

25. The Belief concerning the Bridge (As-Sirat)

*Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far says: "Our belief concerning as-Sirat is that it is true, and that it is a bridge"*¹. ash-Shaykh al-Mufid says: "as-Sirat, linguistically means 'way' (at-tariq), hence religion is called 'the way', since it is the way to the right (path).

That is why accepting the mastership of the Commander of the Believers and the Imams of his progeny is called 'a way'. Similar to this is the saying of the Commander of the Believers, "I am the straight path of Allah, and the most firm cord which is unbreakable", by which he meant that knowing him and adhering to him is the way to Allah, the Exalted.

It has been related that the way to Paradise on the Day of Resurrection is like a bridge over which people pass, and that is the bridge on the right side of which the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, will stand and the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, on the left side, where they will receive the call from Allah, the Sublime,

"Cast, you twain, into Hell every froward unbeliever" [50:24].

It is also related that no one will be permitted to cross the bridge except those who hold with them a writ of immunity from the Fire (bara'ah), given by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him.

It is also related that the bridge is finer than a hair and sharper than a sword to the unbeliever – that is to say, the foot of the unbeliever will never stand firmly on it on the Day of Resurrection because of the dread and fear of that Day with which they will be confronted. Then they will walk on it as one who walks on a thing finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. Yet this is only an expression to illustrate the dread which afflicts the unbeliever when he crosses the bridge. It is a way either to Paradise or to Hell, and from which the servant may look out on Paradise or see the terrors of Hell.

As-Sirat might also signify a tortuous path, and this is why Allah, the Almighty, says:

"And this, My path, is straight" [6: 153].

Thus He distinguished His path which is the true religion, and which He ordered to be followed from

those which lead astray. Also, the Almighty, in commanding His servants to pray and recite the Qur'an says: **Guide us in the straight path [1:5]**, which indicates that the other paths are not straight and that the path of the Almighty Allah is His religion, whereas the path of Satan is the path of rebelliousness. Thus, as-Sirat, as we demonstrated above, originally means path, as as-Sirat of the Day of Resurrection is the path which has to be followed either to Paradise or to Hell.

1. * * Not found in N.

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