

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

AS-SIRAT (THE PATH, THE BRIDGE OVER HELL)

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In popular Muslim thought, the belief in '**As-Sirat**' (*a.k.a 'pul sirat' / the bridge of the way, the bridge over hell*) is often cited as compulsory.

The 'As Sirat' is understood to be an extremely narrow (almost the width of a hair follicle) and sharp bridge with hooks, clasps and thorny iron that **all souls (including the righteous / believers)** will encounter on the Day of Resurrection. It is understood to be surrounded by the raging fire of Hell and one would need to cross this bridge in order to reach paradise or a state of felicity.

The sinful will allegedly fall into its raging fire whilst those who remained righteous, will make their way swiftly across this bridge at a pace directly proportional to the good deeds that they would have earned during their earthly abode. The first one to cross the bridge is understood to be Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) Muslim literature and websites are often found giving references and details with regards to this belief.

From a Quran's perspective, there is absolutely **no mention** of this bridge in the **entire Quran**.

This term and the fanciful narratives associated with it are only found in [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith.

Indeed, '**implicit**' verses are often cited such as those below, but as we will see in this article, such interpretations are countered by **explicit texts** and **context driven themes** from the Quran that deal with eschatology (death, judgement, heaven and hell).

019:070

"And / moreover certainly, We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein.

019:071

"And there is not one of you (pronoun - 'kum') but will come / arrive / go down (* *warada / warid*) (to it). This is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished."

It remains noteworthy; that any *'implicit'* verse of the Quran must be understood in light of **explicit verses**. A belief or doctrine should arguably **never be formed** based on *'implicit'* text alone, especially in the presence of explicit verses or stronger contexts which would deny such a belief.

No doubt, the Quran provides many narratives dealing with **eschatology** (*death, judgement, heaven and hell*).

For example, Surah Fajr (89) cites a succinct narrative of the righteous when they are spoken to after their death and on the Day of Resurrection (89:27). They are welcomed into a place of felicity, God's Garden (*My Garden / Paradise -'jannati'*). Albeit the intention of the narrative appears to remain succinct, one does find remarkable that there is **no mention** of a bridge. However, a trial (accountability) of some sorts is expounded in other Surahs such as Surah Araf (Chapter 7), where a detailed portrayal of the Day of Judgement is given and the communication of both dwellers of the garden and those of hell is shared. (7:38ff; particularly 7:44ff). However, once again, one finds **no mention** of a *'bridge'* or the requirement of all God's servants to cross over it with a view to reach paradise.

Furthermore, one would have also arguably expected some mention of this bridge in Surah Waqia (Chapter 56) where comprehensive eschatological details are expounded in the course of the entire Surah. Again, **no mention** of a bridge is found. Surah Rahman also captures a vivid portrayal of what will transpire on the Day of Judgement and once again, there is **no mention** of any bridge, or any crossing of it for all God's servants.

Moving on from context driven narratives dealing with eschatology where one would expect mention of a bridge, what remains noteworthy, is the **explicit mention** in verses 21:98-102 that righteous individuals would be **far removed** from even so much as the **slightest sound** of hell, let alone being drawn nigh to it in order to cross over it.

021.098-100

"Indeed, you and what you worship besides God, are (but) fuel / firewood **for Hell!** To it you will come / go down to it / arrive (** warid*)"

021.101

"Indeed! those to whom kindness / good has gone forth from Us, **they will be far removed from it**"

021.102-103

"**They will not even hear the slightest sound / whisper (*hasis*)** of it, and they will abide in that which their souls desire forever. The supreme terror will not grieve them, and the angels will welcome / greet them, (saying): This is your Day which you were promised"

* **Warid** - from the root verb *'warada'* means to come / to be present / to arrive at something (*e.g. a man or camel arriving at water to drink etc.*). Classical lexicologists make it clear that 'arrival' does not necessarily imply that one **will** 'enter'. It simply means to arrive at something.

Thus, if the righteous are not to even 'arrive' (*warid*) at hell (21:101) being kept far from it, then the whole popular belief of the bridge (over hell) becomes very questionable. Furthermore, if believers are not even to hear the **slightest sound** of Hell (*and hence be kept away from it*), the belief of all souls passing over a bridge surrounded by hell becomes wholly unwarranted from a Quran's perspective. This argument is further strengthened, when one considers the narratives in verses 25:11-12 where it is made clear that the roar of hell would be **so audible**, that it will even be heard from a distance.

025:011

"Nay, they deny the Hour (the Day of Resurrection), and for those who deny the Hour, We have prepared for those a blazing Fire (i.e. Hell)."

025:012

"When it (Hell) sees them from a far place, they will hear its raging and its roaring."

025:013

"And when they shall be thrown into a narrow place thereof, bound in chains, they will exclaim therein for destruction."

It is thus clear that in order for the roar of hell to remain inaudible to the righteous, they will **never** be brought nigh to it, which is also supported by the explicit text of verse 21:101.

We thus find in the Quran, explicit and context driven verses dealing with eschatology, that completely negates the common beliefs of Muslims pertaining to 'The Bridge', which is predominantly sourced from [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith.

IMPLICIT DEDUCTION

As briefly mentioned in the initial paragraphs of this article, the Quranic evidence cited for such a common belief in Muslim thought, attempts to seek support from verses 19:70-71:

019.070

"And / moreover certainly, We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein.

019:071

"And there is not one of **you** (pronoun - 'kum') but will come / arrive / go down (* warada / warid) (to it). This is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished."

The first point to note is that there is no mention of a bridge in these verses. Secondly, if the context of the verses is studied, the pronoun '**you**' (**kum**) (*those that will go down / arrive at it*) seems to be clearly linked to **those** who were most stubborn and rebellious from all sects mentioned in the previous verse, 19:69. This is made clear when the verses are read in context.

019.069

"Then / moreover surely **We will drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion** against the most gracious (God) (Most Powerful)."

019.070

"And / moreover certainly, We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein.

019:071

"And there is not one of **you** (pronoun - 'kum') but will come / arrive / go down (* warada / warid) (to it). This is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished."

Therefore, the pronoun (**you**) arguably references those wicked leaders and followers in sin, who refused to alter their ways and remained obstinately rebellious against God (19:69). This is further supported by other verses which make it clear that it is the sinners that will be led into hell.

011.098

"He will go before his people on the Day of Judgement, and lead them (**warada - mawrud**) into the Fire (as cattle are led to water). And wretched / woeful is the place to which they are led!"

One notes that the same root verb '**warada**' (*to come, go down, arrive, one which is led down to*) that is used in verses 11:98 and 21:100, is also used in verse 19:71, all dealing with **the guilty**.

Thus the target audience consistently remains the evil-doers, and there is **no indication** that every soul will be driven to hell, will pass by it via a bridge, or will be brought nigh to it.

CITING THE EXCEPTION - THE QURAN'S USE OF 'THUMMA'

Some will note the exception in verse 19:72 and raise the question as to where the righteous will be saved from, if not hell?

A common translation is noted:

019.072

"But (Thumma) We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees."

The Arabic phrase '*thumma*' often translated as 'and', 'but' or 'then' does not always imply a sequence. From a Quran's perspective, this phrase is also understood to signify '*parallelism*' or two events occurring together / simultaneously / concurrently and **not** necessarily in sequence (or one after the other).

For example in Surah 41:11, we note the phrase "*thumma 'istawa*" signifying God's instructions to the heavens when it was still smoke, to form. This was not an action carried out in sequence, or after the creation of mountains on the earth (41:10), but rather, it was an action in tandem or simultaneously with the creation of the Earth. Thus '*thumma*' is better rendered in such contexts as '*moreover*' or signifying **a simultaneous action** rather than one in sequence. This phrase is also used to signify repetitive stress as can be seen in Surah 102.

Therefore, verse 19:72 is better understood as a simultaneous action where whilst the guilty will be left in the pits of Hell, the righteous will be saved from such a trial which is also supported by verse 21:101.

019:072

"Moreover (thumma) we will deliver those who feared / guarded against evil and We will leave the guilty / wrong-doers therein bent on knees"

021.101

"Indeed! those to whom kindness / good has gone forth from Us, they will be far removed from it"

FINAL THOUGHTS

The belief that **all souls** will be brought near a narrow bridge called the '*As-Sirat*' on the Day of Judgement finds no explicit support in the Quran.

From a Quranic perspective, one notes explicit and context driven verses dealing with eschatology, that appear to completely negate this common belief which is predominantly sourced from [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith. As noted, implicit lean on verses such as 19:70-72 to support such a mainstay belief appears to be wholly unwarranted.

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