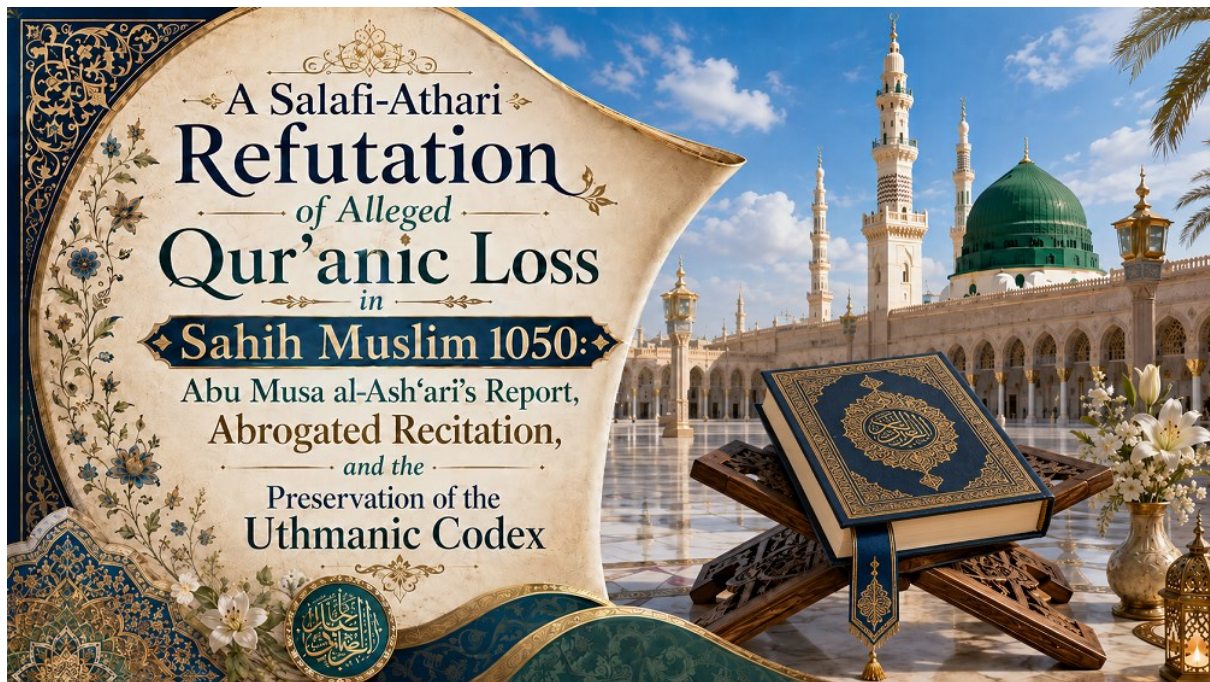


A Salafi-Athari Refutation of Alleged Qur'anic Loss in Sahih Muslim 1050: Abu Musa al-Ash'ari's Report, Abrogated Recitation, and the Preservation of the Uthmanic Codex

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Introduction

This report examines the report in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim no. 1050 in which Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī addressed the reciters of Basra and referred to two bodies of recited material no longer present in the canonical muṣḥaf. Read through an Atharī-Sunni Islamic framework, the report does not describe post-prophetic textual loss. Rather, it sits within a well-attested Qur’anic history of revelation, review, recitation, collection, and—where proven—abrogation of recitation, “naskh al-tilāwah,” before the Prophet’s death. The crucial methodological mistake in modern polemics is to assume that every wording once recited during the process of revelation must remain permanently within the final Qur’an. Sunni Islamic Qur’anic sciences do not make that assumption. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim records the report openly, and Atharī scholars treated it as a matter of Qur’anic sciences rather than as evidence of corruption (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

The allegations raised against this report may be reduced to the following distinct claims: absent Qur’anic material; an incomplete ‘Uthmānic codex; two missing surahs; a lost long surah comparable to al-Tawbah; a second lost surah comparable to the Musabbiḥāt; Abū Mūsā’s testimony to textual loss; Companion forgetfulness; failure of mass memorisation; contradiction with divine preservation; abrogation of recitation as retrospective apologetics; selective canonisation; textual instability; a shorter present Qur’an than the “original”; suppressed verses; a Prophetic saying that was once Qur’an; blurred boundaries between Qur’an and hadith; a missing continuation to Qur’an 61:2; alteration in Sūrat al-Ṣaff; confusion between surahs; inconsistent Qur’anic arrangement; preservation by editorial decision rather than revelation; damage to mass transmission, “tawātur”; individual Companion reports exposing canonical gaps; contradiction between hadith and creed; post-prophetic loss; and the claim that “abrogation” merely renames “loss.”

The method followed here is deliberately strict. It begins with the report's authenticity and narrator profile, then states the governing Sunni Islamic principles once, and then answers each allegation separately so that no claim is answered by conflating it with another. The authorities prioritised are the two Ṣaḥīḥs, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Bāz, and al-ʿUthaymīn, with manuscript and peer-reviewed academic evidence used as corroboration rather than as the theological centre of the case (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-ʿAnzī, 2016; van Putten, 2019; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; Sidky, 2020).

Part One: Foundational Methodology and Evidentiary Framework

The report and its chain

Muslim transmits the report from Abū Ḥarb b. Abī al-Aswad, from his father Abū al-Aswad al-Duʿalī, from Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. In the biographical literature, Abū Ḥarb is graded trustworthy, “thiqah,” by Ibn Ḥajar and al-Dhahabī, and Abū al-Aswad is likewise graded trustworthy by Ibn Maʿīn, al-ʿIjlī, and Ibn Ḥajar. The report is therefore not a weak curiosity pressed into service by later theologians; it is an authentic report preserved in one of the two highest Sunni Islamic hadith collections and supported by credible transmitters in the isnād. Any serious discussion must begin there, not by dismissing the report, but by interpreting it correctly (al-Mizzī, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Ḥajar, n.d./online ed.; Muslim, n.d., no. 1050).

That authenticity is important, but it does not grant critics the right to detach the report from Sunni Islamic legal theory, “uṣūl al-fiqh,” Qurʾanic sciences, and hadith method. An authentic text must still be understood through the categories recognised by the Companions and the early jurists. The mere fact that a report is authentic does not determine which polemical inference is valid. In this case, the governing question is not whether Abū

Mūsā truly said it. He did. The question is what, within Sunni Islamic Qur’anic sciences, his statement means. That question cannot be answered by word-count alarmism or by smuggling in the premise that every once-recited wording remained canonically binding forever (Ibn Bāz, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; al-‘Anzī, 2016).

The Athari-Sunni Islamic framework

The Atharī-Sunni framework rests on several fixed propositions. The first is that abrogation, “naskh,” is real, but not invoked recklessly. Ibn Bāz states that the default is the absence of abrogation unless there is clear proof. The second is that Qur’an 2:106 and 87:6–7 are interpreted by Sunni exegetes to include both abrogation and divinely caused forgetting of what Allah wills to lift. Ibn Kathīr, under Qur’an 2:106, explicitly mentions examples such as the rajm wording and the “two valleys” wording; under Qur’an 87:6–7, he explains that the Prophet would not forget except what Allah willed, and that some scholars related that exception to what was lifted by abrogation. The third is that the category of abrogation of recitation, “naskh al-tilāwah,” is not a modern invention. Ibn Taymiyyah discusses wording that was once recited as Qur’an and later lifted while its ruling remained, and Ibn Bāz and al-‘Uthaymīn affirm the same category in their own discussions (Ibn Bāz, n.d.; Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

This matters because preservation in Sunni Islamic creed is preservation of the Qur’an that Allah decreed to remain Qur’an for the ummah, not preservation of every temporary stage of revealed recitation before the closure of revelation. Allah may reveal, teach, review, confirm, and lift by revelation. What He lifts is not “lost”; it is lifted. What He preserves is not a community-constructed subset; it is the final canonical revelation. That is why Atharī scholars can simultaneously affirm divine preservation and the reality of recitational abrogation without contradiction. The contradiction appears only if one defines preservation

in a way the Sunni Islamic tradition never did (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

Final review, collection, and manuscript horizon

The Prophet’s Qur’an was not left in an undefined pre-canonical state. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī reports that Jibrīl reviewed the Qur’an with the Prophet annually and twice in the year of his death, the final review often called the final presentation, “al-‘arḍah al-ākhirah.” Bukhārī also records Abū Bakr’s collection through Zayd b. Thābit from written materials and from the breasts of men, and then ‘Uthmān’s copying of those manuscripts into standardised codices for the provinces. That is not the behaviour of a community improvising a scripture after the Prophet. It is the behaviour of a community safeguarding a text already fixed in prophetic review and then copied under Companion supervision (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987, 4998).

Material manuscript evidence now strongly corroborates this early standardisation. Van Putten argues that early Qur’an manuscripts descend from a single written archetype and that the data make a standardisation much later than ‘Uthmān highly unlikely. Sadeghi and Goudarzi show that the vast majority of known Qur’an manuscripts belong to the ‘Uthmānic text type and that the sūrahs had already been joined together before ‘Uthmān’s standardising effort. Sidky’s stemmatic analysis argues that the regional codices and four regional exemplars are historically real. The University of Birmingham’s manuscript folios have also been radiocarbon dated to 568–645 CE, placing them extremely close to the Prophet’s lifetime. This manuscript horizon does not support a fluid canon with disappearing long surahs after the Prophet. It supports early fixation and scribal fidelity (van Putten, 2019; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; Sidky, 2020; University of Birmingham, 2015).

Foundational Responses: Missing-Material Claims

Absent Qur'anic material

The strongest form of this objection says that Abū Mūsā plainly describes material once recited as Qur'an but no longer present in the muṣḥaf, and that absence is therefore textual loss. That reading appears straightforward only if one first assumes that any revealed recitation remains permanently canonical. The Sunni Islamic tradition does not grant that premise. Ibn Kathīr, under Qur'an 2:106, explicitly includes the “two valleys” wording among examples of recitation lifted by Allah, and under Qur'an 87:6–7 he explains that the Prophet would not forget except what Allah willed. Al-ʿUthaymīn, commenting directly on this hadith, states that these words were once recited as Qur'an and then were abrogated from Qur'an while some remained in the Sunnah. So, the report indicates former recitation and subsequent lifting, not accidental disappearance from the muṣḥaf (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; al-ʿUthaymīn, 2006).

An incomplete ʿUthmānic codex

The claim of an incomplete ʿUthmānic codex fails because ʿUthmān did not independently “decide” the Qur'an's contents. Bukhārī reports that he copied from the suḥuf already collected under Abū Bakr and preserved with Ḥaḥṣah. If the material remembered by Abū Mūsā had remained canonical at the Prophet's death, it would have had a place in that earlier collection, which itself drew on written material and living memorisation. Moreover, early manuscript research points to a single ʿUthmānic archetype and to historical regional exemplars descending from it. The evidential burden therefore lies on the critic to show that canonically surviving material was excluded from that archetype. This report does not do that. It only shows that some recited material no longer belonged to the final public Qur'an (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020).

Two missing surahs

The language of “two missing surahs” overstates what the report says. Abū Mūsā does not provide titles, complete texts, exact verse counts, or ongoing canonical status. He says only that they used to recite material comparable in one case to al-Tawbah and in the other to one of the Musabbiḥāt, and that he remembered fragments. In Sunni Islamic terminology, that is entirely compatible with two bodies of recited revelation whose tilāwah was later lifted. A remembered fragment from formerly recited material is not the same thing as a lost chapter from the final canon. Had the report meant canonical survival with later disappearance, one would expect conflict with the collected suhuf, the provincial codices, and the manuscript tradition. None exists (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; al-‘Anzī, 2016; van Putten, 2019).

A lost long surah comparable to al-Tawbah

The phrase “resembling al-Tawbah in length and severity” does not prove a long surah was lost after the Prophet. It proves only that Abū Mūsā remembered a former recitational body by rough comparison. Similarity of tone is not proof of final canonical status. Even if the surah had once been long, longness is irrelevant to the preservation question unless it survived the final review and entered the canonical corpus by mass transmission, “tawātur.” Nothing in the report says that it did. Indeed, the fact that Abū Mūsā only remembers one sentence and does not cite a living recitational or codical tradition strongly suggests the opposite: the material had already ceased to function as publicly recited Qur’an (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, n.d., no. 4998; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012).

A second lost surah comparable to the Musabbiḥāt

The same applies to the second surah. Resemblance to one of the surahs opening with glorification, “the Musabbiḥāt,” is a classificatory comparison, not proof of a missing canonical chapter. Abū Mūsā does not say, “this chapter remained Qur’an but vanished.” He

says, in effect, “we used to recite something like this, and I now remember only a fragment.” Under Sunni Islamic Qur’anic sciences, that is the language of former recitation, not canonical omission. The present muṣḥaf’s integrity is established by public transmission and the ‘Uthmānic archetype, neither of which contains such a chapter (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020).

Abū Mūsā testified to Qur’anic loss

Abū Mūsā did not testify that the Qur’an had been corrupted, suppressed, or incompletely transmitted. He testified that there had been material they once recited and that he no longer retained more than fragments. That is a statement about remembered recitational history, not about the failure of the muṣḥaf project. Indeed, if Abū Mūsā had believed the material remained binding Qur’an, the proper conclusion would have been a canonical dispute. Yet neither he nor the Basran reciters treat it that way. Their conduct is itself interpretive evidence: they preserved the report about the former recitation but did not attempt to insert it into the muṣḥaf. That is evidence of canonical discipline, not of loss (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

Foundational Responses: Compilation and Canonisation Claims

Selective canonisation

The polemical claim that early Muslims “chosenly retained” some recitations and “excluded” others by communal preference misconstrues what Bukhārī actually reports. Abū Bakr’s collection was not a literary committee weighing textual options; it was an emergency preservation effort after Yamāmah, led by Zayd b. Thābit, who gathered the Qur’an from written materials and memorisers. ‘Uthmān then copied those suhuf into standard codices and sent them to the provinces. His order to write disputed wording in the dialect of Quraysh concerns authorised mode and orthography, not the invention or deletion of substantive

surahs. Modern manuscript stemmatics corroborate that the resulting archetype was early and historically real (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020).

Textual instability in the early Qur'an

Here the steelman is subtler: even if the final muṣḥaf stabilised, the report supposedly proves earlier textual fluidity so serious that preservation language becomes misleading. The reply is that Sunni Islamic sources already distinguish between the period of ongoing revelation and the period after closure. During revelation, there could be pedagogical variation, authorised modes, and where proven, abrogation. That is controlled revelatory history, not corruption. Once revelation closed, the text entered a phase of remarkable early stability. Van Putten speaks of a single written archetype; Sadeghi and Goudarzi speak of a standard 'Uthmānic text type with only minor variation within it; Sidky argues that the regional codices themselves can be materially reconstructed. The existence of controlled pre-closure dynamics does not negate post-closure preservation (van Putten, 2019; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; Sidky, 2020).

The present Qur'an is shorter than the original revelation

This allegation trades on equivocation. If “original revelation” means every stage of wording ever recited before abrogation, then the present muṣḥaf need not contain everything once recited temporarily, just as a final legal code need not reproduce every provisional draft. If, however, “original revelation” means the final Qur'an intended for enduring public recitation after the Prophet's final review, then the allegation fails, because the entire point of Abū Bakr's and 'Uthmān's work was to preserve that final canon. Sunni Islamic doctrine concerns the preservation of the final Qur'an, not the indefinite conservation of everything ever temporarily recited before Allah lifted what He willed to lift (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4998; Ibn Kathīr, n.d.).

Inconsistent Qur'anic arrangement

The claim that the hadith suggests an uncertain or unstable arrangement collapses against both hadith and manuscript evidence. Sadeghi and Goudarzi explicitly argue that the sūrahs had already been joined together before 'Uthmān's standardising effort. Van Putten notes that the early manuscripts of the 'Uthmānic text type agree on the order of the suraḥs, the order of the verses within each suraḥ, and the word content of those verses. Abū Mūsā's rough comparison to al-Tawbah and the Musabbiḥāt is therefore not evidence that the canonical arrangement was undecided; it is evidence that he was describing non-canonical former recitation by analogy to known canonical chapters (Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; van Putten, 2019).

Preservation by editorial decision rather than revelation

This is a false dichotomy. Revelation fixed what was Qur'an; editorial labour preserved it in written form. Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān were not rival legislators to revelation. They were custodians of revelation. The hadith literature presents collection and codification as preservation of what the Prophet had already taught, written, and reviewed with Jibrīl, not as human authorship of scripture. Manuscript evidence, far from weakening that picture, increasingly supports a very early written archetype close to the traditional account (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987, 4998; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020).

Post-prophetic loss

The objection that the hadith implies post-prophetic loss reverses the actual logic of the Sunni Islamic sources. Abrogation, by definition, is revelatory and therefore bound to the Prophet's lifetime. It cannot occur after his death. The Prophet's final review with Jibrīl occurred in his last year. Abū Bakr's collection then preserved the complete muṣḥaf of the closed prophetic period. Therefore, if material was once recited but absent from the canonical

muṣḥaf, the Sunni Islamic explanation is not that it vanished after the Prophet; it is that its recitational status had already ceased before the final closure of revelation. The hadith provides no evidence of post-prophetic deletion by the Companions (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4998; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.).

Foundational Responses: Memory, Mass Transmission, and Preservation

Claims

The Companions forgot revelation

The phrase “I have forgotten it” is often weaponised as if Sunni Islamic preservation rests on the impossible thesis that no human being ever forgets anything once memorised. That is not the Sunni Islamic claim. Human memory can fail naturally, and revelation itself can cause what Allah wills to be forgotten. Ibn Kathīr explicitly states under Qur’an 87:6–7 that the Prophet would not forget except what Allah willed, and some scholars connected that exception to abrogation. The report also attributes forgetting only to Abū Mūsā personally, not to the Companions collectively. A single Companion’s later inability to recover a once-recited text therefore proves neither communal loss nor doctrinal collapse (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Muslim, n.d., no. 1050).

Mass memorisation failed

The presence of three hundred Basran reciters proves the opposite of what critics claim. It shows that a large recitational community existed and that Abū Mūsā was addressing them as specialists in the recited Qur’an. Their job was not to preserve every wording ever recited before abrogation; their job was to preserve the living Qur’an. Bukhārī’s account of Abū Bakr’s collection also makes clear that the Qur’an was preserved from written materials together with living memorisation, not by memory alone. So the report does not describe a failed mass memory system. It describes a disciplined distinction between the

mass-transmitted canon and recollections of former recitation (al-Bukhārī, n.d., no. 4986; Muslim, n.d., no. 1050).

Contradiction with divine preservation

No contradiction exists unless one defines divine preservation in a way contradicted by the tradition itself. Allah says He preserves the reminder, “dhikr,” and the same revelation also states that He abrogates what He wills and causes forgetting of what He wills. Ibn Kathīr treats these categories as harmonious, not contradictory. Preservation therefore means that what Allah decrees to remain Qur’an remains Qur’an, safeguarded in recitation and muṣḥaf. What Allah decrees to lift is not a failure of preservation but part of revelation’s own history. Different divine acts should not be collapsed into one category merely to manufacture a contradiction (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.).

Abrogation of recitation is a retrospective defence

This allegation is historically weak. Multiple early reports already presuppose that some recited Qur’anic material was later lifted. A peer-reviewed Sunni Islamic study by al-‘Anzī notes that the overwhelming majority of scholars accepted the occurrence of recitational abrogation and that denial is largely a later minority position. The same study also cites Anas’s report concerning Qur’an recited for those slain at Bi’r Ma‘ūnah and later lifted, showing that the category was not invented merely to answer modern polemics. Ibn Kathīr uses the category classically, Ibn Taymiyyah treats it as an established principle, and Ibn Bāz and al-‘Uthaymīn affirm it in contemporary Atharī discussions. That is continuity, not retrospective improvisation (al-‘Anzī, 2016; Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

Mass transmission is undermined

Mass transmission, “*tawātur*,” is not the claim that every historically reported phrase must have been publicly transmitted forever. It is the principle by which permanent Qur’an is known as Qur’an. A wording that survives only through isolated recollections after its recitational lifting is, by that very fact, not part of the permanent Qur’anic canon. The category of former recitation does not damage *tawātur*; it protects *tawātur* by refusing to admit solitary fragments into the Qur’an against the mass-transmitted text. The report therefore demonstrates the discipline of the canon rather than a weakness in it (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987; Muslim, n.d., no. 1050).

Individual Companion reports expose gaps in the canon

An individual Companion report cannot create a “gap” against a mass-transmitted canon. If the Companion remembers a formerly recited text not included in the canonical *muṣḥaf*, Sunni Islamic method classifies it accordingly; it does not subordinate *tawātur* to solitary recollection. This is precisely why Abū Mūsā’s report did not become a textual amendment project. The community preserved his statement historically, but the Qur’an itself remained what the public, written, reviewed, and transmitted canon established. A canon that refuses private amendment by even a major Companion is canonically strong, not canonically weak (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987).

The hadith contradicts Muslim creed

This allegation only works by caricaturing Muslim creed. Sunni Islamic creed does not say that every wording ever recited during revelation remains forever in the *muṣḥaf*. It says that the Qur’an Allah willed for enduring recitation has been preserved. Once that definition is restored, the hadith no longer contradicts creed. It becomes an example of how the hadith corpus openly transmits the history of revelation—including difficult material—

without fear, precisely because the creed already had categories for it. The internal consistency lies not in pretending such reports do not exist, but in interpreting them through the categories of Sunni Islamic Qur’anic sciences (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006).

Abrogation merely renames loss

“Loss” and “abrogation” are not different labels for the same event; they are different causal explanations. Loss means unauthorised disappearance of material that ought still to exist as Qur’an. Abrogation means authorised cessation of recitation by divine revelation before closure of the canon. In legal theory, theological status, and evidentiary consequences, those are entirely different categories. When Atharī scholars call a wording “abrogated in recitation,” they are not cosmetically renaming corruption. They are locating the wording within a recognised revelatory process, one already grounded in Qur’anic verses on abrogation and the Prophet’s divinely conditioned non-forgetting (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.).

Foundational Responses: Qur’an and Sunnah Boundary Claims

Suppressed Qur’anic verses

The “two valleys” wording is not suppressed. Suppressed texts are hidden, denied, or erased from memory and record. This wording was transmitted openly in hadith collections and openly discussed in Sunni Islamic works of Qur’anic sciences. Indeed, al-‘Anzī’s study collates multiple Companion reports concerning it, including reports from Zayd b. Arqam, Buraydah, Ubayy, and Abū Wāqid, in addition to the Ṣaḥīḥayn narrations from Anas and Ibn ‘Abbās. Open historical survival in hadith and scholarship is the opposite of suppression. The question is not whether the wording survived in memory and report. It did. The question is

whether it survived as canonical Qur'an. Sunni Islamic method says no (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 6436, 6439; Muslim, n.d., nos. 1048–1050; al-‘Anzī, 2016).

A Prophetic saying was once Qur'an

Within the Sunni Islamic framework, that is not a scandal; it is a possible historical description of a wording whose recitation was later lifted while its meaning or wording remained in the Sunnah. Al-‘Uthaymīn says exactly this when commenting on Abū Mūsā’s report: the “two valleys” phrase was once recited as Qur'an, then abrogated from Qur'an, while it remained in the Sunnah as hadith. The category distinction is maintained by legal status: what remains Qur'an is recited liturgically and written in the muṣḥaf by tawātur; what remains Sunnah is transmitted as hadith. A wording’s movement from one status to the other by divine act is not confusion but classification (al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006; al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 6436, 6439; Muslim, n.d., nos. 1048–1050).

Blurred boundaries between Qur'an and hadith

The actual behaviour of the early Muslims points in the opposite direction. They preserved the historical fact that some wording had once been recited, but they did not insert it into the muṣḥaf on the strength of memory reports alone. Ibn ‘Abbās even reports uncertainty as to whether the “two valleys” wording was Qur'an or not in one context, which far from proving confusion, shows scrupulous restraint in classification. A blurred boundary would have produced canonical chaos. What we actually see is canonical discipline: a stable muṣḥaf, a hadith corpus preserving non-canonical Prophetic speech and memories of former recitation, and scholars carefully distinguishing between the two (al-Bukhārī, n.d., no. 6436; Muslim, n.d., nos. 1049–1050; al-Bukhārī, n.d., no. 4987).

A missing continuation to Qur'an 61:2

Abū Mūsā's recollection does not prove that the current text of Qur'an 61:2 is missing words. It proves only that a formerly recited body of material contained the canonical verse "Why do you say what you do not do?" together with another remembered clause about testimony on the necks and questioning on the Day of Resurrection. Critics assume adjacency in remembered recitation equals canonical continuity in the final muṣḥaf. That assumption is unproved. The Qur'an frequently contains thematic and lexical echoes across different places. A formerly recited surah could incorporate a canonical verse while also containing wording later lifted from recitation. That does not entail that Sūrat al-Ṣaff is incomplete (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; van Putten, 2019).

Alteration in Sūrat al-Ṣaff

The alteration thesis collapses under manuscript evidence. Van Putten notes that the early 'Uthmānic manuscripts agree on the order of the surahs, the order of the verses within them, and the word content of those verses. There is no manuscript evidence of a longer Qur'an 61:2 in the 'Uthmānic textual tradition. Nor does Bukhārī's or Muslim's collection record any Companion campaign to amend Sūrat al-Ṣaff on the basis of Abū Mūsā's memory. The report therefore cannot outweigh the convergent evidence of canonical recitation, written codices, and manuscript transmission (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020).

Confusion between surahs

The suggestion that Abū Mūsā was confused between al-Ṣaff, a Musabbiḥah surah, and some other surah misunderstands how resemblance works in Arabic scholarly discourse. Saying that a surah resembled one of the Musabbiḥāt is a generic typological description. Likewise, remembering a phrase that echoes Qur'an 17:13 does not imply uncertainty about

canonical placement. Qur'anic discourse is rich in internal thematic correspondence. The report describes remembered former recitation by analogy to known canonical material; it does not document canonical confusion about where verses belong in the muṣḥaf. If such confusion had been real, it would have left traces in the codical tradition. It did not (Muslim, n.d., no. 1050; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; van Putten, 2019).

Interim Conclusion

The report of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim no. 1050 is authentic, but the anti-Islamic inference usually drawn from it is methodologically unsound. It becomes plausible only after importing a foreign premise: that every wording once recited during the period of revelation had to remain in the final muṣḥaf. Sunni Islamic Qur'anic sciences reject that premise. Qur'an 2:106 and 87:6–7, classical Atharī exegesis, Ibn Taymiyyah's legal theory, Ibn Bāz's fatwas, and al-'Uthaymīn's commentary all recognise the possibility—under proof, not whim—of recitational abrogation. Once that framework is restored, the report no longer challenges preservation. It illustrates the distinction between the history of revelation and the final preserved Qur'an (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d./online ed.; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-'Uthaymīn, 2006).

The same report also fails as historical evidence against the 'Uthmānic codex. Bukhārī's collection reports describe an early, document-backed, memory-backed compilation under Abū Bakr and a subsequent provincial standardisation under 'Uthmān. Modern manuscript evidence increasingly supports that picture: an early written archetype, historically real regional codices, early provincial dissemination, and overwhelming dominance of the 'Uthmānic text type. There is no manuscript trail of two missing canonical surahs, no codical evidence of a truncated al-Ṣaff, and no sign that Abū Mūsā's recollection ever functioned as a rival Qur'an. The report is therefore best read not as evidence of loss, but

as evidence that the early Muslims preserved even the history of lifted recitation while keeping the canonical muṣḥaf rigorously protected (al-Bukhārī, n.d., nos. 4986, 4987, 4998; van Putten, 2019; Sadeghi & Goudarzi, 2012; Sidky, 2020; University of Birmingham, 2015).

The decisive point, then, is conceptual. “Loss” is unauthorised disappearance of what should still be Qur’an. “Abrogation of recitation” is authorised cessation of recitation by revelation before canon closure. The hadith, the Atharī scholarly tradition, and the manuscript record all fit the second category, not the first. Once that is understood, the entire cluster of allegations—from missing surahs to failed tawātur—collapses into a chain of category errors. The report is not internally damaging to Sunni Islam. Properly read, it confirms the sophistication, restraint, and early self-awareness of Sunni Islamic Qur’anic preservation (al-‘Anzī, 2016; al-‘Uthaymīn, 2006; van Putten, 2019).

Part Two: Detailed Claim-by-Claim Refutations

Overview of the Detailed Refutations

This report examines the report of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1050 through a Sunni Islamic, Salafi-Athari framework and against the control data supplied by the final Prophetic review, the early codification reports, the science of mass transmission, “tawātur”, and the earliest manuscript evidence. The core finding is that none of the allegations drawn from this report establishes that the present Qur’anic codex, “muṣḥaf”, is incomplete, corrupted, selectively edited, or textually unstable in the sense alleged by polemicists. The report proves a narrower point: a leading Companion recalled material once recited and later no longer retained as part of the publicly transmitted Qur’anic canon, while remembering only fragments of it. That is not equivalent to proving that the Uthmanic codex omitted surviving Qur’anic passages.

The strongest cumulative controls are five. First, the Prophet’s final double review with Gabriel in the last Ramadan establishes a pre-death criterion for what remained Qur’an in its final recited form. Secondly, the Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān codification reports describe a conservative preservation project, not a free editorial one. Thirdly, modern manuscript scholarship strongly supports a very early, single written Uthmanic archetype, with early manuscripts descending from that archetype and from four regional exemplars. Fourthly, the one famous exceptional witness, the lower text of the Ṣan‘ā’ palimpsest, is treated by recent scholarship precisely as exceptional rather than normative. Fifthly, several of the phrases cited in Muslim 1050 are independently preserved as Prophetic sayings in the major hadith corpus, which undercuts the claim that Muslims “lost” them and instead points to the classical Sunni Islamic distinction between current Qur’an, former recitation, and Prophetic speech.

On a Salafi-Athari reading, the correct doctrinal conclusion is therefore not “the Qur’an lost material”, but rather “the Qur’an preserved by Allah is the final canon confirmed in the last Prophetic review and carried by the community in mass transmission”. In that framework, abrogation of recitation “naskh al-tilāwah”, where established by sound evidence, is not accidental post-Prophetic loss. It is an act of divine legislation and withdrawal, whereas “loss” would mean an unintended failure of preservation. The report in Muslim 1050 fits the former category far better than the latter.

Scope and Method

The governing theological frame of this report is the understanding of the people of the Prophetic way and the united community “Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah” according to the Righteous Predecessors “al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ”, using a Salafi/Athari method. The source hierarchy is: authentic hadith; established Qur’anic sciences; early codification reports;

recognised contemporary Salafi authorities, especially Ibn Bāz where directly available in official form; and then manuscript and peer-reviewed academic scholarship where it bears on historical questions. Excluded are the categories and named contemporary authors specified by the user. The report therefore gives interpretive priority to what unambiguously fixes the public Qur’anic canon: the final review, the communal codices, the mass recitational tradition, and the stable manuscript record.

Allegations Raised Against Sahih Muslim 1050

Code	Allegation
a	The hadith proves absent Qur’anic material not present in the current muṣḥaf.
b	The Uthmanic codex failed to preserve all Qur’anic passages known to Companions.
c	The report proves that two whole surahs disappeared.
d	A substantial lost surah comparable in length and severity to al-Tawbah once existed.
e	A second lost surah comparable to the Musabbihāt once existed.
f	Abū Mūsā directly testified that Qur’anic material had vanished.
g	The Companions forgot revealed Qur’an in a way that compromises preservation.
h	Even a community of three hundred reciters failed to preserve all recited material.
i	The hadith conflicts with Allah’s promise to preserve the reminder.
j	Abrogation of recitation is only a later apologetic invented to explain missing text.
k	Early Muslims selectively canonised some recitations and excluded others by choice.
l	The early Qur’anic text was fluid before later standardisation.
m	The present Qur’an is shorter than the original revelation.
n	Some Qur’anic verses were suppressed, including the remembered lines on greed and dust.
o	A Prophetic saying was once treated as Qur’an, proving confusion in transmission.
p	Early Muslims could not reliably distinguish Qur’an from Sunnah.
q	The report preserves a lost continuation to Qur’an 61:2.
r	Surah al-Şaff in its present form is altered or incomplete.
s	The report shows confusion over whether wording belonged to al-Şaff, a Musabbihah surah, or another text.
t	The arrangement of surahs and verses was not fixed in the early period.
u	The final Qur’an reflects editorial decision rather than divinely secured transmission.
v	The doctrine of mass transmission “tawātur” is undermined.
w	Individual Companion reports expose gaps in the canon.
x	The hadith internally damages Muslim creed because it is in <i>Şaḥīḥ Muslim</i> .
y	The hadith implies post-Prophetic loss of revelation.

Code	Allegation
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z	Calling the matter “abrogation” merely renames textual loss without solving it.
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Foundational evidentiary frame

Authentication and chain analysis

The report is authentic in transmission. It is included by Muslim in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* as Hadith no. 1050, with the chain running through Abū Ḥarb ibn Abī al-Aswad from his father from Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī. In Sunni Islamic hadith criticism, Abū Ḥarb is graded trustworthy “*thiqah*” by Ibn Ḥajar, al-Dhahabī, and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr as summarised in the narrator literature, while Abū al-Aswad is likewise graded trustworthy and distinguished. That settles authenticity of the report as a historical narration. It does not settle the polemical inferences later drawn from it. In other words, critics are entitled to appeal to the report’s authenticity, but not to smuggle into it conclusions that its wording, the codification reports, and the manuscript record do not sustain.

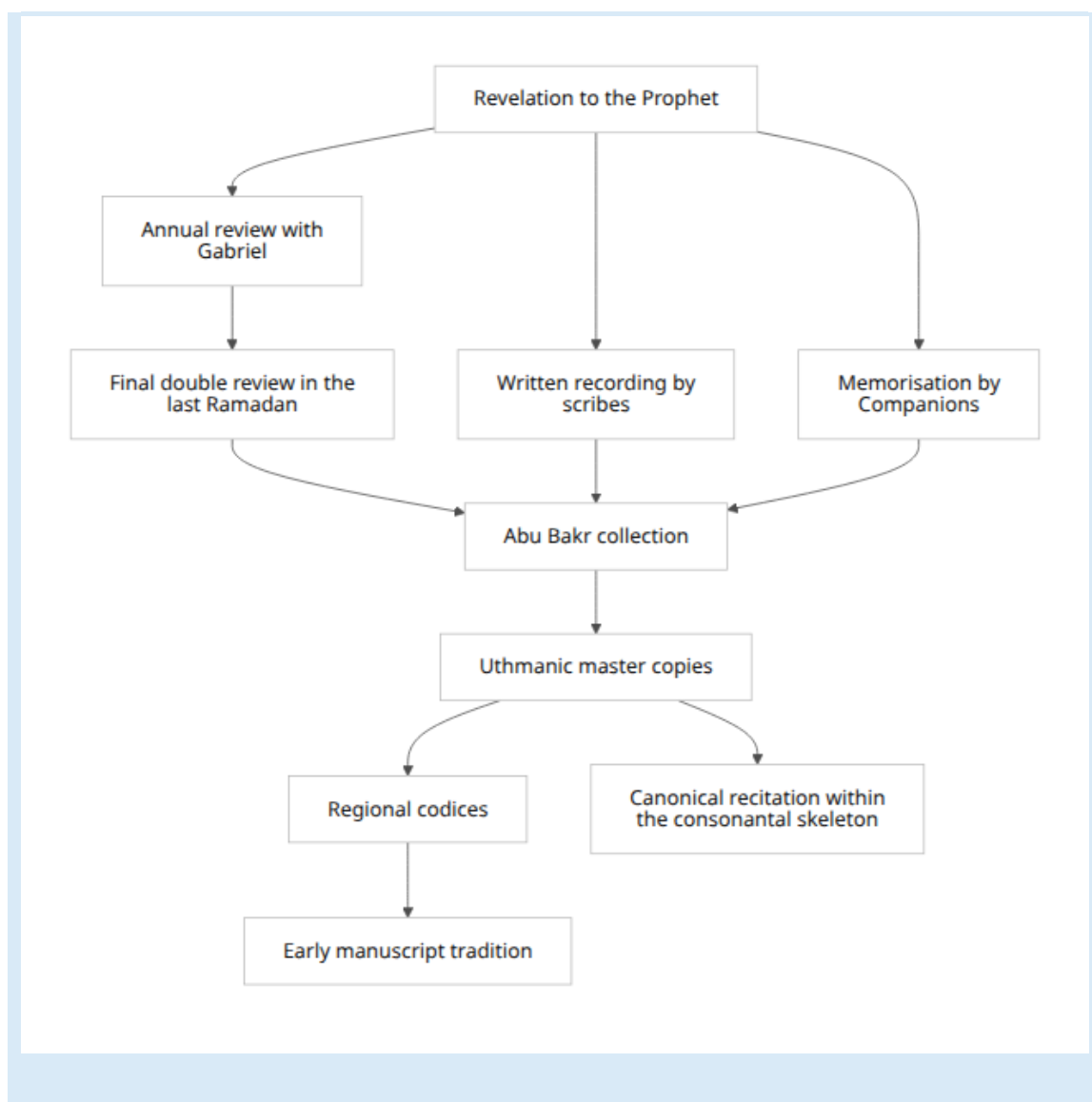
Narrator in the preserved chain	Sunni Islamic hadith judgement in the biographical tradition
Abū Ḥarb ibn Abī al-Aswad	Trustworthy “ <i>thiqah</i> ”; also known among the reciters of Basra
Abū al-Aswad al-Dīlī	Trustworthy “ <i>thiqah</i> ”, distinguished <i>Tābi‘ī</i> , noted for learning and precision

The note beneath the table is crucial. An authentic report may transmit either a fact, a perception, a personal memory, a legal ruling, or an interpretation. The work of scholarship is therefore not to deny authentication but to classify what kind of fact is actually being transmitted. Here, what is transmitted is a Companion’s recollection of past recitation and his own forgetting, not a formal declaration that the present *muṣḥaf* is deficient.

Preservation pipeline

The preservation logic accepted by Ahl al-Sunna is better described as a pipeline than as a single event: revelation to the Prophet; annual review with Gabriel; the final double

review in the year of death; written recording by the scribes; memorisation by the Companions; Abū Bakr’s collection from written pieces and memorised evidence; and ‘Uthmān’s production of authoritative regional copies to prevent dialectal conflict. Ibn Bāz, in explicitly Athari language, states that the Qur’an written by the Companions and standardised in ‘Uthmān’s time is the muṣḥaf “between our hands now”, and that nothing from it was changed. He further states that the preserved text corresponds to the final review “al-‘arḍah al-ākhirah”.



The significance of this pipeline is decisive for interpreting Muslim 1050. Anything that did not remain within this final, public, communally ratified stream is not established as

part of the extant Qur’anic canon merely because an individual Companion remembered it from an earlier stage of recitation. That is not special pleading; it is the ordinary internal logic of the preservation system described in the canonical hadith and affirmed by later Salafi scholarship.

Manuscript control points

The manuscript evidence materially constrains how Muslim 1050 can be read. The Birmingham manuscript is one of the earliest surviving Qur’anic fragments and contains parts of surahs 18–20 in an early Ḥijāzī script. van Putten’s study of 14 early Qur’an manuscripts argues that their shared orthographic peculiarities point back to a single written archetype. Sidky’s stemmatic study concludes that the examined early manuscripts descend from four ancestral regional codices and that this supports the historicity of the Uthmanic canonisation. Sinai, reviewing the major early codices, states that the lower text of the Ṣan‘ā’ palimpsest remains the only known material witness to a recension different from the canonical one. Little, in 2025, argues that the available evidence strongly supports the Uthmanic hypothesis and strongly contradicts later Hajjājīan canonisation theories. Taken together, these findings support early fixation rather than late, open-ended textual fluidity.

Evidence locus	What it shows	Why it matters for Muslim 1050
Birmingham Qur’an fragment	Very early physical witness to the canonical text in circulation	Undercuts theories of late wholesale loss or recomposition
Shared orthographic peculiarities across early manuscripts	A single written archetype behind the early Uthmanic text type	Makes large accidental omission by later editors historically implausible
Stemma of regional codices	Four ancestral codices underlying examined manuscripts	Corroborates Muslim reports about regional dissemination of standard copies
Ṣan‘ā’ lower text as exceptional witness	A rare non-canonical witness rather than the norm	Shows that variation existed at the margins before canonisation, not that the canonical text remained fluid
Recent historical reassessment of canonisation	Strong support for Uthmanic canonisation over later state construction hypotheses	Reinforces the early date of textual fixation

The table is not a substitute for textual analysis, but it supplies the control data without which Muslim 1050 is routinely over-read. The hadith must be interpreted within this documentary landscape, not against it.

Evidentiary rule for naskh

A specifically Salafi point is also important here. Ibn Bāz states that the default with legal and textual claims is non-abrogation unless clear evidence establishes abrogation. This prevents an undisciplined appeal to “naskh” whenever someone meets a difficulty. Yet the same rule means that when there is clear evidence of former recitation that the community did not preserve as present Qur’an, the correct move is not to force that material back into the muṣḥaf, but to classify it properly. The rule is restrictive, not evasive.

Part Two: Detailed Claim-by-Claim Refutations, Claims A to I

Claim A: Allegation of Absent Qur’anic Material

Strongest form of the objection. Muslim 1050 plainly says that a surah once recited as Qur’an is now absent from the present muṣḥaf. The most natural reading, therefore, is that Qur’anic material once existed but no longer exists in the canonical text.

Refutation. The report proves only that Abū Mūsā remembered former recitation and then remembered only a fragment of it. It does not say that the material remained part of the Qur’an after the final review, nor that ‘Uthmān omitted it from a surviving public canon. Under Sunni Islamic methodology, current Qur’an is established by the final public recension carried by the community, not by isolated recollection of earlier recitation. The report’s own wording is retrospective and personal: “we used to recite”, “I have forgotten it”. Moreover, part of the remembered wording also survives independently as a Prophetic saying in Ṣaḥīḥ

al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, which shows that the wording was not “lost” to the community but preserved in another transmitted mode.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986, 4987, 4998, 6438; van Putten, 2019.

Claim B: Allegation of an Incomplete Uthmanic Codex

Strongest form of the objection. If a Companion knew Qur’anic material that the Uthmanic muṣḥaf lacks, then the standard codex must be incomplete.

Refutation. That conclusion confuses private remembrance with canonical criterion. The Uthmanic project was not an exercise in private preference; it was the standardisation of the text already collected and publicly known, with multiple copies sent to the provinces.

Modern manuscript work now strongly reinforces the traditional account: the early Uthmanic text type points to a single written archetype, four ancestral regional codices, and very early fixation. A solitary reminiscence from Abū Mūsā cannot outweigh the entire public codex stream that Muslim, Bukhārī, the early manuscripts, and Athari scholarship converge upon.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986–4987; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; Sidky, 2020; van Putten, 2019; Little, 2025.

Claim C: Allegation of Two Missing Surahs

Strongest form of the objection. Abū Mūsā mentions two forgotten surahs. Therefore, two actual surahs once belonged to the Qur’an and then disappeared.

Refutation. The report does not furnish two extant, reconstructable surahs; it furnishes two analogical recollections: one “resembling” al-Tawbah in length and severity, and another “resembling” one of the Musabbihāt. Abū Mūsā then says he remembered only a small piece from each. That is insufficient to prove that two full canonical surahs survived past the Prophet’s final recension and were later lost. The hadith is fully consistent with formerly recited material later withdrawn from current recitation, while leaving behind

remembered phrases and moral teachings. The leap from “a Companion remembered fragments of past recitation” to “two whole surahs disappeared from Islam” is therefore methodologically indefensible.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 4998; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim D: Allegation of a Lost Long Surah Comparable to al-Tawbah

Strongest form of the objection. The phrase “resembled al-Tawbah in length and severity” proves the loss of a major body of revelation roughly as large as a long Medinan surah.

Refutation. The expression is descriptive, not statistical. It records Abū Mūsā’s comparison, not a recoverable verse count. He does not reproduce the surah, identify its title, or preserve its structure; he remembers one short maxim about greed. It is therefore illegitimate to convert an impressionistic comparison into a quantified theory of major textual loss. When that overstatement is further tested against the manuscript record, it collapses. A genuinely extant, canonical surah of Tawbah-like scale could not vanish from all regional codices, the communal reciters, and the early manuscript tradition while leaving behind only a single remembered sentence.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; Sidky, 2020; van Putten, 2019; Little, 2025.

Claim E: Allegation of a Second Lost Surah Comparable to the Musabbihat

Strongest form of the objection. The second forgotten surah, said to resemble one of the Musabbihāt, is evidence of another independent surah lost from the canon.

Refutation. The same error recurs here. Resemblance to the Musabbihāt is a comparison of character and style, not proof of a fully extant canonical chapter that later vanished. Abū Mūsā’s wording again reports recollection and forgetting, not a complaint that a standing part of the Qur’an had been excluded from the muṣḥaf. Once the final recension and the communal codices are admitted as the standard, the burden shifts to the critic to show

that this second remembered piece remained part of the public Qur'an after the Prophet.

Muslim 1050 does not do that.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4998, 4987; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim F: Allegation that Abu Musa Testified to Qur'anic Loss

Strongest form of the objection. Abū Mūsā himself is testifying that Qur'anic text vanished; this is a Companion-level admission against Muslim doctrine.

Refutation. He is not testifying to “vanishing” in the polemical sense. He is testifying to what he once recited and what he later forgot, while exhorting the reciters not to let long familiarity harden their hearts. He never denounces 'Uthmān, never accuses the codex committee, never instructs the Basrans to restore missing surahs, and never treats the existing muṣḥaf as corrupt. If the hadith were meant as a public accusation of deficient canon, one would expect precisely those elements. Their absence is telling.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 4987; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim G: Allegation that the Companions Forgot Revelation

Strongest form of the objection. The phrase “I have forgotten it” proves that even the Companions forgot revelation, so the whole preservation claim rests on a fragile human memory.

Refutation. Sunni Islamic preservation never rested on one man's memory. The preservation mechanism is communal, written and oral together, and bounded by the final review of the Prophet with Gabriel. A Companion's forgetting of material no longer publicly maintained as Qur'an therefore does not threaten preservation of what remained Qur'an. Indeed, the early collection process in Bukhārī 4986 arose precisely because the community understood the need to consolidate written and memorised witnesses. Forgetfulness in an individual narrator is not the same thing as loss of the canon.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986, 4998; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim H: Allegation that Mass Memorisation Failed

Strongest form of the objection. If Abū Mūsā addressed three hundred reciters in Basra and still spoke of forgotten surahs, mass memorisation clearly failed.

Refutation. The report does not say that the three hundred failed to preserve a canonical surah. It says that Abū Mūsā summoned reciters, praised them, warned them spiritually, and then mentioned material he himself remembered from earlier recitation. The existence of three hundred reciters in one city actually points in the opposite direction: it shows the breadth of Qur’anic learning already present. More importantly, the preservation of the public canon had already been reinforced by codification and regional dissemination. A Companion’s recollection of prior recitation does not demonstrate community-wide failure of canonical preservation.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986–4987.

Claim I: Allegation of Contradiction with Divine Preservation

Strongest form of the objection. If material once recited is no longer in the muṣḥaf, the hadith contradicts Allah’s promise to preserve the reminder.

Refutation. The contradiction arises only if one assumes, without proof, that every wording ever recited in the revelation period remained part of the final Qur’an after the final review. Sunni Islamic doctrine does not grant that assumption. Allah’s preservation concerns the Qur’an He willed the community to retain as its final canon. Athari authorities such as Ibn Bāz affirm that what is between the hands of Muslims today is the preserved Qur’an, unchanged, corresponding to the final review. Manuscript evidence from the earliest period independently supports that stability. Thus the promise of preservation and Muslim 1050 are not contradictory once “the preserved Qur’an” is defined correctly.

Section references: Ibn Bāz, n.d.; University of Birmingham, n.d.; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025.

Part Three: Detailed Claim-by-Claim Refutations, Claims J to R

Claim J: Allegation that Abrogation of Recitation is Retrospective Apologetics

Strongest form of the objection. Abrogation of recitation “naskh al-tilāwah” is a retrospective doctrinal invention designed to rescue Muslim belief from embarrassing reports like Muslim 1050.

Refutation. That objection overlooks two points. First, Athari usūl does not license abrogation claims casually: Ibn Bāz explicitly states that the default is non-abrogation unless clear evidence establishes it. Secondly, the historical controls now available strongly favour an early fixed Uthmanic canon. Once that canon is established, reports of former recitation are more plausibly classified as remembered, no-longer-canonical recitation than as evidence of later editorial loss. In other words, “naskh al-tilāwah” here is not an ad hoc escape hatch but the category that best fits the total evidence: the final review, early codification, early stability, and transparent preservation of the difficult reports themselves.

Section references: Ibn Bāz, n.d.; Little, 2025; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020.

Claim K: Allegation of Selective Canonisation

Strongest form of the objection. Early Muslims selectively canonised some recitations and excluded others according to editorial preference.

Refutation. The codification reports do not describe theological selection but preservational restraint. In Bukhārī 4987, ‘Uthmān orders copies to be made from the already collected written materials and resolves dialectal issues by reference to Quraysh because the Qur’an was revealed in their tongue. That is a move to preserve a norm already received, not to invent one. Sidky’s manuscript stemma and van Putten’s orthographic work materially support this reading: the early written tradition behaves like disciplined descent from archetypes, not like a marketplace of optional texts.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986–4987; Sidky, 2020; van Putten, 2019.

Claim L: Allegation of Early Textual Instability

Strongest form of the objection. Muslim 1050 shows that the early Qur’an was fluid before later standardisation.

Refutation. The evidence supports a more precise and much weaker statement: before canonisation there were limited forms of pre-canonical plurality at the margins, whether in aḥruf, companion codices, or temporary recitational material. That is not the same as claiming that the public Qur’anic text remained fluid in an uncontrolled way. Sinai explicitly notes that the lower text of the Ṣan‘ā’ palimpsest is at present the only known material witness to a recension different from the canonical one; van Putten and Sidky then show the extraordinary coherence of the rest of the early manuscript record. Muslim 1050 can therefore be read as evidence of earlier recitational history, not of enduring canonical fluidity.

Section references: Sinai, 2020; Sidky, 2020; van Putten, 2019; Little, 2025.

Claim M: Allegation that the Present Qur’an is Shorter than the Original Revelation

Strongest form of the objection. The present Qur’an must be shorter than the original revelation, because Abū Mūsā remembered substantial material no longer present.

Refutation. This objection equivocates between “all wording ever revealed and recited at some stage” and “the final Qur’an obligated upon the ummah to preserve and recite”. Sunni Islamic doctrine distinguishes the two. The preserved Qur’an is the final canon after the last Prophetic review. Material no longer recited as Qur’an cannot be counted again as part of the preserved canon merely because it once formed part of the revelation process. The present muṣḥaf is therefore not “shorter than the preserved Qur’an”. It is the preserved Qur’an.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4998, 4987; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim N: Allegation of Suppressed Qur’anic Verses

Strongest form of the objection. The lines on human greed and dust were suppressed Qur’anic verses.

Refutation. Suppression is precisely what the evidence does not show. Those lines are preserved openly in the major hadith collections and discussed candidly by Muslim scholars. A community trying to conceal embarrassing scriptural loss does not preserve the disputed wording in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim for public recitation and debate. The transparent transmission of the wording as Prophetic speech or remembered former recitation is the opposite of suppression.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 6436, 6438; Muslim, Hadith nos. 1048a, 1049; al-Durar al-Saniyyah, n.d.

Claim O: Allegation that a Prophetic Saying was Once Qur’an

Strongest form of the objection. Because “If the son of Adam had two valleys ...” also appears in hadith literature, a Prophetic saying was mistakenly treated as Qur’an.

Refutation. That inference is too blunt. The same wording appearing in both bodies of transmission does not prove confusion; it proves that the wording was preserved in more than one transmitted context. The Sunni Islamic possibilities are well known: a former Qur’anic recitation later withdrawn from current recitation, a saying heard as Qur’anic by some Companions during a stage of revelation and later clarified, or a Prophetic wording that some initially supposed to be from the Qur’an until subsequent revelation or clarification resolved the matter. What it does not prove is that the final muṣḥaf incorporated error. In fact, the opposite happened: the doubtful material was not canonised into the muṣḥaf.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 6436, 6438; Muslim, Hadith nos. 1048a, 1049; al-Durar al-Saniyyah, n.d.; al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 4987.

Claim P: Allegation of Blurred Boundaries between Qur'an and Sunnah

Strongest form of the objection. The report shows that early Muslims did not reliably distinguish between Qur'an and Sunnah.

Refutation. The actual reports show the opposite: they record caution, differentiation, and refusal to canonise doubtful material. Ibn 'Abbās explicitly says, regarding the saying on the son of Adam, that he did not know whether it was from the Qur'an or not. That is disciplined epistemic restraint, not blurred boundaries institutionalised into canon. Likewise, the report connected with Ubayy indicates that the community once regarded wording in a certain way “until” later clarification. The boundary therefore did not collapse; it was observed, debated, and resolved within the transmission tradition.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1049; al-Durar al-Saniyyah, n.d.

Claim Q: Allegation of a Missing Continuation to Qur'an 61:2

Strongest form of the objection. The phrase following Qur'an 61:2 in Muslim 1050 is a missing continuation of that verse.

Refutation. This reading explicitly contradicts the hadith. Abū Mūsā does not say that the current verse in Surah al-Şaff once had an extra continuation. He says that he used to recite a different surah resembling one of the Musabbihāt, and that he remembered from it the wording “O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?” together with the additional reminder about witness against one's neck. He is therefore citing overlap of wording between a forgotten recitation and the present Qur'an, not emending the present text of 61:2. The current canonical continuation of 61:2 is already preserved in 61:3.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; Qur'an 61:2–3; Qur'an 17:13.

Claim R: Allegation of Alteration in Surah al-Saff

Strongest form of the objection. Surah al-Şaff has been altered, because Muslim 1050 preserves a longer original form.

Refutation. No manuscript evidence supports that claim, and the hadith itself does not state it. The present text of 61:2–3 forms a coherent canonical pair. Abū Mūsā’s recollection concerns a separate forgotten recitation that shared wording with the present surah. To move from shared wording to alteration of al-Şaff is to disregard both the hadith’s syntax and the stable early manuscript tradition descending from the Uthmanic archetype.

Section references: *Qur’an 61:2–3; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025; Muslim, Hadith no. 1050.*

Part Four: Detailed Claim-by-Claim Refutations, Claims S to Z

Claim S: Allegation of Confusion between Surahs

Strongest form of the objection. The report betrays confusion about whether the remembered wording belonged to al-Şaff, a Musabbihah surah, or some other lost surah.

Refutation. Abū Mūsā is not confused about categories; he is explicit that the remembered wording came from a different recited surah resembling one of the Musabbihāt. The overlap with Qur’an 61:2 simply means that wording could recur or that a former recitation shared language with a surviving verse. Confusion is being projected onto the text by the critic, not read out of the text itself.

Section references: *Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; Qur’an 61:2–3.*

Claim T: Allegation of Inconsistent Qur’anic Arrangement

Strongest form of the objection. The report implies that the arrangement of surahs and verses was not fixed in the early period.

Refutation. The early manuscript record tells against that. van Putten, citing the Uthmanic text type, notes agreement on surah order, verse order within surahs, and the word content of those verses. Sidky’s work on regional codices and Little’s recent reassessment both reinforce the historicity of an early canonised consonantal text. Muslim 1050 says nothing about the instability of the present arrangement; it speaks about former recitation remembered by one Companion. The present arrangement is controlled by far stronger evidence than that solitary recollection.

Section references: van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025.

Claim U: Allegation that the Qur’an was Preserved by Editorial Decision Rather than Revelation

Strongest form of the objection. The Qur’an was preserved by editorial state decision rather than by revelation.

Refutation. Editorial activity and revelatory preservation are not opposites in the Sunni Islamic account. The Companions’ writing, collecting, and standardising were means by which Allah preserved the text He had already revealed and fixed in the final review. Bukhārī 4998 anchors the final review; Bukhārī 4986–4987 anchors the preservational collection; Ibn Bāz explicitly states that ‘Uthmān’s work preserved, rather than altered, the Qur’an. Modern manuscript evidence broadly confirms an early, stable archetype. The “editorial decision” framing is therefore a category mistake.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986, 4987, 4998; Ibn Bāz, n.d.; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025.

Claim V: Allegation that Tawatur is Undermined

Strongest form of the objection. If some material is remembered only in individual reports, the doctrine of mass transmission “tawātur” collapses.

Refutation. Quite the opposite. These individual reports show the restrictive force of *tawātur*. The community did not treat solitary memory as sufficient to expand the *muṣḥaf*. What counts as current Qur'an is what the community transmits publicly and continuously; what an individual Companion recounts outside that stream may preserve legal, historical, or recitational memory, but it does not override the canon. Ibn Bāz's statement that the transmitted readings are *mutawātir* and not textual corruption articulates the same principle in later Athari language.

Section references: Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986–4987; Muslim, Hadith no. 1050.

Claim W: Allegation that Individual Companion Reports Expose Gaps in the Canon

Strongest form of the objection. Individual Companion reports expose real gaps in the canon.

Refutation. They expose memories about the history of recitation, not proven gaps in the final canon. If one elevates any solitary Companion recollection into a canonical supplement, one destroys the communal criterion by which the Qur'an was preserved. The fact that Sunni Islamic tradition preserved these recollections while refusing to insert them into the *muṣḥaf* shows that the criterion remained intact. Muslim 1050 is therefore evidence for disciplined canon boundaries, not for canonical gaps.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986–4987; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim X: Allegation of Contradiction between Hadith and Muslim Creed

Strongest form of the objection. Because the report is in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, it becomes an internal contradiction within Muslim creed.

Refutation. This assumes that hadith authentication and polemical interpretation are the same thing. They are not. Sunni Islamic hadith scholars intentionally transmitted reports that were *prima facie* difficult so that the tradition would be preserved honestly and interpreted responsibly. The existence of the report in Muslim proves that Muslim did not see

it as disproving Qur’anic preservation. It proves only that the report itself is soundly transmitted and therefore must be interpreted within the broader doctrinal and historical framework. Once that framework is applied, the contradiction disappears.

Section references: Muslim, Hadith no. 1050; Ibn Bāz, n.d.

Claim Y: Allegation of Post-Prophetic Loss

Strongest form of the objection. The report implies post-Prophetic loss of revelation, because Abū Mūsā is speaking after the Prophet’s death.

Refutation. A post-Prophetic report about past recitation does not by itself prove a post-Prophetic loss event. The decisive dating control is the final double review before the Prophet’s death and the immediate early codification under Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān. The earliest manuscripts then align with that fixed tradition. Thus, even if Abū Mūsā is speaking later, the material he recalls need not have survived into the public final recension after the Prophet. That is precisely what the preservation pipeline rules out.

Section references: al-Bukhārī, Hadith nos. 4986, 4987, 4998; University of Birmingham, n.d.; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025.

Claim Z: Allegation that Abrogation Merely Renames Loss

Strongest form of the objection. Calling the matter “abrogation of recitation” merely renames textual loss in theological language.

Refutation. The distinction is substantive, not verbal. “Loss” means the community failed to preserve what Allah intended to remain Qur’an. “Abrogation of recitation” means Allah legislated that some wording would no longer remain part of the current recited scripture, while the final canon would be preserved. Those are different causal explanations and different doctrines. The evidence here favours the latter because the final review, the communal codices, the early manuscript archetype, and the continued open preservation of

the difficult reports themselves all point to purposeful delimitation of the canon, not accidental attrition.

Section references: Ibn Bāz, n.d.; al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 4998; van Putten, 2019; Sidky, 2020; Little, 2025.

Concluding findings

The cumulative case is decisive. Muslim 1050 is authentic, but the anti-Islamic reading of it is not. Read in isolation and stripped from Sunni Islamic principles of canon formation, the report can be made to sound like evidence of textual loss. Read in context, however, it says much less and fits neatly within an already evidenced model: Allah's revelation included phases of recitation history, the Prophet underwent a final double review with Gabriel, the Companions preserved the final public recitation through written and oral means, 'Uthmān standardised that recitation in regional codices, and the earliest material witnesses strongly support the existence of an early stable Uthmanic archetype. On that reading, Abū Mūsā's statement is not a confession that the Qur'an failed to be preserved; it is a fragment of historical memory about material no longer maintained as current Qur'an.

Equally important, the report does not support the most rhetorically powerful criticisms that are commonly attached to it. It does not prove two missing surahs. It does not prove a Tawbah-sized block dropped from the canon. It does not prove that Surah al-Şaff is truncated. It does not prove that the Companions could not distinguish Qur'an from Sunnah. It does not prove that mass transmission failed. It does not prove suppression. Rather, it proves that the Sunni Islamic tradition was candid enough to preserve the memory of former recitation while disciplined enough not to confuse that memory with the Qur'an's final canon. That is not a weakness in the preservation claim. It is one of the features by which the integrity of the tradition is recognised.

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A Salafi-Athari Refutation of Alleged Qur'anic Loss in Sahih Muslim 1050: Abu Musa al-Ash'ari's Report, Abrogated Recitation, and the Preservation of the Uthmanic Codex

Proof of The Preservation of the Quran

Understanding Differences in Qirā'āt (Recitations) of the Glorious Holy Quran

Did Devotees (Ribbīyūn) fight with him, or were Devotees (Ribbīyūn) killed with him?

Quran (3:146)

Global Acknowledgment: Non-Muslim Scholars' Confirmation of Quran and Hadith Preservation

Refuting the 26 Qur'ans Lie

Shredding the Gospels: Contradictions, Errors, Mistakes, Fictions

Seven Ahruf Scheme and the Centrality of the Prophetic Precedent

The revelation of the Qur'an in seven styles (ahruf, sing. harf)

How do we know that Qur'an has not been changed?

Quran Preservation & Compilation -1 (Prophet's lifetime)

Quran Preservation & Compilation -2 (Circumstances during Abu Bakr's time)

Quran Preservation & Compilation -3 (under Abu Bakr)

Quran Preservation & Compilation -4 (under ‘Uthman)

The Revelation and Compilation of Quran – History Covered

101 Proofs that the Quran is Not Copied from the Bible

6 Reasons Qur’an Cannot Be a Copy of Bible

Paul the False Apostle of Satan

Atheism

The Orientalists, The Bible & The Qur’ân: A Brief Review of The Bible Borrowing Theories

The Collection, Arrangement, and the Preservation of the Glorious Quran

What contradictions exist within the Quran? Contradictions in the Quran?

The Collection, Arrangement, and the Preservation of the Glorious Quran

False Accusations Against Uthman Ibn Affan

There is only ONE Qur’an

Was the Originally Compiled Qur’an During the Era of Abu Bakr Incomplete?

Hadith Preservation Response

Why Didn’t God Preserve The Previous Books?

Answering Missionary Allegations Against the Noble Qur’an’s Preservation

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Context & Internal Relationships

Refutation Of The Internal Contradictions In The Qur'ân

The Defense of The Qur'ân Against The Bible Borrowing Theory

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