

AL - SIRAT ACCORDING TO MU'TAZILA AND THE RESPONSE OF SUNNITES TO THEM

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Abstract

Praise be to Allah; All Prayers and Blessings of Allah be upon our master, the most noble Prophet Muhammad (Allah's blessing and peace be upon him and upon his family and companions). This research deals with the topic (Al - Sirat according to Mu'tazila and the response of Sunnites to them). I have researched an ample amount of books and resources in order to achieve a broad understanding of this topic and all matters related to it, where I gathered, scrutinized, abridged and criticized the material. I have clarified issues which no scholar had ever discussed in detail, and I highlighted issues no one had ever approached; This is what will be, God willing, evident throughout the research, "May Allah grant me success in this endeavor".

Keyword: Al - Sirat , Mu'tazila, Sunnites,

1.1 First: Definition of Al – Sirat:

Linguistic definition of Al – Sirat: The path; it is a bridge elongated over Hell.¹

“And squat not on every road, breathing threats, hindering from the path of God”; Al – Sirat, also pronounced: Al –Sirat & Al –Zirat: means the path².

According to Sharia, Al-Ghazali³ defined Al – Sirat as a bridge elongated over Hell⁴

Al-Juwayni⁵ defined Al – Sirat as a bridge elongated over Hell, which the earlier ones and the later ones must pass on.⁶

Aegean⁷ said: “I know that Al– Sirat is a bridge elongated over Hell which the believers and nonbelievers must pass on⁸.

I said: The dispute has arisen among the scholars with regards to who passes on Al– Sirat? Do all of the creation do; the believers and the nonbelievers? As stated by most of the scholar⁹.

Or whether the passing limited to the dwellers of Paradise, said Al Hulaimy^{10 11}, which is understood from Bukhari's Classification¹². Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar¹ said :(Al –Sirat gate is Hell bridge), means a bridge erected over Hell for Muslims to cross it to Paradise².

¹ The Complete Dictionary by Firoozabadi: p. 607

² Lisān Al-‘Arab by Ibn Manzur: Al – Sirat topic

³ Abu Ḥamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali Al-Tusi: Senior debater of Asharite, who fluctuated between different doctrines and finally embraced Sufism. Of his works: (The Revival of Religious Sciences) and (The Economy in the Belief). He died in (505) AH. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 19/322.

⁴ Rules of Beliefs by Al-Ghazali: P. 97.

⁵ Al-Juwayni: Abu al-Ma'ali Abd Al-Malik Ibn Abdullah Ibn Yousuf Al-Juwayni, known as Imam Al-Haramayn, one of the greatest Asharite Imams. He died in (478) AH. Of his works :(Al-Shamil). Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 18/467.

⁶ Kitab Al-Irshad ILA Qawati Al-Adilla by Al-Juwayni: p. 379.

⁷ Aegean: Abu al-Fadl Abdulrahman Ibn Ahmed Ibn Abdul Ghaffar Aegean (Attributed to the town in Persia) Shirazi, one of the students of Bayaadi Ash'ari. He was a knowledgeable scholar in Arabic origins and meanings. Of his works: The Positions in the Science of Discourse, and Introduction to the Science of Semantics, Rhetoric and Budaiya. He died in (756). Refer to: The Book of Prominents 3/295.

⁸ The Positions by Aegean: P. 383.

⁹ Abkar Al-Afkar (The Intact Ideas) by Al-Amidi- 3/263, The Positions by Aegean: P.383, Al-Irshad Shareh Lum'at-ul-'Itiqaad (Guidance Explaining the Spangle of the Belief)by Ibn Qudama, p. 287, Sahih Muslim explained by Al-Nawawi 3/20.

¹⁰Al Hulaimy: Abu Abdullah Al-Hussein Ibn Hassan Ibn Mohammed Ibn Halim Al

Bukhari Al Shafie, the judge and knowledgeable scholar, head of Hadith narrators and debaters in Transoxiana. He died in (403) AH. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 17/231-234.

¹¹ Tuhfat Almureed ala Jawharat Al tawheed-(The follower's Masterpiece of Monotheism Jewel) - by Alpajuri-p. 212.

¹² Al-Bukhari: Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Ismail Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Al-Mughīrah Al-Bukhari, he was born in

It appears to me that the passing on Al –Sirat is general to all people: believers and nonbelievers alike, due to universality of the expression (people) mentioned in the Hadith reported by Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her: “I am the first person”. She asked the Prophet (PBUH) about this verse ([It will be] on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth)³; I said: Where are the people on that day? He said: On Al –Sirat⁴.

As well as the Hadith: (The people are carried on Al –Siraton the Day of Resurrection...)⁵

While on the other hand; the Hadiths indicated that there is a group who enters Paradise without accounts and without (suffering) any torment, and they do not cross Al –Sirat (Allah knows best). As well as who gets entangled by Hell; Imam Al-Qurtubi said⁶ (You should know that in the Afterlife there are two Al –Sirats: One of them is a path for all the people of the Resurrection, the heavy and light ones, except who enters.

Paradise without accounts, or who gets entangled by Hell; should he be saved from greater Sirat, which we mentioned, whereas only the believers are saved from it, who Allah is aware that retribution will not deplete their good deeds, will be gathered on another special Sirat for them, whereas none of them will be returned to Hell....⁷.

I said: The existence of this exception does not confuse the original principal, where all creatures will cross this Sirat, even if a group will not cross due to the exempting evidences. Moreover; the division of Al –Sirat, by the scholars, to two Sirats states that the second Siratis an arch between Heaven and Hell, dedicated for those who enter Paradise; as in Sahih Bukhari (The believers, after being saved from the (Hell) Fire, will be stopped at a bridge between Paradise and Hell and mutual retaliation will be established among them regarding wrongs they have committed in the world against one another. After they are cleansed and purified (through the retaliation), they will be admitted into Paradise...)⁸.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari said (By saying (arch) shows that it is the end of Al –Sirat next to Paradise, and it might be other than Al –Sirat between Al –Sirat and Paradise)^{9 10}.

I said: It is apparent that the people of infidelity and hypocrisy will be falling from Al –Sirat over Hell and the hooks will entangle them into the fire, and whoever passes and crosses it to the other end, he is safe and will enter Paradise, by the grace and favor of Allah. And whether there are two separate Sirats or one Sirat and an arch, the result is the same, whereas everyone will cross the first Sirat, while the second one is dedicated for those who enter Paradise (Allah knows best).

1.2 Second: Legitimate Islamic Texts That Prove Al - Sirat and its Attributes:

Ancestor scholars argued whether Al - Sirat was mentioned in the Quran or not; despite unanimously agreeing that the belief in Al – Sirat is an obligation, in accordance with the authenticated Hadiths proving so¹¹. This dispute is due to their controversy over interpretation of many verses which signify a surm is eddenotation regarding Al – Sirat. One of the verses that support this denotation is "And there is not one of you but will come to it. This is a fixed decree with thy Lord"¹².

Ibn Attia said in his Interpretation of the Quran: Ibn Abbas -May Allah be pleased with him-, Ikrimah, and others read the verses as follows "And there is not one of them" meaning the nonbelievers.

(194) AH in Bukhara, he is Persian by birth, the author of Al-Sahih, he died in (256 AH).Refer to: Sahih Bukhari's Preface.

¹ Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, the knowledgeable scholar, Al-Haafidh, author of Fath Al-ariand Lisan Al-Mizan among others. He died in (825) AH. Refer to: Gold Nuggets by Ibn Al-Imad 7/271.

² Fath Al-Bari by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani 11/446.

³ Sura Ibrahim: 48.

⁴ Sahih Muslim: # 214.

⁵Reported by Ahmad in Al-Musnad: 5/43.

⁶ Abu Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abu Bakr Farah Al-Ansari Andalusian Al-Qurtubi, the Imam, (mufassir) interpreter, and deep researchers for the meaning of Hadith, good classifier, and an ascetic worshiper. He died in (671 AH.)Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 6/217-218.

⁷ The Reminder of the Conditions of the Dead and the Afterlife Matters by Al-Qurtubi: 2/550

⁸ Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6535).

⁹ Fath al-Bari by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani: 5/96.

¹⁰ Al-Haafidh said in al-Fath: (The mentioned arch was a dispute point; where it was said that it was the complement of Al – Sirat, which lies at its end next to Paradise);and it was said: (They are two Sirats, which was asserted by Al-Qurtubi) 11/485.

¹¹ Jahm IbnSafwan's Articles and their impact on Islamic Sects /Yasir Qadhi 2/675.

¹² Sura Maryam: Verse 71.

Al-Akthar said that the addressee is the whole world, where everyone has to pass on it; but they disagreed about the incoming of the believers. Abdullah Ibn Masud and Abdullah Ibn Abbas said that incoming means entering, but it is not merely to the believers, and then Allah takes out the believers after knowing what they have escaped from.

The second opinion states that it is an oversight, knowledge, and proximity incoming, just like saying (I came to the water), meaning: I arrived at the water, without necessarily entering the water. They said: that is deemed enough terror to the believers. Allah All-Mighty said: "And when he arrived at the water of Madyan"¹.

The third opinion states that: God makes the top of Hell dormant on Doomsday like an aura, then all of creation, their pious and licentious, then its people fall in, while the believers come out winners without acquiring any harm².

Ibn Attia said (*): There is another saying regarding the incoming which is the fever that afflicts the believer in this Worldly life, (Fever is every believer's share from Hell), according to Mujahid. Ibn Attia said: The principle of the incoming is exceeding

Al – Sirat, whereas the Ṣaḥīḥ Hadith implied that Al – Sirat is elongate over Hell bridge, where people transport across it in stages as quick as lightning, wind, or horses; while the nonbelievers get snatched by hooks and fall in Hell³.

Al-Zamakhshari⁴ the Quran interpreter said: After citing the statements that interpret the verse regarding the incoming of Al – Sirat being longated over Hell, he said that the true meaning is that the incoming is kneeling around Hell⁵.

I said: Al-Zamakhshari cited the statements and descriptions of Al – Sirat without attenuation or replying to whoever adopted the proof of Al – Sirat, and it is apparent that he acknowledged this statement, even though he did not adopt it, because he had learned that there were some audio evidences that approved it⁶.

Imam Al-Amidi (*) quoted this verse: "And lead them to the path of the Fire; And stop them; for they must be questioned"^{7 8}.

We could also quote this verse: "Surely thy Lord is on the watch"⁹.

(*) He is Abu Muhammad Abd Al-Haq Ibn Ghalib Ibn Abdulrahman Ibn Attia. He was born in (481) AH. He is the author of Brief Explanation in Interpretation of the Quran. He died in (541) AH. Refer to: The Introduction to the Interpretation by Ibn Attiya.

Abdullah Ibn Masud said: ("By the dawn" is deemed as an oath, "Indeed, your Lord is in observation", following Al – Sirat lie three bridges: The Trust lies on one bridge, the figure lies on another bridge, and Allah, the Almighty, is by another bridge). Alq dai Aezzami said: This Hadith is "Mawquf "to Abdullah Ibn Masud and it is "Mursal". Alq dai said: If it was "Ṣaḥīḥ", He implied that, Allah knows best, the angels of God would ask him about all what he had forsaken¹⁰.

I said that: It is also narrated on the authority of Muqatil Ibn Sulaiman¹¹ in his interpretation of the verse that when Allah, the Almighty, took an oath, "Indeed, your Lord is in observation", he means Al – Sirat¹².

¹ Sura Al-Qaṣaṣ: Verse 23.

² Brief Explanation Interpretation of the Quran by Ibn Attia: 9/511, 513.

³ Refer to Brief Explanation in Interpretation of the Quran by Ibn Attia 9/114. Refer to Zaad Al-Maseer by Ibn Al-Jawzi 5/254, 256. Refer to Altafsir Alkabber (The extent Interpretation) by Al-Razi 7/558.

⁴ Al-Zamakhshari: Mahmud Ibn Umar, Mu'tazila (mufassir) interpreter author of Al-Kashshaaf (the revealer). He died in (538) AH. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 20/151.

⁵ Refer to: Al-Kashshaaf (the Revealer) 3/36.

⁶ God willing, more explanation will follow regarding Mu'tazila creed regarding this issue.

(*) Al-Amidi: Ali Ibn Abu Ali Ibn Mohammed Al-Thalabi Saifuddin, one of Asharite Imams. He died in (631) AH. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala.

⁷ Sura Al-Saffat: (23-24).

⁸ Refer to: Abkar Al-Afkar (The Intact Ideas) by Al-Amidi 3/263.

⁹ Sura Al-Fajr: 14.

¹⁰ Forqan Al-Quran among the Attributes of the Creator and the Qualities of the Universes, by Alq dai Aezzami Shafi'i (p 432-433).

¹¹ Muqatil Ibn Sulaiman Al-Balkhi, great interpreter of Quran, he narrated from Mujahid and Dahhaak, died in (150) AH. Refer to: Nubala 7/202.

¹² Forqan Al-Quran by Salameh Alq dai, p. 433.

I said: It seems that these verses do not imply a definitive indication proving Al – Sirat is elongated over Hell; whereas on the other hand, the Sunnah does imply a definitive indication proving Al – Sirat, which cannot be denied neither by interpretation nor by attenuation.

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah in Sahih Muslim “So they will come to me; and I will stand and be given permission. Amanah and ties of relationship will be sent forth and will stand on the sides of the Al - Sirat right and left and the first of you will pass like lightning”¹.

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri Narrated: “Then the bridge will be laid across Hell.” We, the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) said, “O Allah's Messenger (PBUH)! What is the bridge?” He said, “It is a slippery (bridge) on which there are clamps.

Muqatil Ibn Sulaiman used to say that God is a body in the form of human flesh with blood, hair, bone, organs, and limbs, such as: hand, Leg, tongue, and head... Refer to: Islamists Articles 1/187.

Ibn Hibban said that Muqatil Ibn Sulaiman used to adopt from the Jews and Christians' knowledge regarding Al-Quran what conforms to their Books, and compare God Almighty to creatures, and lied while narrating Hadith. Refer to: Al-Majrooheen 3/14.

And (Hooks like) a thorny seed that is wide at one side and narrow at the other and has thorns with bent ends. Such a thorny seed is found in Najd and is called As-Sa'dan. Some of the believers will cross the bridge as quickly as the wink of an eye, some others as quick as lightning, a strong wind, fast horses or she-camels. So some will be safe without any harm; some will be safe after receiving some scratches, and some will fall down into Hell (Fire)”².

It is narrated on the authority of Aa'ishah, May Allah be pleased with her, Hadith Marfu, “Hell has a bridge thinner even than the hair and sharper than the sword, which there are clamps that entangles people according to the Will of God. People cross as quickly as the wink of an eye, or lightning, or wind...”³.

Imam Bukhari narrated in this chapter Abu Hurairah's long Hadith about witnessing and the conditions of the people of the situation on the Day of Resurrection: “Then a bridge will be laid over the (Hell) Fire.” Allah's Messenger (PBUH) added, “I will be the first to cross it. And the invocation of the Apostles on that Day, will be 'Allahumma Sallim, Sallim (O Allah, save us, save us!),' and over that bridge there will be hooks Similar to the thorns of As Sa'dan (a thorny tree). Didn't you see the thorns of As-Sa'dan?” The companions said, “Yes, O Allah's Messenger (PBUH).” He added, “So the hooks over that bridge will be like the thorns of As-Sa-dan except that their greatness in size is only known to Allah. These hooks will snatch the people according to their deeds. Some people will be ruined because of their evil deeds, and some will be cut into pieces and fall down in Hell, but will be saved afterwards...”⁴.

Imam Ibn Hajar commented on this Hadith and mentioned the attribute of the people cross on Al – Sirat, where some will cross as quickly as the wink of an eye, lightning, a strong wind, or fast horses...Then he quoted Ibn Abu Jamra saying (It is implied that the passers on Al – Sirat are of three types: Survivor without any scratch, perishable at first glance, and the average between them who get scratched then saved. Each type is divided into sections implied by “according to their deeds”⁵.

He Said in (Majma' Al-Zawa'id) (The collector of Eexcrescence) (10/359) that the Hadith he narrated on the authority of Ahmad Ibn Lahee'ah who he is weak but he trusted him, and the rest of the narrators were Sahih persons.

Al-Lalika'I had narrated in his Explanation of The Fundamentals of Ahl As-Sunnah WA L- Jamā'ah by Salman Al-Farsi where he said: (Al – Sirat is elongated on Dooms day as sharp as a knife).Refer to: Explanation of The Fundamentals of Ahl As-Sunnah Wa L-Jamā'ah by Al-Lalika'I 6/1251.

I said: The Hadith indicates that the Prophet (PBUH) will be the first to cross Al - Sirat and the first one to pass it. Imam Al-Qurtubi mentioned some of the Hadiths that prove Al - Sirat and its attributes⁶.

¹ Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih number (195), and narrated by Ahmad 3/345.

² Narrated by Imam Bukhari in his Sahih number (7439) and Muslim in his Sahih (183).

³ Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad 6/110.

⁴ Refer to: Fath Al-Bari, 11/444-445, Hadith number (6573).

⁵ Same previous source.

⁶ The Reminder of the Conditions of the Dead to the Afterlife Matters by Al-Qurtubi: 2/38-45.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated that Ibn Masud (May Allah be pleased with him) said: "Al – Sirat is elongated over Hell, sharper than the sword; the first class will pass by like lightning, the second like the wind, the third like the excellent horses, and the fourth like the excellent animals, then they shall pass, and the angels say: "O Allah, Grant them safety, grant them safety, Grant them safety"¹.

I said: Some of the attributes of Al – Sirat may not be valid as some are *Ḍaʿīf* "weak" or *Mursal* "hurried" or a saying of a companion of the Prophet, and this issue is based on hearing; therefore the Hadith must be *Sahih* in order to be reliable.

Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi² said that Al – Sirat was mentioned in Hadiths and his attributes were mentioned in an abundance of Hadiths; even though some are *Gharib* (strange) or *Ḍaʿīf* "weak". Many preachers cite these Hadiths in their stories and sermons while being lenient toward them to scare people, and very often what were listed as exaggerations were not proven; for example what was narrated that its ascension is the distance of a thousand years, and its levelness is the distance of a thousand years, and descending from it is the distance of a thousand years, so stated, but not proven, and it was also narrated that it is sharper than the sword and finer than a hair and hotter than embers and more cunning than the fox; thus many exaggerations had been mentioned, while describing it as sharper than the sword and finer than a hair were narrated from a reliable Hadith³.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar commented on the Hadiths that were narrated in describing Al – Sirat as being finer than a hair and sharper than the sword, while others described as a wide valley and the distance of fifteen thousand years.

Its ascension is the distance of a thousand years, and descending from it is the distance of a thousand years, and its levelness is the distance of a thousand years, and he clarified that some sources (*isnad*) of these Hadiths were *Laien* (*flabbe*) while others were *Mursal* (*hurried*)⁴.

I said: Proving the concept of Al – Sirat is not disputed among the Sunnites, and the attributes that were not reported in a proper way should not be invoked or proved, because this is an audible issue and not a question of the mind to dispute it, and some disputes might occur while trying to prove some of the attributes.

For example the statement by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: (I was informed that the bridge is finer than hair and sharper than a sword), and in another narration: (*finer than hair*)⁵.

And this term is narrated by many companions of the Prophet, including Ibn Mas'ud, Anas, Aisha and others (May Allah be pleased with all of them). Imam Al-Bayhaqi in *The Branches of Faith*⁶ mentioned some of these Hadiths which are free from being *Ḍaʿīf* "weak" and *Laien* (*flabbe*)⁷.

While the narration by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him) is considered the truest in this chapter, but when he said (I was informed), this implies it was likely that he heard it from the Prophet (PBUH) or from another person, because he (May Allah be pleased with him) did not say that he heard it from the Prophet (PBUH), which shows that Al – Sirat attributes of being (*finer than hair and sharper than a sword*) was not narrated on the authority of the Prophet (PBUH), and if it was so, we would have learned about it, and we are left with a saying of a companion of the Prophet (PBUH), which can be accepted or not, because this saying is not subject of independent judgment, but a wisdom and it is treated as (*Marfu`*) something added to the Prophet (PBUH), and this issue is subject to a lengthy dispute among scholars⁸.

¹ (2) Refer to *The Branches of Faith* by Imam Al-Bayhaqi 1/333.

² (3) Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi: Abu Mohammed Abdullah Ibn Mohammed Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi, he was the Hanbali scholar of the Levant; he was reliable, noble, pious, worshiper, and Salafi. Of his works (*The Spangle of the Belief*). He died in (620) AH. Refer to *Nubala* 22/165.

³ (4) *The Guidance Explaining the Spangle of the Belief* by Ibn Qudama, p (285-286)

⁴ Refer to: *Fath Al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani 1/454.

⁵ Narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih* No. 183.

⁶ Refer to: *The Branches of Faith* by Imam Al-Bayhaqi (1/333, 332 331).

⁷ As pointed out by Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar in *Fath Al-Bari* 1/454.

⁸ Refer to: *The Precision in Provisions Assets* / Ibn Hazm 1/282. Refer to (*Al-Mustafa*) the *Clarified* by Al-Ghazali 1/131, Refer to (*Irshad ul Fuhood*) *Masters Guidance* / Ash-Shawkani 60

I said: What appears to me is whereas the Hadith is (Marfu`) something added to the Prophet(PBUH), this deems it unreliable, and it still a saying of a companion of the Prophet(PBUH); and I do not want to elaborate on this issue any more, lest we might stray away from the subject of our research.

Third: The Sunnites' Creed Regarding Al – Sirat:

The Sunnites have proven Al – Sirat, and acknowledged the texts that prove it without interpretation nor sophistication, and the essence of the Sunnites regarding this issue is that proving that Al – Sirat is elongated over Hell is possible. If it was imposed, it could not exist on its own¹.

We can divide the Sunnites' creed regarding Al – Sirat into two categories:

First category: Proving the concept of Al – Sirat, and it is a bridge elongated over Hell where the earlier ones and the later ones must cross it.

Second category: Proving some attributes that are used to describe Al – Sirat.

I would like to cite some of the Sunnites' methods in proving Al – Sirat:

Imam Aegean² said: (All what Sharia mentioned regarding Al – Sirat, Al - Miizaan (The Scale), and the Reckoning... is the truth)³.

Ibn Qudama said: Al – Sirat is true where the righteous pass and the wicked slip⁴.

Imam Al-Tahawi⁵: (And believe in... Al – Sirat)⁶.

Imam Al-Nawawi said⁷: (From this we conclude that Al – Sirat is true and the doctrine of the people of the Truth is to assert it and the Salaf ("predecessors") were unanimous on asserting it)⁸.

Imam Ibn Al-Qattan⁹ said: Citing the sayings of the Sunnites (They unanimously agreed that Al – Sirat is a bridge elongated over Hell, which the people will cross according to their deeds)¹⁰.

Hanbal said that he had heard Abu Abdullah (Ahmad Ibn Hanbal) say:

(We believe in Al – Sirat, Al - Miizaan (The Scale), Heaven and Hell, and the Reckoning; we do not avert nor do we doubt)¹¹.

I said: The sayings of the scholars are recurrent regarding the meaning of proving it, and I have not learned about any one of the Sunnites who denied or interpreted the meaning of Al – Sirat to far-reaching meanings, but their sayings agreed with proving it.

1.3Fourth: The Definition of Mu'tazila:

Mu'tazila in language: Mu'tazila or (Al'tizal) isolation, a term which indicates dismissal; reclusion; weaknesses; and separation. In the books of language: to isolate, sack him, isolate him, withdraw, remained isolated, and isolate: to set aside and retire from¹².

In terminology: They are identified as a sect of The Qadrians [Anti-fatalists]¹³, who violated The Muslim Nation regarding the issue of the perpetrator of the major sins; led by Wasil Ibn Ata¹ and Amr Ibn Ubayd² during the era of the venerable (Taabi'i) follower Hasan Al-Basri³ (May Allah Almighty have mercy on him)⁴.

¹ Refer to: The Rules of Faiths by Al-Ghazali. 97, Abkar Al-Afkar (The Intact Ideas) by Al-Amidi 3/263, and the Explanation of Positions by Al-Jurjani 4/348.

² Aegean: Mohammed Ibn Abdulrahman Ibn Mohammed Aegean, of Ash'arite Imams and their doctrine researchers, his book (The Positions in Ilm al-Kalām "Science of Discourse") is considered mainstay among Ash'arite. He died in (905) AH. Refer to Al-Alam by Al- Zarkali 6/195.

³ Refer to: The Explanation of Positions by Al-Jurjani 4/348.

⁴ The Spangle of the Belief by Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi p. 285.

⁵ Imam Al-Tahawi: Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Salameh Ibn Salamah Al-Azdi Al-Hanafi Abu Jafar, a scholar of Hadith (Muhaddith) and a Sunnites scholar, he wrote (The Famous Doctrine. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 15/27.

⁶ Aqida Al-Tahaweyah along with Ibn Abi Al-Izz explanation, p. 404.

⁷ Mohiuddin Abu Zakaria Yahya Ibn Sharaf Ibn Marie Ibn Hassan Gazmi Al-Shafi'. He was born in (631) AH. Of his works "Explanation of Muslim" and Al-Rawdh. He died in (676) AH. Refer to: Biographies of Nubala 8/149.

⁸ Sahih Muslim explained by Al-Nawawi 3/20

⁹ Ali Ibn Mohammed Ibn Abdul Malik Ibn Yahya Ibn Samaha Al-Hamidi, he was born in Fes in (562) AH. Of his works "Scrutiny of the Rules of Vision" and "Conflict in Qiyās (the process of deductive analogy), and others. He died in (628) AH. Refer to: the introduction of the book "Persuasion of (Ijmā) consensus Issues "by Ibn Al-Qattan.

¹⁰ Persuasion of (Ijmā) consensus Issues by Ibn Al-Qattan 1/52.

¹¹ Refer to: Explanation of The Fundamentals of Ahl As-Sunnah Wa L-Jamā'ah by Al-Lalika'I 3/1251.

¹² Refer to: The Complete Dictionary by Firoozabadi 4/15.

¹³ The Qadrians [Anti-fatalists]: They were given this name because of their statement regarding Fate, they are

Mu'tazila were called by several names, including The People of Justice and Monotheism, and they were nicknamed The Qadrians [Anti-fatalists] and the Judicial⁵.

The school of Ala'tazal began to be prominent and visible and recognizable when someone entered a session of Hasan Al-Basri, and said: O Imam! A group has appeared in our time, who judges the perpetrators of the major sins as unbelievers, and they consider a major sin as infidelity which deems its perpetrator as disbeliever, and (Murji'ah) who postpone the perpetrators of the major sins, where a major sin does not harm Faith; therefore how do you judge this in accordance with Faith? Hasan contemplated, and before answering, Wasil Ibn Ata⁶ said: I do not say that the perpetrator of a major sin is utterly a believer nor a disbeliever, but he is in a class between the two, not a believer nor a disbeliever. Then he retired to a pillar of the mosque pillars approving what had answered a group of Hasan's associate. Hasan said: Wasil secluded us; thus he and his followers were called Mu'tazila⁷.

I said: This school was an extension of the first Qadrians [Anti-fatalists] thought that emerged in the late era of the Companions (May Allah be pleased with them). The Companions of the Prophet had disowned them⁸.

Mu'tazila adopted the principle of The Contravene Qadrians [Anti-fatalists] who denied that Allah had known or predestined or created the actions of the people; on the contrary, the people create their own actions and fate⁹...

This shows that Mu'tazila originated as an ideology based on mental consideration at the beginning of the second hegira century in Basra by the true co-founders: Wasil Ibn Ata and Amr Ibn Ubayd after exceeding the first preliminary stage at the hands of the first Qadrians.

With the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate, Mu'tazila movement was active, and began to send messengers all over to invite people to their beliefs and creeds; Wasil Ibn Ata was the one who assumed this task¹⁰.

He attained the support of the Abbasid Caliphs, one after the other, until the reign of Al-Ma'mun who adopted the concept of Mu'tazila regarding the issue of creating the Quran, and ordered his governor in Baghdad to examine the jurists, scholars, and judges, and this occurred in (218) AH, and this resulted in a great affliction to the scholars, including Imam Ahmad¹¹, (May Allah be merciful to him), who withstood to the adversity, endured and remained patient¹².

I said: It's strange that the Mu'tazila sources attributed the doctrine to the companions, The Four (Rashidun) Righteous Caliphs, and (Ahl Al-Bait) the Family of Prophet Muhammad (May Allah be pleased with them all), where they did not mention any evidence supporting what they claimed. Judge Abd Al-Jabbar said¹³: The first

those who claim that a person is the one who creates his actions independently, and deny Fate, and they say that the matter is appellant which god has no prior knowledge or Fate of it. Refer to: Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal 1/45.

¹ Wasil Ibn Ata, head of Mu'tazila and their propagandist to their heresy. Mu'tazila Al-Wasiliyah Sect of is attributed to him. He was a pupil of Hasan Al-Basri. He wrote the Book of Monotheism and Types of Murji'ah. He was born in (80) AH and died in (131) AH. Refer to: The Balance of Moderation 3/275.

² Amr Ibn Ubayd: Amr Ibn Ubayd Ibn Bab Al-Basri. He wrote the Book of Justice and Monotheism. He was born in (80) AH and died in (144). AH. Refer to: The Balance of Moderation 3/273.

³ Hasan Al-Basri: Al-Hasan Ibn Abi-l-Hasan Yasar Al-Basri. One of (Taabi'i) followers Leaders. He was born during the late reign of Caliphate Omar Ibn Al-Khattab. He died in Basra in (110) AH. Refer to: The Balance of Moderation 1/483.

⁴ Refer to: The Difference Among Sects by Al-Baghdadi, p. 115-118

⁵ (Kitāb Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal), The Book of Sects and Creeds by Al-hahrastrani 1/56.

⁶ The books of Mu'tazila differed regarding who debated Hasan Al-Basri on that incident, whether it was Wasil Ibn Ata or Amr Ibn Ubayd and most likely it was Wasil Ibn Ata; where Judge Abd Al-Jabbar proved in many of his books it was Amr Ibn Ubayd. Refer to: The Explanation of the Five Fundamentals by Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani, p. 153.

⁷ Refer to: Desire and hope by Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani, p. 153. The Victory and the Response to the Atheist, Ibn Al-Rawandi by Al-Khayat, p. 165. Refer to: The Explanation of the Five Fundamentals by Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani, p. 137.

⁸ Refer to: The Difference Among Sects by Al-Baghdadi, p. 25-26.

⁹ Refer to: The Difference Among Sects by Al-Baghdadi, p. 112-11

¹⁰ Refer to: The Mornof Islam by Ahmad Amin 3/90.

¹¹ Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Al-Shaybani, the founder of the famous juristic school. He was born in (164) AH, and died in (241) AH

¹² Ibn Khaldun's (Muqaddimah) Introduction 3/1079.

¹³ Abu Hassan Abd Al-Jabbar Ibn Ahmed Ibn Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani, one of the seniors and most famous of Mu'tazila. Of his works: (The Enricher in Monotheism and Justice Issues) and (The Explanation of the Five Fundamentals) and (The Preference of "I'tazal" Mu'tazila Theology). He died in (415) AH. Refer to: The Balance of Moderation 2/5333.

Mu'tazila was the companions of Muhammad (PBUH), because they were firmly united and took care of each other^{1 2}.

I said: Do any people who (take care of each other), must be embracing the doctrine of Mu'tazila? This statement is far from conforming to reality. Whoever believes in Mu'tazila doctrine, which is based on the Five Fundamentals, must certainly realize that the Companions (May God bless them) are totally on contradiction with him, and I have mentioned earlier that the companions had disparaged the first Qadrians [Anti-fatalists]³.

1.4 Mu'tazila Branches

The Mu'tazila had branched into two branches:

First: Branch of Basra, represented by Wasil Ibn Ata, Amr Ibn Ubayd, Othman Al-Tawil⁴, Abul-Huzayl Al-Allaf⁵, Abu-Bakr Al-Asum⁶, An-Nazzam⁷, Al-Shahham⁸, Al-Jahiz Abu-Ali Al-Jubba'I⁹, Abu-Hashim¹⁰, and others¹¹.

Second: Baghdad branch, represented by Bishr Ibn Al-Mu'tamir¹², Ahmad Ibn Abu-Daoud¹³, Thumama Ibn Al-Ashras¹⁴, Al-Iskafi¹⁵, and Issa Ibn Al-Haytham Al-Khayyat^{16 17}.

I said: The tracer of Mu'tazila branches, whether they were of Basra or Baghdad, will infer their reliance on the mind, and making it the ruler over the hearing. We can say that (Al'tizal) school was the first to establish the irrelevance of the text, whether it was Quran or Sunnah, and abidance to logical and mental proofs. This led to their frequent jumble, where you will find an independent branch to every prominent imam. Abd Al-Qahir Al-Baghdadi said: (Mu'tazila had split into twenty sects, where each sect Judged the others as unbelievers)¹⁸.

This conflict does not preclude that they agreed on fundamentals, which they called the Five Fundamentals. The researcher of Mu'tazila will infer that they were being defamed, because they contradicted the Sunnites, while being praised and thanked at the same time for their response to the followers of other religions, such as the Jews, Christians, and pagans. Their responses were characterized as scientific insight and sound mental argument. Henry Corbin said: Even though Mu'tazila were disgraced for their differences with the for the Sunnites, while being thanked at the same time for the effort they put, because of their interaction and the general attitude toward non-Muslim groups, which formed within the Muslim community¹⁹.

¹ Refer to: The Preference of Moderation by Judge Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani2/5333.

² Refer to: The Ranks of Mu'tazila by Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Al-Murtadhā, p. 7-8.

³ (6) Refer to: The Difference Among Sects, p. 25-2

⁴ (1) Othman Ibn Khaled Al-Tawil, he was the teacher of Ibn Al-Huzayl Al-Allaf. He was sent by Wasil Ibn Ata to Armenia to invite people to (Al'tizal). Refer to: Desire and hope, p. 35

⁵ Hamdan Ibn Al-Huzayl Al-Allaf. Al-Huzaylia Sect was attributed to him. He was born in (134) and died in (235) AH. The Difference among Sects, p. 121.

⁶ Abdulrahman Ibn Kisan Al-Asum. He wrote The Creation of Quran and The Book of Monotheism. He died in (200) AH. Refer to: Desire and hope, p. 52.

⁷ Ibrahim Ibn Sayyār Ibn Hani An-Nazzam. Mu'tazila An-Nazzamia Sect was attributed to him. Of his works: The Book of Monotheism; (The Difference Among Sects, p. 131).

⁸ Yousef Ibn Abdullah Ibn Ishaq Al-Sham. Al-Jahizia Sect was attributed to him. He lived during the reigns of Al-Mu'tasim and Al-Mutawakkil ;(The Difference among Sects, p. 175).

⁹ Mohammed Ibn Abdul-Wahab Al-Jubba'I Al-Basri. He became the leader of Mu'tazila after Abul-Huzayl. Al-Jubba'ia Sect was attributed to him. Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash'ar inarrated from him. He died in (303). Refer to: The Difference Among Sects, p. 183.

¹⁰ Abdulsalam Ibn Mohammed Ibn Abdul-Wahab Al-Jubba'I. Al-Bahshmia Sect was attributed to him. He was born in (247) and died in (321) AH. The Difference among Sects, p. 184.

¹¹ Refer to: Desire and hope, p. 1058 by Ibn Al-Murtadhā.

¹² Bishr Ibn Al-Mu'tamir Al-Hilali. Al-Bishria Sect was attributed to him. He died in (210) AH. The Difference among Sects, p. 156.

¹³ Ahmad Ibn Abu-Daoud Ibn Jarir Ibn Malik Al-Iyadi. He died in (240) AH. (Refer to: Desire and hope, p. 46).

¹⁴ Thumama Ibn Al-Ashras Al-Nimri. Of his works: The Book of (Al-Hujja) the Proof. The Difference among Sects, p. 172.

¹⁵ Mohammed Ibn Abdullah Al-Iskafi. Al-Iskafian Sect is attributed to him. He wrote seventy books, The Book of Al-Lutfah and The book of Justice. Refer to: The Difference Among Sects, p. 169.

¹⁶ Issa Ibn Al-Haytham Al-Sufi Al-Khayyat. He died in (245) AH. Refer to: Desire and hope, p. 66.

¹⁷ Desire and hope, p. 106.

¹⁸ (1) The Difference among Sects by Abd Al-Qahir Al-Baghdadi, p. 112

¹⁹ The History of Islamic Philosophy, written by Henry Corbin, p. 170.

1.5 Fifth: The Mu'tazila's Creed Regarding Al - Sirat

Mu'tazila proved Al - Sirat as a whole and did not deny its existence, according to Imam Al-Ash'ari, who was the most knowledgeable person of Mu'tazila creed regarding Al - Sirat and the conflict around it, where he had never mentioned a conflict around its existence, but rather around its attributes.

There are ranks for the concept of Al - Sirat:

First: Proving the concept of Al - Sirat.

Second: Proving that it is elongated over Hell where all creatures will cross it.

Third: Proving some of the true attributes that were mentioned in Legitimate Islamic texts.

When Mu'tazila proved Al - Sirat and denied that it is elongated over Hell, but rather it is a path to Heaven; by saying so, they had interpreted and excluded the concept of Al - Sirat which was mentioned in Legitimate Islamic texts. Therefore, the scholars had attributed to Mu'tazila denying Al - Sirat¹.

Judge Abd Al-Jabbar said: (If you were asked: Is what was mentioned about Al - Sirat true? The response will be: With regards to what the public say in its description, and what was mentioned in some statements that are not true. What is true is that it is a path for the people of the Hell and Heaven after the Reckoning; because the path of the people of the Heaven is by the gate of Hell, and whoever is deemed as Hell people, he will be redirected and thrown in Hell, and whoever is deemed as Heaven people, he will pass and escape it, and this is also in the interest of those accountable by Sharia. Then he recited the verse: (And there is not one of you but will come to it), and said that the intended meaning is what we mentioned of being close to it².

He said in another place: (Among the things that we must believe in is Al - Sirat, which is a path between Heaven and Hell, and it expands for the people of Heaven and narrows down for the people of Hell... We do not approve what Al-Hashwiyah said about Al - Sirat that is finer than a hair and sharper than a sword)^{3 4}.

He also said: A story about some of the Sheikhs of Mu'tazila imams that they interpreted Al - Sirat with regards to the texts that refer to good deeds and sins, but he weakened this argument⁵.

He said: (Legitimate texts disapproved who denied that God allows his servants to cross Al - Sirat). I said: By doing so, they were misinterpreting the meaning.

Al-Amidi said regarding the statement of Mu'tazila: The Mu'tazila had disagreed: the doctrine of Abū l-Hudhail and Bishr Ibn Al-Mu'tamir tended towards its probability without judging it as certain, while Al-Jubba'I hesitated between denying and proving it, where he denied and approved it on and off.

Most of Mu'tazila tended to deny Al - Sirat in this sense⁶.

I said that the Imam meant: Mu'tazila denied Al - Sirat as being a bridge elongated over Hell, where the wicked slip and the righteous pass.

Mu'tazila adopted a set of suspicions, such as:

First: The statement of Judge Abd Al-Jabbar (There is no obligation on that Day, therefore, it cannot be right to subject the believers to pain and require them to cross such a sharp and fine path)⁷.

Second: (And what they had described did not represent a path, so both of them were wrong)⁸.

I said: The judge meant that its description of being sharper than a sword and finer than a hair does not apply to a road intended for walking, which renders it inconceivable; therefore, it must be denied based on the mind.

Third: Among the things, Mu'tazila use as evidence, was their argument that to obligate the people to cross Al - Sirat is tiring to the believers; while the believer shall not be subjected to any fatigue nor tiredness; because this constitutes torture, and the believer cannot be tortured⁹.

¹ (1) Refer to: The Positions by Aegian, he attributed the denial of Al - Sirat to most of Mu'tazila, and said that Al-Jubba'I fluctuated between denying and proving it. Abū l-Hudhail and Bishr Ibn Al-Mu'tamir pointed out its probability without rendering it Occurring. Refer to: The Explanation of Positions by Al-Jurjani 4/349. Imam Yahya Ibn Abu Al-Khair Al-Omrani said in his book (Victory in Responding at the Evil Mu'tazila) (3/720): Al - Sirat is true, but Mu'tazila, Al-Ozriyah, and the people of deflection denied all of this

² Refer to: The Preference of "I'tazal" and the Ranks of Mu'tazila by Judge Abd Al-Jabbar, p. 205-206.

³ The Explanation of the Fundamentals by Judge Abd Al-Jabbar, p. 737-738.

⁴ Imam Al-Malti in his book (Alert and Response), p. 106.

⁵ Refer to: The Explanation of the Five Fundamentals by Judge Abd Al-Jabbar, p. 738

⁷ The Explanation of the Five Fundamentals by Abd Al-Jabbar Al-HamaJani, p. 737.

⁸ The previous source, p. 738.

⁹ Refer to: Abkar Al-Afkar (The Intact Ideas) by Al-Amidi- 3/264.

I said: Mu'tazila divided into branches and sects, and they differed regarding proving Al – Sirat; some of them interpreted Al – Sirat in the sense of a road and did not prove the most attribute of Al – Sirat of as being elongated over Hell, while others hesitated in proving it, where they denied and approved it on and off.

1.5 Sixth: The Sunnites' Responses to Mu'tazila

First: The basis among the Sunnites is to rely on the proof of hearing, and not abandon it to a mental suspicion or doubt, because what has been proven by Legitimate Islamic texts, cannot be overlooked, interpreted, nor defined, and this is an acknowledged proven by denotation in Quran, Sunnah, and (Ijma) consensus. This issue is considered one of the acknowledged issues, which do not require any evidence due to their manifestation and clarity. Al – Sirat is proved in the Sunnah, and (Ijma) consensus, therefore, it cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted to a meaning not tolerated by the context, like a branch of Mu'tazila did, where they interpreted Al – Sirat as a denotation of good deeds and sins, and by doing so, they misinterpreted the Quran in a way the text does not permit and relied on metaphor.

Second: Allah Almighty is not incapable of anything, He is capable of whatever he wills, and He chooses what to do with his slaves¹.

Allah Almighty made some of His creatures fly in the air and others swim in the water, and His purpose is that: These attributes are paranormal habits, and are not farfetched that Allah will allocate such things to some of His slaves².

Third: Their statement that this constitute as an obligation and tiredness to the believers; the Sunnites response is that the believers will cross Al – Sirat like lightning or wind, this what was mentioned in Legitimate Islamic texts, where there is no fatigue, tiredness, nor obligation. And their speed crossing Al – Sirat will be in accordance to how fast they uphold the obligations of Allah, while the nonbelievers slip into Hell; so, where is the obligation? The fatigue and tiredness?

Fourth: Al – Sirat is proved by perfect (Ijma) consensus, therefore, it is not permitted to violate (Ijma) consensus and the Legitimate Islamic texts that support it.

I said: These farfetched interpretations and flimsy suspicions should not be relied upon or argued, and these are the suspicions which Mu'tazila relied upon, and I have not found other suspicions. Allah knows best.

1.6 The Conclusion

- 1- All praise belongs to Allah who has guided us to this. And we could not have found guidance, if Allah had not guided us. Through this research, the position of the Sunnites regarding Al – Sirat becomes illustrated, their doctrine is characterized by moderation, and being far from extremism and neglect, they did not rely absolutely on the mind, but they gave priority to the text and hearing regarding many of belief fundamentals, especially with regards to Occult; unlike Mu'tazila who gave priority to the proof of mind in some of these issues. On the other hand it should be noted that some of Sunnites denied some attributes of Al – Sirat, not because the mind did not accept them, but because the Hadith was not proven, unlike Mu'tazila who denied these attributes because the mind did not accept them; and this is an important difference between the two schools.
- 2- It is also important to point out that I put a great effort to track Mu'tazila statements in their books regarding this issue, which they rely upon, therefore, I pray to Allah to guide us to the good and right both in our sayings and work.
- 3- And the conclusion of our prayer shall be, 'All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

¹ (1) The Explanation of Positions by Al-Jurjani, 4/349.

² (2) Refer to: Abkar Al-Afkar (The Intact Ideas) by Al-Amidi- 3/265.