnarrator is not sure as to which expression the Prophet (PBUH) used.) Umm Haram said, "O Allah's Messenger! Invoke Allah that He makes me one of them." Allah's Messenger invoked Allah for her, slept again, and woke up smiling. Once again Umm Harām asked, "What makes you smile, O Allah's Messenger?" He replied, "Some of my followers were displayed before me as fighters in Allah's Cause," repeating the same dream. Umm Haram said, "O Allah's Messenger! Invoke Allah that He makes me one of them." He said, "You are amongst the first ones." It happened that she sailed on the sea during the Caliphate of Mu'āwiya bin Abi Sufyān, and after she disembarked, she fell down from her riding animal and died." (Al-Bukhari, 1997, 4: 47-48, no. 2788; Muslim, 2007, 5: 245-246, no. 1912).

of their first king, Saul. Each apostasy involved idol worship and abandonment of the true religion, with periods lasting eight years, eighteen years, twenty years, seven years, three years, eighteen years, and forty years (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 187-189). He then concludes:

"Reflect: what scripture could remain intact through such long periods of disbelief and rejection of faith, in a small land no larger than a three-day journey, in which no one on earth remained upon their religion or adhered to their scripture?" (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 189-190).

From Ibn Ḥazm's discussion, it becomes clear that he focused primarily on external criticism. He highlighted the absence of an unbroken chain of transmission for the Torah and noted that the Israelites had apostasized for many years, worshipped idols, and that immorality had spread among them. Such a community, he argued, cannot be trusted with a scripture, for they are not reliable transmitters. Moreover, the lack of a continuous chain makes it impossible for any investigator to identify the true source of the transmitted Torah, given the anonymity of its transmitters.

This is precisely the point later emphasized by Spinoza in his critique of the Torah. He wrote:

'...In fact, we are completely ignorant of the authors of many of these books, or of the persons who wrote them, or we doubt their identity. Nor do we know on what occasions or at what time these books—whose true authors are unknown—were written. We do not know into whose hands they fell, nor from whom the original manuscripts came, from which several divergent copies were produced; nor, finally, do we know whether there existed many other manuscripts from different sources.' (Spinoza, 1997, 255).

Thus, Spinoza does not limit himself to questioning the chain of transmission and the anonymity of its transmitters. He also examines the discrepancies among the versions of the Old Testament and raises the possibility that many other versions may have existed. All of this further demonstrates the unreliability of the text currently held by the Jews.

He also subjects the Old Testament to **internal criticism**, applying several criteria, the most important of which are the following:

1. Comparison of the versions available among the Israelites

He collected no fewer than two Arabic translations of the Torah⁵, compared their contents, and consulted Jewish scholars whenever he encountered a difficulty

⁵ The first Arabic translation of the Old Testament was produced by John, Bishop of Seville, in 724 CE, with the aim of assisting Christians and the Maghrebis through it. See: *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 771.

Furthermore, we find Ibn Ḥazm speaking about the Samaritan version and comparing what it contains with other versions -something that reinforces the conclusion that it was circulating in al-Andalus and that Ibn Ḥazm had access to it. See: *al-Fiṣal*, 1/77.

in either version-both out of fairness and in order to bind them by their own explanations.

2. Highlighting the contradictions among the translators of the Torah

He highlighted the contradictions found among the translators of the Torah (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 121), noting the inconsistency of the manuscripts and the falsehoods contained within them, and he devoted an entire chapter to discussing

"the clear contradictions and manifest falsehoods in the book that the Jews call the Torah, in all their other books, and in the four Gospels- by which their corruption and alteration become certain, and by which it becomes evident that they are not the revelation sent down by Allah, exalted be He" (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 116 ff).

3. Exposing the historical inaccuracies contained in the versions of the Torah

These inaccuracies are so severe that the narratives cannot possibly be true (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 122-128). Among such examples is what appears "at the end of their Torah: 'Moses, the servant of Allah, died there in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor, and no human being has known the place of his grave to this day...' This passage is a just witness, a decisive proof, and a truthful argument that their Torah has been altered, and that it is a fabricated history written for them by either one erring in ignorance or one deliberately forging in disbelief. It is certainly not something revealed from Allah Almighty, for it is impossible that this passage was revealed to Moses during his lifetime... This is pure falsehood -exalted is Allah above that. And his statement, 'and no human being has known his grave to this day,' is sufficient evidence for what we have mentioned: that it is a history composed after a very long time, without doubt" (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 212).

This is the very same proof later employed by Spinoza (1997, 269) in his critique of the Torah to demonstrate that the Torah in circulation is not authentic. He devoted an entire chapter to this point, entitled: "Wherein it is demonstrated that the Five Books, together with the Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and Kings, are not authentic; and wherein we examine whether these books had one author or many."

4. Demonstrating the discrepancy between the Samaritan Torah and the Torah held by other Jews:

He shows that the version possessed by the Samaritans is not the same as that held by the rest of the Jews, and that each group claims that the Torah it holds is the authentic one, while asserting with certainty that the version held by the other group is corrupted (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 117).

Through this profound textual criticism, Ibn Ḥazm -according to what modern studies in the history of biblical criticism affirm- may be regarded as the first to formulate a comprehensive methodology for critiquing the Old Testament, one based on the integration of external criticism (isnād-based critique) and internal or textual criticism.

The critical discourse developed by Ibn Ḥazm -together with the critiques advanced by earlier Muslim scholars- played a significant role in shaping Jewish

awareness of the textual crisis of the Torah. Among the most prominent figures influenced by this was Abū Ishāq Ibn Ezra, who stated that more than one author contributed to the writing of the Torah—an observation that Spinoza adopted explicitly (Spinoza 1997, 266). This observation aligns strikingly with Ibn Ḥazm’s method.

Such a methodological convergence between the critiques of Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Ezra, and later Spinoza cannot be explained as a mere historical coincidence. The Andalusian environment constituted a wide space for intellectual exchange between Muslims and Jews, which makes the hypothesis of an influence -whether direct or mediated- the most reasonable and academically sound explanation.

From all that has been presented, it becomes clear that Ibn Ḥazm established a rigorous critical method for engaging with the scriptures of the People of the Book, combining the verification of transmission with the analysis of textual content. This method later moved from the Islamic sphere into the Jewish and subsequently the Western scholarly traditions, through layers of dialogue, transmission, and intellectual interaction -rendering Ibn Ḥazm’s place in the history of biblical criticism truly central and impossible to overlook.

Conclusion of the Section

This section has shown that Ibn Ḥazm approached historical narration with the same rigorous critical method he applied to ḥadīth, relying on verified transmission, personal observation, trustworthy reports, and the consensus of historians. His analyses -from exposing false political claims to reconstructing the Farewell Pilgrimage- demonstrate a commitment to testing narratives against established facts and rational possibility. His critique of the Torah further extends this methodology, combining external criticism of transmission with internal examination of textual contradictions and historical impossibilities. Through this integrated approach, Ibn Ḥazm not only shaped Andalusian historiography but also contributed to the early foundations of scriptural criticism, influencing later Jewish and Western scholarship.

CONCLUSION

A close examination of Ibn Ḥazm reveals a scholar who accepted no report unless both its chain of transmission and its textual content withstood rigorous scrutiny. He combined the external critical framework developed by the muḥaddithūn—analysis of isnād continuity, the ‘adālah (uprightness) of transmitters, their ḍabt (precision), and the verification of authorship, manuscript variants, and audition records—with the internal critical sensibility characteristic of an incisive historian. Through this synthesis, Ibn Ḥazm did not merely dismiss a report on account of a flaw in its transmitters; rather, he examined how that flaw

shaped the wording and meaning of the report itself, thereby preserving the integrity of transmitted narratives.

This methodological rigor explains his rejection of well-known accounts whose falsehood becomes evident once tested against chronological data, *khuṭba* records, and pledges of allegiance—such as the case of the impostor who claimed to be Hishām al-Muʿayyad. Ibn Ḥazm approached this affair not as a political controversy but as a report requiring critical verification: dates, sermons, *bayʿah* ceremonies, and contextual details that unravel through comparison and cross-examination.

The same precision governs his treatment of *ḥadīth*. For him, the narration of a trustworthy transmitter (*thiqah*) is authoritative unless one of three types of evidence invalidates it: an explicit admission of error, corroborated testimony from someone present in the session of audition, or decisive empirical observation. Only after establishing the reliability of the *isnād* does he subject the *matn* to semantic examination; for he maintains that the report of a *thiqah* stands as proof and cannot be rejected without evidence.

Although scholars may differ with Ibn Ḥazm in certain individual judgments, the methodological value of his approach in restoring textual authenticity remains clear. He returned reports to their original sources, protected texts from interpolation and error, and linked the craft of verification to the craft of understanding. His engagement with historical material was shaped by the same coherence: a meticulous documentary instinct paired with an internal critique alert to inconsistency. In this sense, Ibn Ḥazm offers a practical scholarly model that unites the rigor of authentication with the discipline of interpretation—refusing to accept a report simply because it is transmitted, and refusing to be persuaded by meanings whose transmission is unsound.

On this basis, the present study was structured into two sections: the first examining his method in *ḥadīth* transmission and criticism, and the second analyzing the application of these tools to historical reports. The implications of this methodology for his critique of sacred texts remain a promising field for future research—one that would complete the portrait of Ibn Ḥazm as he emerges here: a scholar of rigorously verified transmission and a thinker whose conclusions rest solely on evidence.

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