

The Tale of Ğahannam
'Hell' According to Early Muslim Tradition

Nael Abd El-Rahaman, School of Religious Studies
McGill University, Montreal
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Abstract

This thesis is primarily a study of the concept of Hell in Islam as it was imagined by early Muslims. Hell in Islam has received limited attention by Muslim and Western scholars of Islam, even though it occupies an important place in the events of the Day of Judgment and in the minds of those interested in learning about the Day of Judgment according to Islam. The relative lack of information about *Ĝahannam*, particularly in languages other than Arabic, is among the reasons for the paucity of literature by Western scholars. This study provides information about *Ĝahannam* and takes on the task of giving *Ĝahannam* the attention it deserves. A general view of *Ĝahannam* in Islam will be introduced as well as its topography, its inhabitants, and the types of punishments used in it. In addition, the issue of its permanency will be discussed. This investigation will focus on the thoughts of the first three generations without introducing later understandings, beliefs, or imaginations. Therefore, it will set aside what is currently said about *Ĝahannam* and examine what early generations said about it.

I argue that authentic *ḥadīṭ* did in fact reflect early Muslims' understanding of *Ĝahannam*. Therefore, the study will substantially rely on what was said by the Prophet related to *Ĝahannam* in addition to what is written in the Qur'ān regarding it. As *ḥadīṭ* serves as a lamp to shed light on the way early Muslim perceived *Ĝahannam*, this study will address methodological and terminological issues related to *ḥadīṭ* and discuss how the methods of early *ḥadīṭ* critics proved to be reliable in *ḥadīṭ* authentication processes. In relation to the issue of *ḥadīṭ* authenticity, the study will introduce and explore what later came to be the science of *'Uṣūl al-Ḥadīṭ* and its related genera. It will also touch on the problem of *tadlīs* (concealing the defects in a *ḥadīṭ*) and how *ḥadīṭ* critics were aware of it. Furthermore, because Western scholars generally agree that

early *ḥadīth* critics limited their authentication of *ḥadīth* to examining *ʿisnād* (the chain of narrators), the study will also discuss *matn* or *naṣṣ* (text) criticism, in particular during the early period of Islam, by providing examples of such criticism applied by *al-Ṣaḥābah*.

Résumé

Cette thèse est avant tout une étude du concept de l'enfer dans l'Islam tel qu'il a été imaginé par les premiers musulmans. L'enfer dans l'Islam a reçu une attention limitée de la part des érudits musulmans et occidentaux de l'Islam, même s'il occupe une place importante dans les événements du Jour du Jugement et dans l'esprit de ceux qui souhaitent en apprendre davantage sur le Jour du Jugement selon l'Islam. Le manque relatif d'informations sur *Ĝahannam*, en particulier dans les langues autres que l'arabe, est l'une des raisons du manque de littérature par les érudits occidentaux. Cette étude fournit des informations sur *Ĝahannam* et prend la tâche de donner à *Ĝahannam* l'attention qu'il mérite. Une vue générale de *Ĝahannam* dans l'Islam sera introduite ainsi que sa topographie, ses habitants et les types de punitions qui y sont utilisés. En outre, la question de sa permanence sera examinée. Cette enquête se concentrera sur les pensées des trois premières générations sans introduire de compréhensions, de croyances ou d'imaginations ultérieures. Par conséquent, il mettra de côté ce qui est actuellement dit à propos de *Ĝahannam* et examinera ce que les premières générations ont dit à ce sujet.

Je soutiens que l'authentique *ḥadīṭ* reflétait en fait la compréhension des premiers musulmans de *Ĝahannam*. Par conséquent, l'étude s'appuiera essentiellement sur ce qui a été dit par le Prophète concernant *Ĝahannam* en plus de ce qui est écrit dans le Coran à ce sujet. Comme *ḥadīṭ* sert de lampe pour faire la lumière sur la façon dont les premiers musulmans percevaient *Ĝahannam*, cette étude abordera les questions méthodologiques et terminologiques liées au *ḥadīṭ* et discutera de la façon dont les méthodes des premiers critiques de *ḥadīṭ* se sont avérées fiables dans les processus d'ation *ḥadīṭ*. En ce qui concerne la question de l'authenticité de *ḥadīṭ*, l'étude introduira et explorera ce qui est venu plus tard à être la science de *'Uṣūl al-Ḥadīṭ* et de ses genres apparentés. Il abordera également le problème des *tadlīs* (dissimulation des défauts dans

un *ḥadīṭ*) et comment les critiques *de ḥadīṭ* en étaient conscients. En outre, parce que les érudits occidentaux conviennent généralement que les premiers critiques *de ḥadīṭ* limitaient leur authentification du *ḥadīṭ* à l'examen de l'*isnād* (la chaîne des narrateurs), l'étude discutera également de la critique *de matn* ou *naṣṣ* (texte), en particulier pendant la première période de l'islam, en fournissant des exemples de cette critique appliquée par *al-Ṣaḥābah*.

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Notes on Method

- This study follows Brill’s simplified Arabic transliteration system. Arabic words that have ‘sun letters’ such as ‘al-Šawkānī’, ‘al-Tawbah’, and ‘al-Nār’ are written with the *lām*; however, they should be pronounced as ‘aš-Šawkānī’, ‘at-Tawbah’, and an-Nār’.
- The patronymic forms *ibn* (son) and *bint* (daughter) are abbreviated into ‘b.’ and ‘bt.’ respectively, the only exceptions being when they are used as the first parts in names.
- Dates are given in the combination (AH/CE), where AH is the abbreviation for ‘after *hiğrah*’ or its Latin form ‘Anno Hegirae.’ *Hiğrah* refers to the journey the Prophet Muḥammad took from Mecca to Medina. The first day of Year One of the Islamic calendar, which follows a lunar cycle, corresponds to the 15th of July, 622 CE.
- Qur’ānic references are mainly from the *Saheeh International Translation*¹ with minor modifications.
- The word *ḥadīṭ* in this study refers mainly to the Prophetic tradition. *Ḥadīṭ* can also refer to the narratives of *al-Šaḥābah* (the Companions). However, they are usually called *ḥadīṭ mawqūf* (discontinued or untraceable to the Prophet).²
- *Ḥadīṭ al-āḥād* or solitary *ḥadīṭ* are proven to be useful in this study,³ even though some scholars, such as al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bağdādī, do not accept them on matters related to theology.⁴

The reason to consider them is that a closer look reveals that the majority of the earlier

¹ *Saheeh International Translation*, ed. A.B. al-Mehri (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2010).

² ‘Uṭmān ibn al-Šalāḥ al-Šahrazūrī, *Ma’rifat ‘Anwā’ ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīṭ - Muqaddimat ibn al-Šalāḥ*, ed. ‘Abd al-laṭīf al-Humīm and Māhir al-Fahl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2002), 117-8.

³ *Ḥadīṭ al-āḥād* are those *ḥadīṭ* missing one or more criteria to make them *ḥadīṭ mutawātir* (recurring); *ḥadīṭ* transmitted by multiple sources where it was impossible for them to collude; or those *ḥadīṭ* with only one or two of *al-Šaḥābah* (the Companions).

⁴ ‘Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bağdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī Ma’rifat ‘Uṣūl ‘Ilm al-Riwāyah*, 2 vols., ed. ‘Ibrāhīm al-Dimyāṭī (Mīt Ġamr, Egypt: Dār al-Hudā, 2002), 2:557.

muḥadditūn (singular *muḥaddit* and the singular female equivalent is *muḥadditah*: a scholar of *ḥadīṭ* or a specialist who worked on *ḥadīṭ*, narrated *ḥadīṭ*, and acquired knowledge about the uprightness, honesty, reliability, precision, and accuracy of the narrators)⁵ affirmed that an authentic *ḥadīṭ al-āḥād* (*ḥadīṭ al-āḥād al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*) is acceptable from its *'isnād* (chain of narrators) side; the debate is on whether to accept it as valid proof for establishing a Prophetic *sunna* and use it as an independent source of law.⁶

- Given that *ḥadīṭ* and reports (*ḥadīṭ mawqūf*) used in this study are considered authentic, and that one could find contradictory reports, I will include *ḥadīṭ mawqūf* in this study as reflecting a different view, or different views, held by early Muslims after exhausting all possible means to merge them into one coherent view.
- Sources such as al-Qurṭubī's commentary, *al-Ġāmi' li- 'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, and al-Ṣābūnī's commentary, *Ṣafwat al-Tafāsīr*, have been consulted to explain terms, passages, or verses that speak about the subject of the study.⁷ Commentaries on *ḥadīṭ* such as *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* and *Fath al-Mun'im: Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* have been likewise employed where they discuss relevant passages or if they are needed to explain some details in the Qur'ān or the authentic books of *ḥadīṭ*.⁸ In addition to these classical commentaries, contemporary works like Joel Blecher's book, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary*

⁵ 'Abd 'Allah al-Mubārakfūrī, *Ma'āt al-Mafātīḥ Ṣarḥ Miškāt al-Maṣābīḥ* (Varanasi: al-Ġāmi'ah al-Salafiyyah, 1984), 397.

⁶ 'Umar F. 'Abd Allāh, *Mālik and Medina: Islamic Legal Reasoning in the Formative Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 107–30.

⁷ Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ġāmi' li- 'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 20 vols., ed. Aḥmad al-Bardunī and 'Ibrāhīm Atfīš (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Maṣriyyah, 1964). Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, *Ṣafwat al-Tafāsīr*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣābūnī, 1997).

⁸ Aḥmad ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 13 vols., ed. Muḥib al-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1379 AH). Mūsā Ṣāhīn Lāšī, *Fath al-Mun'im: Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣurūq, 2002).

across a Millennium, also contribute to the study.⁹ Blecher's book focuses on the social and intellectual history of the interpretation and transmission of *ḥadīth* literature. By examining the development of *ḥadīth* scholarship in specific historical contexts, Blecher's work provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the understanding and interpretation of *ḥadīth* throughout history.

- In this study, the term 'Early Islamic Era' will be employed to encompass the earliest three generations or the most exemplary generations, namely *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions), *al-Tābi 'īn* (the Successors), and *Tābi 'ū al-Tābi 'īn* (the Successors of the Successors).
- My own translation of the Islamic primary sources in Arabic will be used if an English translation is not available. This is intended to overcome some problems with the earlier approaches where the absence of English translations clouded the conclusions reached by their authors.
- Finally, all Arabic titles are left untranslated.

⁹ Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary Across a Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

Introduction

What happens after death is an important matter discussed in nearly all religions. This is because death is a fact that every living human being will face; death is the end of our journey in this life. In addition, what happens after death is a matter of curiosity that encourages us to ask many questions: Is this it? What could be next? What should I expect? To answer such questions, religions that believe in life after death tend to explain the unknown in terms of passage to Paradise or Hell. Unfortunately, Hell, as opposed to Paradise, does not receive much attention in the literature.

The idea of Hell, or a hell-like place, was formulated long before the emergence of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptian civilization, developed the concept of “moral” death or an understanding that people after death carry the consequences of their actions in this life into their next one.¹⁰

Judgment after death, as shown in chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead*, could lead those who fail the judgment to “die a second time” or to be sent outside the cosmos.¹¹ In most of the world’s religions, religious leaders promote the idea that people should live decent, honest, and moral lives so they may be rewarded generously in the hereafter. In many, it is also taught that those who commit misdeeds in this world will be subjected to severe punishments in the hereafter unless they repent and live moral lives before they die. Thus, the fundamental function of Hell can be seen as a tool to encourage people to live moral lives and discourage them from

¹⁰ A.E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 3.

¹¹ Peter F. Dorman and John R. Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Religion," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 10, 2017). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ancient-Egyptian-religion>.

committing misdeeds. Interestingly, the concept of Hell has been accepted by many religious individuals, and continues to be so, as it reflects their desires for a final justice or a divine justice that could work as a form of compensation for the injustices in this world. Generally, Hell serves as a tool to motivate people to behave according to the faith's guidelines or the guidelines of the governing system where the leaders are considered to be gods, god-like figures, gods' representatives, or representatives of a deity.

The need for this work

Islam is no different from any other religion that employs the idea of Hell as a tool to stimulate people to act according to the faith's instructions. Historically, the earliest Muslims' perception of the unseen world, known to them as *'ālam al-ġayb*, was a strict reflection of the Qur'ānic text and *ḥadīth*¹² of the Prophet Muḥammad.¹³ The Qur'ān was the primary trusted authority used by early Muslims during the Early Islamic Era to learn about the unseen or *ġayb* since these early Muslims considered the Qur'ān to be *kalām Allah* (the actual words spoken by Allah),¹⁴ the all-knowing God of the seen and unseen worlds. The second authoritative source was *ḥadīth*, which shared the same normative value of the Qur'ān except that the words of *ḥadīth* are not the words of God; they are the words of the Prophet Muḥammad, with the general meaning inspired by Allah.¹⁵

¹² The word *ḥadīth* means “new”, which is the antonym of old. It also refers to any narrative. The word *ḥadīth* can be used as singular or plural (the plural form is *'aḥādīth*). In Islamic terminology, it refers mainly to the Prophet's tradition. This includes his words (*'aḡwāl*), his deeds (*'af'āl*), and his unspoken approval (*taqrīr*) of his Companions' words or deeds.

¹³ ‘Earliest Muslims’ here are those belonging to the earliest three generations: *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) who were living at the time of the Prophet, *al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors), and *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors of the Successors).

¹⁴ Muḥammad ibn Māḡah, *Sunan ibn Māḡah*, 2 vols., ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Bāqī (Beirut: 'Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1432 AH), 1:18.

¹⁵ 'Alī ibn Ḥazm, *al-'Iḥkām fī 'Uṣūl al-'Aḥkām*, 8 vols., ed. Aḥmad Ṣākīr (Beirut: Dār al-'Āfāq al-Ġadīdah, 1983), 1:97.

By the eighth century CE, different Islamic schools had started to take shape. The *'ahl al-ḥadīth* movement, which emerged by the end of that century and encouraged people to follow the tradition of the Early Islamic Era, stood in opposition to the recently developed rationalist theology and other schools of thought such as *Mu'tazilah*.¹⁶ Their aim was to preserve the Early Islamic Era tradition because according to them it represented the purest teachings of Islam, as *al-Ṣaḥābah* were the first to learn directly from the Prophet Muḥammad and were the only people who had the chance to ask for clarification directly from him. In addition, the Qur'ān in *sūrat 'āl-Imrān* testifies that they were the first generations of the best nation created, and then in *sūrat al-Tawbah* that they were an example to be followed.¹⁷

By the eleventh century CE, the *ahl al-ḥadīth* tradition,¹⁸ also known as the *Sunnī* tradition or *Aṭar* tradition, which was established by its central thinker Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH/855 CE), was revived again.¹⁹ From that point on, it remained one of the main Islamic traditions, and

¹⁶ *Ahl al-ḥadīth*, also *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, the partisans of tradition. Traditionalism in Islam manifested first in the re-emergence of the old Arabian concept of *sunna*, the normative custom of the community, which was in due course identified with the *sunna* of the Prophet. This normative custom found its expression in the "living tradition" of the ancient schools of religious law, which came into being at the very beginning of the second century of Islam. J. Schacht, "Ahl al-Ḥadīth," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (2012), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/*-SIM_0379

files/328/-SIM_0379.html. *Mu'tazilah*: The term refers to those who separate themselves. *Mu'tazilah* as a religious movement first appeared in the region of Basra in Iraq during the first half of the eighth century. Later, it became one of the most important rational theological movements of Islam. Rudolph Ulrich, "Mu'tazilah," in *Religion Past and Present* (Brill).

¹⁷ *Sūra* 3, *ali-Imran*, verse 110. *Saheeh International Translation*, 69. *Sūra* 9, *al-Tawbah*, verse 100. *Saheeh International Translation*, 166.

¹⁸ *Ahl al-ḥadīth* tradition or *ahl al-sunna* here is to include 'Aṣ'ariyyah, Aṭariyyah, and Mātrīdiyyah. In addition, it could also include those who do not use personal opinion (*ra'y*) or analogical deduction (*qiyās*) for their ruling on legal matters or theological matters when texts (*nuṣūṣ*) are available.

¹⁹ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) was known as "the imam of Baghdad", a well-known and renowned theologian, jurist, and traditionist throw-out the Islamic world. He was born around 780 CE and died around 855 CE. He is the founder of the Ḥanbalī school, one of the four main Sunnī schools of law and theology. His works are considered to be a reference for the 19th century neo-*Salafīyyah* or neo-Traditionalist reform movement. Holtzman Livnat, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Encyclopaedia of Islam (Brill). *Aṭar*: The word literally means "trace". Ḡamāl al-Dīn ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1414 AH), 4:5. In Islamic terminology, *Aṭar* means a tradition or *ḥadīth*. Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī, *Muḥtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, ed. Yūsuf al-Ṣiḥ Muḥammad (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyyah, 1999), 13.

other movements, schools, and traditions borrowed some of its approaches, methods, and more importantly its sources to develop their interpretations. While the *Sunnī* tradition is well established today, Muslim ideas along with Western scholarly literature about Hell or *Ġahannam* have expanded through blending verses of the Qur'ān, Prophetic tradition, theological interpretations, and philosophical approaches.²⁰ This is mainly because of the relatively insufficient details given about Hell in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, which then inspired people's minds to create a comprehensive understanding of Hell using claims of revelation, dreams, imagined tours of Heaven and Hell, or divine knowledge received directly from Allah. This has produced a different understanding about the original vision of Hell.

Concerning *Ġahannam*, there are misconceptions regarding the terms used in the Qur'ān that explain it. *Saqar*, for example, is a proper name of Hell that is employed in the Qur'ān four times. However, the common perception in Western literature is that the word was unknown to the Companions; therefore, the next verse asked *mā 'adrāka mā Saqar*, “what shall make thee know what saqar (is)?”²¹ Al-Šawkānī (d. 1250 AH/1834 CE) explains that Arabs employ ‘*mā 'adrāka mā*’ if they need to emphasize or underline a matter.²² In addition, what appears next after the formula explains how *Saqar* is petrifying and how its fire is intense, but not what the

²⁰ An example of this is Lange's interpretation regarding the meaning of the word *zabāniya* mentioned in *Sūrat al-'Alaq* 96:18, where he said that Muslims believed that the angels of Hell used to be “subterranean demons in hell.” Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 92. While it is true that a member of *ġinn* could be called an angel, such as 'Iblīs, who was called before his sin an angel due to his good work and devotion, yet they are not angels by creation or nature. 'Abd al-Malik al-Ṭa'ālibī, *Fiqh al-Luġah wa Sirr al-'Arabiyyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turaṭ al-'Arabī, 2002), 107-8. The Qur'an states clearly that *ġinn* were created from fire, which is a material different than what Allah used to create angels. Angels of Hell are called *zabāniya* because they are tough and they use force to push disbelievers into Hell according to Ibn Manẓūr. ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 13:194.

²¹ Thomas O'Shaughnessy, "The Seven Names for Hell in the Qur'an," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 24, no. 3 (1961): 463. G.E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 82.

²² Muḥammad al-Šawkānī, *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār ibn Kaṭīr, 1414 AH), 5:393.

word itself means.²³ Another example is *al-Ḥāfirah*. To this day, many believe that *al-Ḥāfirah* is another name of Hell. Of the early scholars, al-Qurtubī (d. 671 AH/ 1273 CE) along with al-Ṭabarī (d. 224 AH/ 838 CE) reported that many scholars had agreed that *al-Ḥāfirah* is one of Hell's names.²⁴ However, the literal meaning of the word, which appears only once in the Qur'ān, is the piece of land in which graves are dug; there is no direct reference to Hell.²⁵

Another issue is that some scholars, including some who belong to the *Sunnī* school, have used unauthenticated *ḥadīth* to interpret verses in the Qur'ān or other *ḥadīth* in which Hell is mentioned. Among earlier scholars who used unauthenticated *ḥadīth* was al-Zamaḥṣarī (d. 538 AH/1144 CE), who explained a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet said that Hell will become empty and its gates will be closed.²⁶ 'Abd 'Allah b. 'Umar (d. 73 AH/693 CE), who allegedly narrated this *ḥadīth*, was one of *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions);²⁷ thus, al-Zamaḥṣarī was compelled to take his words seriously.²⁸ His interpretation was that “the unbelievers will come out of the heat of the fire and into the cold of severe frost. Only in this sense would Gehenna [*Ġahannam*] be empty and its gates closed.”²⁹ However, al-Zamaḥṣarī's explanation of the *ḥadīth* does not necessarily

²³ Muḥammad Ḡarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ḡāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24 vols., ed. Aḥmad Ṣākīr (Jordan: al-Risālah, 2000), 24:27.

²⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ḡāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24:193; al-Qurtubī, *al-Ḡāmi' li-'Aḥkām al-Qur'ān - Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, 19:197.

²⁵ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4:206.

²⁶ 'Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Zamaḥṣarī (467- 538 AH/1075 –1144 CE) “was a Mu'tazilite man of letters and grammarian from Khwārazm. The author of about fifty works, two-thirds of which have survived (many in print), his main fields of interest were *adab*, grammar and lexicography, but he also composed works in theology and law, as well as works on the Qur'ān and the Tradition. He is best known, however, for his Qur'ān commentary, *al-Kaššāf 'an ḥaqā'iq ḡawamiḍ al-tanzīl wa-'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wuḡūh al-ta'wīl* (*The Discoverer of the Truths of the Hidden Things of Revelation and the Choicest Statements concerning the Aspects of Interpretation*) which he completed in Mecca in 528/1134.” Andrew J. Lane, “You can't tell a book by its author: A study of Mu'tazilite theology in al-Zamakhshari's (d. 538/1144) *Kašshāf*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 75, no. 1 (2012), <http://www.jstor.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/stable/23258895>.

²⁷ Muḥammad al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar 'A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abd al-Mannān (Lebanon: Bayt al-'Afkār al-Dawliyah, 2004), 2448.

²⁸ Muḥammad Ṣams al-Dīn al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar 'A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 18 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2006), 4:303.

²⁹ F. E. Peters, ed. *A Reader on Classical Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 411. *A Reader on Classical Islam*, ed. F. E. Peters (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 411.

reflect how early Muslims during the Early Islamic Era understood Hell. The *ḥadīṭ* in question has not been authenticated by the majority of early or modern *ḥadīṭ* critics.³⁰ Another issue is the question concerning the concept of *Ĝahannam*'s possibility of cessation or *fanā' al-Nār*.³¹ Though it is taken for granted in several works on Islam that *Ĝahannam* is eternal, Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah (d. 751 AH/1350 CE) presented us in his book, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ* (Spurring Souls on to the Realms of Joys), twenty-five arguments concerning this issue, then reluctantly indicated that *Ĝahannam* is eternal.³² Yet upon closer scrutiny, some of the most prominent scholars, such as Muḥyī al-Dīn b. al-'Arabī (d. 638 AH/1240 CE), took the contrary view of Ibn Qayyim's statement. Ibn al-'Arabī, according to Chittick, did not accept the notion of eternal punishment in Hell. He argued that God's wrath proves to be subordinate to his mercy, not only for Muslims but for all people.³³ On a related matter, there has been uncertainty about whether *Ĝahannam* has been created or will be created only on the Day of Judgment.³⁴ The difficulty here does not lie in attempting to discover the proper meaning of the verses of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīṭ* in which Hell is mentioned, but in distinguishing between the understanding of early Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, expressed in authentic *ḥadīṭ* or authentic *ḥadīṭ mawqūf*, and portraying, whether intentionally or as an oversight, a possibly late or inauthentic text as if it represented the understanding of Muslims during the Early Islamic Era.

³⁰ Muḥammad Naṣir al-Dīn al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīṭ al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḏū'ah*, 14 vols. (Riyad: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1992), 2:71.

³¹ James Robson, "Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?," *The Muslim World* 28, no. 4 (1938).

³² Muḥammad ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, ed. Zā'id al-Nṣīrī (Dār 'Ālm al-Fawā'id, 1428 AH), 718-92.

³³ William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, SUNY series in Islam, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 174.

³⁴ Muḥmūd 'Umar Aḥmad al-Zamaḥṣarī, *al-Kaššāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq wa Ĝawamiḍ al-Tanzīl*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitab al-'Arabī, 1407 AH), 1:106.

Relevant primary and secondary literature

Prior to the advent of Islam, it is probable that the Arabs constructed a vision of Hell by drawing from the knowledge acquired from the divine books of *'ahl al-Kitāb*³⁵ along with the knowledge passed down from their ancestors. However, my study aims to shed light on the earliest accounts of *Ġahannam* according to Islam. As such, it relies primarily on the Qur'ān, the authenticated books of *ḥadīth*, and the early works of *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic commentary or explanation) containing *ḥadīth mawqūf*, while ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of their contents, since numerous reports are accompanied by an *'isnād* (chain of narrators).

The authenticated books of *ḥadīth* used in this study are mainly from the *Sunnī* tradition. The *Sunnī ḥadīth* canon consists of six collections: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Buḥārī (d. 256 AH/870 CE),³⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī (d. 261 AH/875 CE),³⁷ *Sunan Ibn Māğah* by Muḥammad b. Māğah (d. 275 AH/889 CE),³⁸ *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by 'Abū Dāwūd al-Siğistānī (d. 275 AH/889 CE),³⁹ *Sunan al-Tirmidī* by Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidī (d. 279 AH/892 CE),⁴⁰ and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* by Aḥmad b. Šu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH/915 CE).⁴¹ Regarding the books of *tafsīr*, the study consulted early books of *tafsīr* such as *Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Ayāt al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Ġarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH/923

³⁵ *'Ahl al-Kitāb* (people of the book) in Islam are mainly Jews, Christians, along with Zoroastrians. In addition, they could include others, such as Sabians, whose religions are based on divine revelations and divine books such as the Torah and the Gospel.

³⁶ Muḥammad al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9 vols., ed. Muḥammad al-Nāsir (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Nağāh, 1422 AH).

³⁷ Muslim al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 5 vols., ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turaṭ, 2001).

³⁸ Ibn Māğah, *Sunan ibn Māğah*.

³⁹ 'Abū Dāwūd al-Siğistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 4 vols., ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'ašriyyah, 2014).

⁴⁰ Muḥammad al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 6 vols., ed. Baššār Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-'Islāmī, 1998, 1998).

⁴¹ Aḥmad Šu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, 4 vols. (Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1991).

CE),⁴² *al-Ġāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH/1273 CE),⁴³ *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl Fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān* by al-Husīn Mas'ud al-Baġawī (d. 516 AH/1122 CE),⁴⁴ *al-Tafṣīr al-Kabīr - Maḡātib al-Ġayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209-10 CE),⁴⁵ and *Fāth al-Qadīr* by Muḥammad al-Šawkānī (d. 1250 AH/1834 CE).⁴⁶ In addition, other books of *zuhd* (abstinence), such as *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa yalīhi Kitāb al-Raqā'iq*,⁴⁷ are also useful for this study because they are rich in material on early Muslims' views of Hell during the Early Islamic Era. For example, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181 AH/797 CE) the author of *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa yalīhi Kitāb al-Raqā'iq*, is one of *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors of the Successors) who traveled to learn about *ḥadīth* and wrote up *ḥadīth* after hearing them from *al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors) he met.⁴⁸

Here, it is important to note that, although the majority of *ḥadīth* found in the *Sunnī ḥadīth* canon are *ṣaḥīḥ* or authentic, not all of them can be deemed such upon careful scrutiny. In addition, there are also problems of authenticity associated with the books of *tafṣīr*. With *ḥadīth* mentioned in the books of *tafṣīr*, the situation is somewhat easier since the chain of narrators is normally mentioned before each *ḥadīth*. Nevertheless, the commentaries remain useful for this study since most of the exegetical works include the source of information and, in many cases, the chain of narrators. Since the authors of these books were not predominantly from among

⁴² al-Ṭabarī, *Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*.

⁴³ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ġāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*.

⁴⁴ al-Ḥusayn Mas'ud al-Baġawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān: Tafṣīr al-Baġawī*, 5 vols., ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (Beirut: Dār 'Ihyā' al-Turāṭ al-'Arabī, 1420 AH).

⁴⁵ Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Tamīmī al-Rāzī, *al-Tafṣīr al-Kabīr - Maḡātib al-Ġayb*, 32 vols. (Beirut: Dār 'Ihyā' al-Turāṭ, 1420 AH).

⁴⁶ al-Šawkānī, *Fāth al-Qadīr*.

⁴⁷ 'Abd Allāh al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa Yalīhi Kitāb al-Raqā'iq*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-'A'zamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2004). 'Abd Allāh 'Abī al-Dunyā, *Kitāb al-Zuhd* (Damascus: Dar ibn Kaṭīr, 1999).

⁴⁸ Šams al-Dīn al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar 'A'lam al-Nubalā'*, 7:365.

muhadditūn or *ḥadīṭ* critics, the main issue one should be aware of is that they may include false chains of narrators or anonymous reports.

Given that this study will use *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ* (sound *ḥadīṭ*) and other reports such as *ḥadīṭ mawqūf* that were thus verified, I assume that they reflect the beliefs of *al-Ṣaḥābah* and constitute the bridge by which the primitive or original teachings of Islam were transmitted to succeeding generations.⁴⁹ The main purpose of this study, however, is not to establish a complete canon of *‘ilm qaṭ‘ī yaqīnī*⁵⁰ that bear on the topic of Hell, but to generate the best possible picture of Hell as it appears in the Qur’ān and is elucidated by authenticated *ḥadīṭ* and reports found in the *Sunnī* traditional literature, including the *Sunnī ḥadīṭ* canon and other *ḥadīṭ* collections. There is no intention to pass judgment on any Islamic school of thought, *madḥab*, or on any *ḥadīṭ* mentioned in it. Rather, the authenticated *ḥadīṭ* and reports are employed to show the *al-Ṣaḥābah*’s beliefs and understanding.

For example, *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) transmitted *ḥadīṭ* in which they taught that Adam, who was the only father of all humanity and who was created by Allah’s own hands,⁵¹ will be permitted *ṣafā‘ah* (intercession; asking Allah on his sons’ behalf for forgiveness) on the Day of Judgment.⁵² This understanding indeed contradicts some views, such as that of the contemporary Islamic thinker ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr Ṣāhīn and the French Protestant Isaac de la Peyrère, who argued that Adam was not the first man but rather a patriarch of one of the many tribes that were living

⁴⁹ Muḥammad ‘Abū Zahrah, *al-Mu‘āzizah al-Kubrah al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 2008), 399.

⁵⁰ *‘ilm qaṭ‘ī yaqīnī* means “decisive and certain knowledge”, i.e., “clear and understandable”.

⁵¹ *Sūra* 38, Ṣād, verse 75. *Saheeh International Translation*, 394.

⁵² al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:184. al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 4:134.

on this Earth before or with him.⁵³ Yet, one of the core beliefs of *al-Ṣaḥābah* shows how they could be granted release from Hell using the help of their great father.

In another example, the Qur'ān clearly states that consuming dead animals or eating animals that were not slaughtered according to the *ṣarī'ah* (Islamic laws, rules, or commandments) is *ḥarām* (forbidden).⁵⁴ If a Muslim intentionally consumed dead animals or animals that were slaughtered without invoking the name of Allah, knowing that it is *ḥarām*, then he/she committed an act that may lead to Hell.⁵⁵ Muslims during the Early Islamic Era accepted that; however, according to the Companion 'Abū Hūrayrah (d. 57,58 or 59 AH/678, 679 or 680 CE) *al-Ṣaḥābah* also believed that they were allowed to consume the catch of the sea, even if it was caught dead and even if they did not see the need to slaughter it, without any consequences.⁵⁶ Whether later movements, schools, or traditions consider their views right or wrong, this study reveals what Muslims during the Early Islamic Era had initially believed on the basis of authenticated *ḥadīth*, and reports proven to have *'isnād ṣaḥīḥ*, do not contradict the Qur'ān or other, sounder *ḥadīth* such as *ḥadīth mutawātir*.⁵⁷

The final point I would like to mention here has to do with the fact that, for the most part, *Sunnī* literature is employed in this study. On the subject of Hell, all main Islamic schools and traditions accept the idea of Hell as it appears in the Qur'ān. In *sūrat*⁵⁸ al-'Aḥqāf, the Qur'ān

⁵³ Richard Henry Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work, and Influence* (BRILL, 1987), 42–59. 'Abd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn, *'Abī 'Ādam: Qiṣṣat al-Ḥalīqah Bayna al-'Uṣṭūrah wa al-Ḥaqīqah* (Cairo: Dār 'Aḥbār al-Yaūm, 1999), 120–3.

⁵⁴ *Sūra* 5, al-Ma'idah, verse 3. *Saheeh International Translation*, 98.

⁵⁵ Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, *al-Muḡnī li ibn Qudāmah*, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1968), 9:11.

⁵⁶ al-Siḡistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 1:21.

⁵⁷ *Ḥadīth mutawātir* refers to the kind of *ḥadīth* that have more than three chains of narrators. According to al-Mubārakfūrī: *Ḥadīth mutawātir* is what was reported by many narrators, where it was impossible for them to collude and agree to lie about something they saw the Messenger of Allah doing or something they personally heard him saying; i.e., they report by saying 'I saw the Messenger of Allah doing this, or I heard the Messenger of Allah say such and such' al-Mubārakfūrī, *Ma'āt al-Maḥfūṭih Ṣarḥ Miškāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, 380.

⁵⁸ Usually translated as "chapter." The Quran is divided into 114 *surahs* or chapters.

reads: “And they will be rewarded according to their deeds, and they will not be wronged. Indeed, every action will have its own degree of reward or punishment, and Allah will fully compensate them for what they have done.”⁵⁹ Al-Qurṭubī says that this verse provides evidence that whoever submits to Allah is to inherit Paradise; however, whoever disobeys Allah will then be in the Hellfire.⁶⁰ Also, al-Zamaḥṣarī says that this verse shows that Allah is not a tyrant, and He will not punish anyone without giving him a warning – a warning that was sent by a prophet and through a book.⁶¹ In addition, all Islamic traditions along with the majority of Western scholars who have discussed Hell or *Ġahannam* in Islam agree that *Ġahannam* is an afterlife place of punishment for sinners. This is a place Allah had prepared for those, human or *ġinn*, who deliberately refused to believe in Him, refused to submit to Him, or refused to follow His teachings revealed to them through His messenger.⁶² In *sūrat* al-Tawbah, the Qur’ān reads: “Do they not realize that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger will be thrown into the fire of Hell, where they will abide forever? This is the ultimate disgrace.”⁶³ Moreover, I must emphasize that some *Sunnī* works do not always reflect the early Muslim understanding of Hell during the Early Islamic Era. For example, in his book *Ṣifat al-Nār*, Ibn ‘Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281 AH/894 CE) used an inauthentic *ḥadīth* to describe the walls of the Hell.⁶⁴ Some works even used

⁵⁹ *Sūra* 46, al-‘Aḥqāf, verse 19. *Saheeh International Translation*, 445. “And for all there are degrees [of reward and punishment] for what they have done, and [it is] so that He may fully compensate them for their deeds, and they will not be wronged.”

⁶⁰ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ġāmi‘ li-‘Aḥkam al-Qur’ān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 7:87. Al-Qurṭubī is: ‘Abū ‘Abd ‘Allah Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abū Bakr al-‘Anṣarī al-Ḥazraġī al-Qurṭubī. A Muslim scholar (1214 – 1273 CE) associated with the *Sunnī* Mālikī school, a scholar of *ḥadīth* and well-known for his commentary on the Qur’ān; *Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*.

⁶¹ al-Zamaḥṣarī, *al-Kaṣṣāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq wa Ġawamiḍ al-Tanzīl*, 2:67.

⁶² *Ġinn*, sometimes written ‘*Djinn*’ in English, is a generic noun for a group of God’s creations. The word is plural, and “*ġinnī*” is the singular. The word is taken from ‘*iġtīnān*’, which carries the meaning of being concealed or covered. Arabs refer to a fetus as ‘*ġanīn*’ because it cannot be seen or because it is hidden in its mother’s womb. A shield can also be called ‘*miġann*’ because it works as a cover for a warrior. *Ġinn* are called ‘*ġinn*’ because they are covered; they cannot be seen by humans. al-Rāzī, *Muḥtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, 66.

⁶³ *Sūra* 9, al-Tawbah, verse 63. *Saheeh International Translation*, 163. “Do they not know that whoever opposes God and His Messenger – that for him is the fire of Hell, wherein he will abide eternally? That is the great disgrace.”

⁶⁴ ‘Abī Bakr Muḥammad, *Ṣifat al-Nār*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsif (Beirut: Dār ibn Ḥazm, 1997), 18.

the names of prominent Islamic figures and included impressive fabricated chains of narrators for their reports. Wim Raven says about the author of *Kitāb al-‘Azama*, which deals with the subject of this study:

The author shows his awareness of the requirements of Islamic scholarship by adding impressive but faked *‘isnāds* (chains of transmission) to the work in the manner demanded by the *‘ulamā’*. Yet these imprimaturs, assigned to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and others, which are meant to underscore its reliability, have by their sheer quantity almost the opposite effect.⁶⁵

However, it is possible to distinguish the developed understandings from those of the Early Islamic Era thanks to the *Sunnī* method of collecting and authenticating *ḥadīth* and reports, in particular, the process of rigorous examinations to establish their credibility. The *Sunnī ḥadīth* criticism evaluated each of the transmitters in the chain of narrators along with *ḥadīth naṣṣ*.⁶⁶ This fortunate fact makes dependence on *Sunnī* literature advisable.

The challenge of reconstructing Early Islamic Era views

Besides the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* are extremely significant for this research because they to a certain degree reflect the understanding of the earliest Muslims. Ignác Goldziher says that “hadith serve as a direct reflection of the aspirations of the Islamic community, and furnishes us with an invaluable document for the development of Islamic religious goals beyond the Qur’ān.”⁶⁷ Some Islamic groups, such as *al-Qurāniyyūn*,⁶⁸ along with some Western scholars, reject the reliability

⁶⁵ Wim Raven, "Hell in Popular Muslim Imagination: The Anonymous Kitāb al-‘Azama," in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed. Christian Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 146.

⁶⁶ Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Foundations of Islam, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 199–200.

⁶⁷ Ignác Goldziher and Bernard Lewis, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Modern classics in Near Eastern studies, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1981), 40.

⁶⁸ *al-Qurāniyyūn* believe that Islam should only be based on the Qur’ān. They reject the reliability and authenticity of *ḥadīth*. Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 38-42. “Among the leading opponents of the Hadith are Rashad Khalifa and Ahmad Subhy Mansour of Egypt who settled in the United States, Kassim Ahmed of Malaysia, and Edip Yuksel, a Turkish religious activist who immigrated to the United States to escape persecution in his homeland.” Aisha Y. Musa, "The Qur’anists," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 1 (Jan 1, 2010 2010), <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2009.00189.x>.

and authenticity of *ḥadīṭ*. While *al-Qurāniyyūn*'s main reason for rejecting *ḥadīṭ* is that they consider the Qur'ān to be the only trusted source of *ṣarī'ah* (Islamic laws, rules, or commandments), they also agree with the main argument of Western scholars that, since *ḥadīṭ* collections comprised material accumulated at the earliest a few decades after the death of the Prophet, their material could not be relied on as trustworthy. In part, they are right, notably when Western scholars indicate that some *ḥadīṭ* contain anachronisms. In his book, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Jonathan Brown argues that the transmission of *ḥadīṭ* during the first generations was not yet subjected to rigorous criticism, as in later generations.⁶⁹ I believe this to be so; however, I would suggest that it was not yet subjected to rigorous criticism because Muslims during the Early Islamic Era considered all *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) *'udūl*, i.e. upright, honourable, and honest, and as such competent to transmit the authentic teachings of the Prophet.⁷⁰ In addition, based on the belief that the best generation or the most exemplary generation⁷¹ is the generation of the Prophet, then those who come after them, then those who come after them -i.e. the earliest three generations, *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions), *al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors), and *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors of the Successors)- according to the Prophet's *ḥadīṭ*, later generations accepted the authenticity of their narrations.⁷² They also paid closer attention to the Companions' interpretations, which they

⁶⁹ Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Foundations of Islam, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2011).

⁷⁰ *'Udūl*, singular *'adl*.

⁷¹ The Prophet considered the first generation of Muslims to be the best due to their strong faith, dedication, and sacrifice. As a result, they established a standard of excellence in their commitment to Allah and Islam that subsequent generations should strive to emulate. This highlights the importance of the first generation of Muslims and their significant impact on the development of Islam.

⁷² According to al-Naysābūrī, the Prophet said that "the best of my *'umma* [nation] are those of my generation, then the people of the next generation, then the people of the next generation after them. Then the people that will come after them, their testimony will precede their oaths and their oaths will precede their testimony." al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:1963. Ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī (1263 – 1328), who is known as a medieval *Sunnī* Muslim theologian and reformer, teaches that some narrations prove that the third generation is in fact the third after the Prophet's generation. Therefore, the best generations are four and not three as it is commonly known. Taqī al-Dīn

transmitted as *ḥadīṭ mawqūf* (*ḥadīṭ* untraceable to the Prophet) to the next generations, believing that they are accurate representations of Islam as taught by the Prophet.

Ḥadīṭ forgery or *waḍʿ al-ḥadīṭ*, which can be accidental or deliberate, became a significant issue only during what is known as the Second *Fitna* (civil war) affecting the Islamic community (60–72 AH/680–692 CE).⁷³ It was only at that time that enlisting past authorities became a requirement.⁷⁴ ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak⁷⁵ was asked once about fabricated *ḥadīṭ* and answered, *ya ʿiṣ lahā al-ḡahābiḍah*,⁷⁶ which literally means “great scholars exist for that reason,” by which he implied that he knew about fabricated *ḥadīṭ* and that there would always be competent scholars to examine them. Even if we agree with some Western critics, such as Ignác Goldziher, and some Islamic groups, such as *al-Qurāniyyūn*, that *ḥadīṭ* collections could not be deployed as reliable historical sources for the life of the Prophet, it remains possible that they can document the life and interpretations of *al-Ṣaḥābah* as a ‘primary source’ transmitting *ḥadīṭ* to their *Tābi ʿīn* (Successors), which was then transmitted to *Tābi ʿū al-Tābi ʿīn* (the Successors of the Successors). Moreover, *al-Ṣaḥābah* also managed to leave written documents in which *ḥadīṭ* are written along

Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Maḡmuʿ al-Fatawā*, 37 vols., ed. ʿAbd al-Rahman Qāsim (Madīnah: King Fahd Complex, 1995), 20:295.

⁷³ The word *fitna* (plural *fitan*) is mentioned thirty-four times in the Qurʾān. It means a trial, test, temptation, or in some cases, distraction.

⁷⁴ "Forgery in Ḥadīth," Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition, updated 2018/07/01, accessed March 7, 2020, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/forgery-in-hadith-COM_27169?s.num=9&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=Companions. However, after the first *Fitna* or the first civil war (35–41 AH/ 656–661CE) *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) started to pay a closer attention to the *ʿisnād* according to the Successor Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110 AH/729 CE). al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:15.

⁷⁵ ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak: (118 or 119/736 or 737-181/797) a merchant who combined with his business a love of learning. He travelled widely, studying under many authorities, including ʿAbū Ḥanīfa. Besides his large collection of traditions (20,000 according to Ibn Muʿīn), his interests included legal, religious and literary matters. He said that he heard traditions from around 4,000 scholars and transmitted around 1,000 reports. Muslim has some of his traditions in his *Ṣaḥīḥ. Ibn al-Mubārak*. He studied *fiqh* with Sufyān al-Thawrī and Mālik b. Anas the author of *al-Muwattaʿ*. J. Robson, "ibn al-Mubārak," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (2012/04/24 2012), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-al-mubarak-SIM_3297?lang=en files/614/ibn-al-mubarak-SIM_3297.html.

⁷⁶ al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī Maʿrifat ʿUṣūl ʿIlm al-Riwāyah*, 1:148.

with the Qur'ān. In the next chapter, it will be shown that despite the authenticity of the famous *ḥadīṭ*⁷⁷ in which the Prophet urged his Companions not to write *ḥadīṭ*, other *ḥadīṭ* and reports are showing that *al-Ṣaḥābah* were writing *ḥadīṭ* before the death of the Prophet. In fact, later in his life the Prophet himself asked the Companions to write his *ḥuṭbah* (speech or sermon) after *fath Makkah* (Conquest of Mecca).⁷⁸

With regard to the science of *ḥadīṭ*, establishing that a given *ḥadīṭ* represents the authentic 'aqwāl (words), 'af'āl (deeds), or taqrīr (spoken or unspoken approval) of the Prophet has often proven difficult.⁷⁹ However, in *Sunnī ḥadīṭ* criticism, the discipline of *al-ḡarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* evaluates the righteousness or 'adāla of the transmitters or riḡāl mentioned in the chains of narrators of *ḥadīṭ*.⁸⁰ Therefore, if scholars applied this discipline to a given *ḥadīṭ* by certifying that 'isnāduhu ṣaḥīḥ, this meant that what is authenticated is the credibility of the 'isnād (chain of narrators) linking back to the Prophet through one or more of his *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions).⁸¹ *Ḥadīṭ* with sound chains of narrators or 'asānīd are said to reflect what *al-Ṣaḥābah* understood from the Prophet unless there was *tadlīs*.⁸²

Goldziher argued that the whole *ḥadīṭ* corpus could not be relied upon as historical data because the 'asānīd (singular 'isnād) were often fabricated and the contents or nuṣūṣ (singular

⁷⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2298.

⁷⁸ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 3:2434; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:988.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Brown, "Did the Prophet Say It or Not? The Literal, Historical, and Effective Truth of Ḥadīths in Early Sunnism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 2 (2009): 259, www.jstor.org/stable/40593816.

⁸⁰ *Riḡāl* (singular raḡul) the literal meaning is "men".

⁸¹ G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 73.

⁸² *Tadlīs* literally means "concealment", especially in reference to a fault a merchant does not reveal when selling a good. It is the verbal noun of *dalasa*, which originally denoted the mixing of light and dark colours. In Islamic terminology, *tadlīs* means to conceal the defects in a *ḥadīṭ*, either in the text, in the chain of narrators, or in the source (or the teacher) from which the tradition was learnt.

naṣṣ) included evident anachronisms.⁸³ Juynboll added that “this form of fraud, so widespread during the second [eighth] century and known by the general term *tadlīs*, was hardly ever detected.”⁸⁴ However, a closer study reveals that early Muslim *ḥadīth* critics were aware of this problem; therefore, early *ḥadīth* criticism tested *ḥadīth* transmitters and the majority of *ḥadīth nuṣūṣ*.⁸⁵ Scholars such as al-Buḥārī (d. 256 AH/870 CE) and al-Naysābūrī (d. 261 AH/875 CE) paid close attention to the narrators or *riḡāl al-ḥadīth* along with the *nuṣūṣ* and produced the two most cherished books in *Sunnī* Islam: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.⁸⁶ That is not to overlook the scholars before them who during the Second *Fitna* (60–72 AH/680–692 CE) intensely studied and evaluated the chains of narrators of *ḥadīth*, ranked them, and singled out the names of those who committed *tadlīs* and rated them according to the type of *tadlīs* they committed.⁸⁷

Here, it is important to note that the authentication method of the Muslim scholars who worked on *ḥadīth* (also known as *al-muḥaddithūn*) and the Western academic study of *ḥadīth* are both critical regarding the questions of the authenticity and reliability of historical sources. However, they use different approaches to evaluate the authenticity and reliability of *ḥadīth*.

⁸³ A. Kevin Reinhart, "Juynbolliana, Gradualism, the Big Bang, and Ḥadīth Study in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 3 (2010): 416, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23044959>.

⁸⁴ Juynboll, *Muslim tradition*, 73.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Hadith*, 233.

⁸⁶ Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Buḥārī and Muslim: the Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*, Islam history and civilization, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5.

⁸⁷ Goldziher assumed that “the evaluation of transmitters reached its full height with Ibn Abī Ḥātim.” Eerik Dickinson, *The Development of Early Sunnite Hadith Criticism: The Taqdima of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (240/854-327/938)*, Islamic history and civilization: studies and texts, 0929-2403; v. 38, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 82. ‘Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Idrīs b. al-Mundhir al-Ḥanzalī al-Rāzī (240–327/854–5–938), known as Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, was a transmitter (*rijāl*) critic, traditionist, and exegete who was born in Rayy (north-eastern Iran) to a family originating from the village of Jazz near Iṣfahān. His chief mentors included his father, ‘Abū Ḥātim (195–277/810–1–90), and ‘Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī (200–64/815–6–78), both towering third/ninth-century *ḥadīth* experts. Pavel Pavlovitch, "ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/ibn-abi-hatim-al-razi-COM_30667_files/611/ibn-abi-hatim-al-razi-COM_30667.html.

Western critics may decline to acknowledge a *ḥadīth*, such as the one quoted by al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī (d. 463 AH/1071 CE) anticipating the rise of 'Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150 AH/767 CE) as a trustworthy historical source due to the fact that its content included evident anachronism.⁸⁸ Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī along with many *ḥadīth* critics such as al-'Asqalānī (d. 852 AH/1449 CE) and al-'Albānī (d. 1999) also rejected the *ḥadīth*; however, they dismissed it because it contained, along with the evident anachronism, unreliable narrators in its *'isnād*.⁸⁹ If the *'isnād* was not reliable, *ḥadīth* will not be validated and there will be no need to investigate its *naṣṣ*. Al-Šāfi'ī (204 AH/820 CE) asserts that if a *ḥadīth* has been transmitted consistently by reliable narrators since the time of the Messenger of Allah, then *ḥadīth* is established as authentic and attributed to the Messenger of Allah.⁹⁰ William Muir held that Muslim *ḥadīth* criticism was inadequate because it examined the *'isnād* but not “the statement of witnesses” of the *ḥadīth* themselves.⁹¹ Although its skepticism never matched that of the historical critical method, the Muslim scholars' *or muḥaddithūn*'s method, which is based on criteria that examined both the sources of a *ḥadīth* and its contents, was adequate to sift reliable from unreliable *ḥadīth*.⁹² According to Brown:

The Sunni tradition of hadith criticism was founded on a commitment to sifting reliable from unreliable hadiths based on criteria that examined both the sources of a report and its contents. In the absence of conflicting evidence or some strong objection, however, Muslim hadith

⁸⁸ The Prophet allegedly said: “After my death, a man named al-Nu'mān b. Thābit, who will be called 'Abū Ḥanīfa, will emerge. Allah will use him to restore Allah's religion [Islam] and my *Sunna*.” 'Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ Baġdād*, 16 vols., ed. Baššār Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-'Islāmī, 2002), 3:103. Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that the Prophet had some knowledge about the future revealed to him by Allah. That served as a model for anachronism among early *ḥadīth* forgers.

⁸⁹ al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah*, 13:555.

⁹⁰ Muḥammad ibn 'Idrīs al-Šāfi'ī, *al-'Umm*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1990), 7:201. Al-Šāfi'ī (d. 204 AH – 820 CE) “a foundational figure in the early history of Islamic law, played central roles in the formulation of doctrine, in the development of legal hermeneutics, and, through his influence on students in Egypt and Baghdad, in the formation of one of the four recognized schools of legal thought (*madhāhib*, sg. *madhhab*) of Sunni Islam, which came to be named for him...” Joseph E. Lowry, “al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820),” in *Islamic Legal Thought* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 43.

⁹¹ William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet: From Original Sources*, 3d ed. (London: Smith, Elder, 1894), xliii.

⁹² Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 233.

scholars and jurists treated a report attributed to the Prophet ﷺ *prima facie* as something he really said.⁹³

That being said, it is worth noting that early Muslim *ḥadīth* critics used similar terms to describe their findings on *ḥadīth*. These terms, however, were denoting different meanings in some cases. For example, al-Buḥārī, al-Tirmidī, al-Šāfi‘ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal indicated different meanings when they described the level of a *ḥadīth* as *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* (sound *ḥadīth*) or *ḥadīth ḥasan* (fair *ḥadīth*). *Ḥadīth ḡarīb* for some scholars is usually denoting that this *ḥadīth* is reported by only one narrator. However, for other scholars it may mean that the content of the *ḥadīth* is unique and/or reported by one narrator, the chain of narrators is unique, a part of the chain is unique, or the chain and content of the *ḥadīth* are unique. In addition, *ḥadīth ḡarīb* could also indicate that the *ḥadīth* is *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* but not commonly known or mentioned by scholars. Moreover, *ḥadīth ḡarīb* could be a fabricated *ḥadīth* that contains unusual *naṣṣ* or text. *Ḥadīth ‘azīz* (precious) usually refers to a *ḥadīth* that has only two or three chains of narrators, yet *‘azīz* could be used to describe the *ḥadīth*'s high quality and superiority. *Ḥadīth mašhūr* (famous) refers to the kind of *ḥadīth* that have more than three chains of narrators but did not reach the level of *mutawātir* (recurring), a *ḥadīth* transmitted by multiple sources who could not have possibly colluded. Yet, another meaning of the term *ḥadīth mašhūr* could be that it is well known to scholars and laity. Again, this *ḥadīth* could also be either *ṣaḥīḥ* or fabricated. *Ḥadīth tābit* (firm) usually refers to *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥadīth ḥasan*; however, it may describe the existence of it as a *ḥadīth* regardless of its authenticity. A *ḥadīth* could also be labelled as *munkar* (rejected or renounced), *šād* (abnormal or unusual), or *mursal* (contains one or more missing transmitters in its chain). This could make it confusing to a

⁹³ Brown, *Hadith*, 199-200.

certain extent; however, to learn about what *ḥadīth* critics meant by these labels, one should take into account what each of those scholars specified in their introductions to their major works.

Chapter I. Methodological and Terminological Issues

a. The duality of divine revelation

Ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ enjoyed almost the same level of authority as the Qur'ān according to the *Sunnī* tradition; however, some people believe that it should not enjoy that status. For instance, some Islamic *fīraq*, *maqāhib*, and *madāris* (Islamic branches, sects/denominations, and schools) such as *al-Ḥawāriġ* (Kharijites) do not accept the methodology of *ḥadīṭ* criticism, saying that it is an inadequate methodology because the majority, if not all, of *'asānīd* were forged, and thus the methodology cannot be used to verify *ḥadīṭ* authenticity.⁹⁴ Others, as we have seen, say that *ṣarī'ah* (Islamic laws, rules, or commandments) and religious practices should rely only on the Qur'ān, and thus *ḥadīṭ* should not receive any attention.⁹⁵

Opposition to *ḥadīṭ* is not a new matter. It started during the third AH / ninth CE century. Nonetheless, *ḥadīṭ* maintained its high status in *Sunnī* tradition, particularly after Muḥammad al-Šāfi'ī laid the foundation for the notion of the duality of revelation. Al-Šāfi'ī argued that *ḥadīṭ* is separate from the Qur'ān, yet equivalent to it. Al-Šāfi'ī says that the words of *ḥadīṭ* are articulated by the Prophet; however, the broad meaning of it is *wahy* or *'ilhām* (inspired by Allah). The notion of the duality of revelation emphasized the need for *ḥadīṭ* for Muslims to better understand their religion and the teachings of their Prophet.

Wael Hallaq indicates that one of the most important achievements of al-Šāfi'ī was establishing *ḥadīṭ* as an indispensable source of law.⁹⁶ In his books *Ġimā' al-'Ilm* and *al-Risālah*, al-Šāfi'ī himself emphasized that *ḥadīṭ* is the second revelatory source of guidance for

⁹⁴ Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, 98.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, 46-47.

⁹⁶ Wael B. Hallaq, "Was al-Shafi'ī the Master Architect of Islamic Jurisprudence?," in *The Formation of Islamic Law*, ed. Wael B. Hallaq and Lawrence I. Conrad (New York: Routledge, 2016), 262.

Muslims.⁹⁷ His demonstration of the early opposition to the use and authority of *ḥadīth*, and his responses to that opposition, are noteworthy here. For example, in *Ġimā' al-ʿIlm*, al-Šāfi'ī presents a compelling argument on proving the authority of *ḥadīth* and the concept of the duality of revelation. According to al-Šāfi'ī, Muslims should accept the Prophetic *ḥadīth* in matters related to their religious practices and law:

Allah the Most High has made accepting reports from his Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) obligatory for us and for those before and after us. No one disputes the obligation and duty of accepting reports from Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), except a faction whose doctrine I will describe, if Allah Most High wills.⁹⁸

Early Islamic Era Muslims, before al-Šāfi'ī, however, did accept the authority of *ḥadīth*. In fact, according to them the Qur'ān teaches that the Prophet was not speaking on his own; what he says is in fact *wahy* (a revelation coming from Allah).⁹⁹ While some scholars understood that the verses in which the words *yantiqū* (he utters) or *wahy* are mentioned, such as in *sūrat al-Nağm*, are referring only to the Qur'ān, others, such as al-Bağawī, used the literal meaning of the word *yantiqū* to claim that the text refers to anything said by the Prophet related to faith or religious practices.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that, if the Prophet wrongly judged a normal everyday matter, he would be corrected by Allah. On one occasion, the Prophet attended Ibn Salūl's (d. 9 AH/631 CE) *ğanāzah* (funeral) prayer believing that Allah gave him permission to participate in his *ğanāzah* according to *sūrat al-Tawbah* verse 80.¹⁰¹ Knowing him to be one of the *munāfiqūn*¹⁰² (hypocrites or false Muslims), Allah revealed to the

⁹⁷ Muḥammad al-Šāfi'ī, *Ġimā' al-ʿIlm*, ed. Aḥmad Šākir (Cairo: Maktabat ibn Taymiyyah, 1986); Muḥammad al-Šāfi'ī, *al-Risālah* ed. Aḥmad Šākir (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalabī, 1938).

⁹⁸ al-Šāfi'ī, *Ġimā' al-ʿIlm*, 11,12.

⁹⁹ *Sūra* 53, al-Nağm, verse 3,4.

¹⁰⁰ al-Ḥusayn Mas'ud al-Bağawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Bağawī*, 8 vols., ed. Muḥammad al-Nimir, 'Utmān Ḍumayriyyah, and Sulymān al-Ḥirš (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 1997), 7:400.

¹⁰¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 14:407.

¹⁰² *Munāfiqūn* (singular *munāfiq*) are those who belong to a specific group of people who lived in al-Madīna and pretended to accept Islam but worked in various ways to hinder the Prophet's mission. Allah says about them:

Prophet: “O Muhammad, never offer funeral prayer for any of them who have died nor stand at their graves. They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while persisting in their disobedience.”¹⁰³

In support of al-Baġawī’s claim, it was made clear for *al-Ṣaḥābah* that the Prophet was always speaking the truth, particularly when he gave instructions or rulings on matters related to faith, *‘ilm* or religious knowledge, or *‘a ‘māl* or religious practices. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (d. 63 AH/682 CE) narrated that he was writing everything he heard from the Prophet to help him memorize it. However, some people from *Qurayṣ* (an Arabian tribe that included a group of clans that populated the city of Mecca and entrusted with religious services. The Prophet Muḥammad was born into the Hāšim clan of the tribe) advised him to stop writing, saying: “Do you write everything that you hear knowing that the Messenger of Allah is a human who could speak in anger and contentment?” Learning that, he stopped writing immediately. Later, he went to the Prophet and expressed his concerns. The Prophet reassured him by pointing to his mouth and saying: “You may continue to write down what you hear from me, by Him in Whose hand my soul lies, only *ḥaqq* (nothing but the truth) comes out from it.”¹⁰⁴

Accordingly, while they are separate from the Qur’an, *ḥadīth* were given the status of divine revelation. Interestingly, the Companion ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar reported that while the Prophet was encouraging *al-Ṣaḥābah* to transmit his *ḥadīth*,¹⁰⁵ he used the word *‘āyah*, which usually

“When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muhammad], they say, “We testify that you are the Messenger of God.” And God knows that you are His Messenger, and God testifies that the hypocrites are liars. They have taken their oaths as a cover, so they averted [people] from the way of God. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.” *Sūra* 63, al-Munāfiqūn, verse 1.2. *Saheeh International Translation*, 526.

¹⁰³ *Sūra* 9, al-Tawbah, verse 84. *Saheeh International Translation*, 165. “And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad] over any of them who has died - ever - or stand at his grave. Indeed, they disbelieved in God and His Messenger and died while they were defiantly disobedient.”

¹⁰⁴ Sulaymān al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 7 vols., ed. Šu‘ayb al-‘Arna‘ūt and Muḥammad Qara Balālī (Damascus: Dār al-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 2009), 5:489,90.

¹⁰⁵ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 4:170.

means a verse in the Qur'an, to describe verses in his *ḥadīth*.¹⁰⁶ *Al-Ṣaḥābah* understood that there are two types of *wahy* or revelation. The first is the Qur'ān – the precise words that were uttered by Allah and then revealed to His Prophet Muḥammad through the archangel *Ġibrīl* (Gabriel). The second is *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. *Ḥadīth* was also understood to consist of two main types. The first is *ḥadīth qudsī* where the actual text of *ḥadīth* is inspired by Allah (*'ilhām*) and then uttered by the Prophet. In other words, the meaning and words of the *ḥadīth* are directly from Allah. The second is prophetic *ḥadīth*, where the general meaning of the *ḥadīth* is inspired by Allah, but the words were articulated by the Prophet. In this case, the Prophet is conveying the message of Allah in his own words, while still accurately conveying the intended meaning.

For an understanding of the early Muslim attitudes toward revelation and the prophetic-revelatory event, the unity of divine word and prophetic word is ultimately more significant than are the undeniable distinctions between the two. If too mechanical a line is drawn between verbatim Qur'ānic revelation communicated through Muhammad and implicit, non-Qur'ānic revelation and inspiration granted him as a function of his prophethood, the early Community's essentially unitive understanding of God's activity in the sending of His Apostle is distorted. The “pre-theological” Muslim understanding of revelation was focused not solely upon a scriptural revelation, but upon a revelatory event in which a scriptural revelation was the principal, but not the only aspect of God's revelatory activity.¹⁰⁷

While Muslims during the Early Islamic Era apparently viewed the Qur'ān as the actual words of Allah revealed and then delivered to them through his Prophet, the Qur'ān, “being the Word of God, is too sublime to interpret and decipher without the aid of the Prophet.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, earliest Muslims, building upon the Qur'ānic third and fourth verses of *sūrat al-Naḡm*, had the tendency to elevate *ḥadīth* to the point of practically considering it parallel to the

¹⁰⁶ ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 6:498.

¹⁰⁷ William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadith Qudsi* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1977), 19.

¹⁰⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago, IL: ABC International Group, 2000), 73.

Qur'ān in terms of its authority. Goldziher “also recognized that in the very beginning the words of the Prophet had probably been treated almost as revelation in themselves.”¹⁰⁹

Here, it is important to note that throughout the Early Islamic Era, Muslims emphasized, encouraged, and favoured oral transmission for both the Qur'ān and *ḥadīṭ*. That was possibly because Arabic was written without vowels¹¹⁰ and reading a text without vowels could lead to errors. John Burton has recognized the same problem, arguing that debates over whether the noun “feet” in the sixth verse of *sūrat al-Ma'idah* should be read as *'arḡulakum* or *'arḡulikum* resulted from earliest Muslims relying on Qur'ānic texts without vowels.¹¹¹ In addition, before the invention of paper, it was hard and expensive to obtain writing tools and mediums. Also, there was a fear that they may confuse *ḥadīṭ* with the text of the Qur'ān. However, in their efforts to carefully protect *ḥadīṭ*, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era managed to record some of it in writing along with the Qur'ān, considering them both as *wahy* worthy of protection by memorization and writing. In her book, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, Nabia Abbott discussed the question of *ḥadīṭ* writing among the early generations of Muslims.

The familiar argument that the paucity of literate Arabs and the peculiarities of the Arabic script deterred the rapid development of written Tradition is no more applicable to Tradition than it is to the Qur'ān, which was standardized in less than a quarter of a century after Muḥammad's death. In fact, the reasons for the comparative delay in the development of a body of more or less standardized traditions were, in part at least, quite the opposite. Traditions were already being written down by quite a few, even in Muḥammad's day. It was the rapid growth of both oral and written *ḥadīṭh* following Muḥammad's death and not any lack of literate Arabs equal to the task of recording *ḥadīṭh* that alarmed 'Umar I ['Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23 AH/644 CE)] and a few other companions.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadith Qudsi*, 33.

¹¹⁰ 'Abd 'Allah al-Siḡistānī, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abdoh (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīṭah, 2002), 327.

¹¹¹ John Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīṭh*, Islamic Surveys, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 27.

¹¹² Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 6,7.

In addition to Nabia Abbott, Fuat Sezgin and Mustafa Azami also concluded that *ḥadīṭ* were written during the lifetime of the Prophet and his *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions).¹¹³ Although there are some contradicting reports regarding the issue of whether *ḥadīṭ* was written during the time of the Prophet or not, the existence of such reports indicates that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era were paying close attention to the issue of writing *ḥadīṭ* and that written *ḥadīṭ* could be dated back to the year 622 CE, the year the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina. Using the aforementioned *ḥadīṭ*¹¹⁴ of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ leads us to believe that it is possible to combine the contradicting reports and conclude that while some of *al-Ṣaḥābah* followed the instructions of the Prophet and renounced writing *ḥadīṭ*,¹¹⁵ others resumed or continued writing it along with the Qur’ān after being granted permission from the Prophet. To further support this claim, other *ḥadīṭ* show that some *Ṣaḥābah* were granted permission to keep writing *ḥadīṭ* such as ‘Alī b. ‘Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH/661 CE),¹¹⁶ while others, such as ‘Abū Sa‘īd al-Ḥudrī (d. 74 AH/693 CE), were at least banned at some point from writing it.¹¹⁷ Another possibility is that the ban occurred during the early period of Islam where the Prophet might have banned some among *al-Ṣaḥābah* from writing *ḥadīṭ* in order not to confuse it with the Qur’ān; however, he later allowed writing *ḥadīṭ* along with the Qur’ān as the Companions became more familiar with *ḥadīṭ* and able to distinguish it as a different narrative genre than the Qur’ān.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Aisha Y. Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture: A Discussion on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8.

¹¹⁴ al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 5:489,90.

¹¹⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:3004.

¹¹⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:111; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:1355.

¹¹⁷ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi‘ al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:335.

¹¹⁸ Aḥmad Šākir, *al-Bā‘iṭ al-Ḥaṭīṭ* (Cairo: Dār al-Turāṭ, 1951), 12.

b. The issue of the authenticity and authority of *ḥadīth*

The terms authenticity and authority are both important to those interested in *‘ilm al- ḥadīth* (the science of *ḥadīth*). Authenticity refers to the degree to which a particular *ḥadīth* or a report can be traced back to the Prophet or one or more of his *Ṣaḥābah* with a high level of certainty. Authority refers to the position granted to *ḥadīth* as a source of religious law and guidance. However, if a *ḥadīth* was not proven to be authentic, then it has no authority. Concerning the issue of authority, *al-Ṣaḥābah* highly valued *ḥadīth* and considered it to be a form of *waḥy* or divine revelation, making it an important source of *‘ilm* (religious knowledge), *‘a‘māl* (practices), law, and guidance after the Qur’ān, as noted earlier. In addition, they believed that because of its authority the Prophetic tradition is also protected by Allah along with the Qur’ān. In fact, some *‘ulamā’* (scholars), such as Sufyān al-Ṭawrī (d. 161 AH/778 CE), went on to say in their commentary on verse 19 of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*¹¹⁹ that along with His promise to protect the collection and recitation of the Qur’ān, Allah promised to preserve the Prophetic tradition or *ḥadīth* by employing *al-Ṣaḥābah*. Thus, *al-Ṣaḥābah* lived and memorized the Prophetic tradition and then transmitted it to their successors.¹²⁰ Earliest Muslims paid close attention to *ḥadīth* not only because they considered it *waḥy* but also because it unfolds the truth revealed in the Qur’ān; for them, it was the *bayān* of the Qur’ān. In other words, they felt the need for *ḥadīth* because it explained what is ambiguous, undetailed, or nonspecific in the Qur’ān. In addition, *ḥadīth*, as an authoritative source for *al-Ṣaḥābah*, also introduced them to some laws and *‘ilm* that are not mentioned in the Qur’ān. An example could be seen in the aforementioned *ḥadīth* where ‘Abū Hūrayrah explained that Muslims are allowed to consume the catch of the sea even if it was

¹¹⁹ *Sūra* 75, *al-Qiyāmah*, verse 19. *Saheeh International Translation*, 571.

¹²⁰ Sufyān al-Ṭawrī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭawrī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1983), 4.

caught dead or not slaughtered.¹²¹ Another example of this could be seen where al-'Albānī in his *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīṭ al-Saḥīḥah* says that al-'Irbād b. Sāriyah (d. 75 AH/694-695 CE)¹²² reported that the Prophet gathered his *Ṣaḥābah* after a Jewish man complained to him about the behavior of some of the *Ṣaḥābah*. The Prophet then told them: “Do not think that forbidden matters are only to be found in the Qur’ān. By Allah, I counselled, instructed, and restrained matters like those in the Qur’ān and more. As long as *’ahl al-kitāb* (people of holy books such as Jews and Christians) are paying their obligations, Allah made it *ḥarām* (forbidden) to enter their homes without their permission, to beat their women, or to eat their fruit without their permission.”¹²³ Another example is in *sūrat al-Baqarah* where Allah urged the believers to establish prayer and give *zakāh*.¹²⁴ However, nowhere in the Qur’ān is there a full description of how to pray or the amount of *zakāh* required to be paid. Only in *ḥadīṭ* can one find details about those *’a’ māl*. In addition, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that the authority of *ḥadīṭ* comes from the Qur’ān itself. The Qur’ān states that Allah will grant his blessings and mercy to those who obey Him and obey the Prophet,¹²⁵ that the Prophet is the judge in all disputes among themselves,¹²⁶ that ignoring the directions of Allah and the guidelines of the Prophet leads to losing courage and strength,¹²⁷ and that the sign of their true love for Allah is following the sayings and the *’a’ māl* of the Prophet.¹²⁸ Therefore, in addition to *ḥadīṭ*, which shows the

¹²¹ al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 1:21.

¹²² One of *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) who lived in Homs (a city in Syria) and narrated *ḥadīṭ*. Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī, *Siyar ’A’lam al-Nubalā’*, 4:430.

¹²³ Muḥammad Našir al-Dīn al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīṭ al-Saḥīḥah*, 7 vols. (Riyād: Maktabat al Ma’ārif, 1995-2002), 2:541. al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 3:170.

¹²⁴ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 43. *Saheeh International Translation*, 35. An annual religious duty of giving alms for the benefit of the poor and the rest of the Islamic community. It is required of those who have excess wealth.

¹²⁵ *Sūra* 3, ’āl-’Imrān, verse 132. *Saheeh International Translation*, 70.

¹²⁶ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā’, verse 65. *Saheeh International Translation*, 85.

¹²⁷ *Sūra* 8, al-’Anfāl, verse 46. *Saheeh International Translation*, 151.

¹²⁸ *Sūra* 3, ’āl-’Imrān, verses 31-32. *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā’, verses 59, 65, 80. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi’ al-Bayān ’an Ta’wīl ’Āy al-Qur’ān*, 6:322.

authority of the Prophet's *sunnah*, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that the Qur'ān confirms this authority more than once. Thus, they felt that their obligation is to observe the Prophetic tradition to fulfill one important message of the Qur'ān.

The *Sunnī ḥadīth* canon consists of six collections: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Ibn Māğah*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*. However, not all *ḥadīth* found in the *Sunnī ḥadīth* canon are *ṣaḥīḥ* or authentic. Concerning the issue of authenticity, *ḥadīth* collections are commonly classified into four groups according to the level of their authenticity: the most authentic collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*;¹²⁹ collections with a few debatable *ḥadīth* such as *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*; collections with many debatable and problematic *ḥadīth* such as *Sunan Ibn Māğah* and *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*;¹³⁰ and collections with many weak or/and fabricated *ḥadīth* such as *al-Mawḍū'āt*¹³¹ and *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah*.¹³² Each *ḥadīth* is composed of a chain of narrators (*'isnād*) and content/text (*matn/naṣṣ*). The authentication of *ḥadīth* mainly depends on the authenticity of the chain of narrators or the *'isnād* of *ḥadīth*. Therefore, if scholars ruled a given *ḥadīth* as *ṣaḥīḥ*, this meant that what was mainly authenticated is the credibility of the *'isnād* (chain of narrators) linking back to the Prophet through one or more of his *Ṣaḥābah*. If the *'isnād* proved to be authentic and there were no reasons for doubt such as its *matn* contradicting a verse or verses in the Qur'ān, established accepted doctrines, or another sounder *ḥadīth* such as *ḥadīth mutawātir*, then *ḥadīth* is considered authentic and authoritative.¹³³

¹²⁹ Brown, *The canonization of al-Buḥārī and Muslim*, 5.

¹³⁰ Aḥmad Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, 50 vols., ed. Šu'ayb al-'Arna'ūt and 'Ādil Muṣṣid (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001).

¹³¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ġawzī, *al-Mawḍū'āt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Uṭmān (Muḥammad 'Abd al-Muḥsin, 1966).

¹³² al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah*.

¹³³ *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2004), xxxiii.

While the Prophet was among his followers, there was no need for the chain of narrators, as *al-Ṣaḥābah* were the first narrators after the Prophet; in addition, they were able to directly contact the Prophet for any clarification. ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23 AH/644 CE), for instance, heard Hiṣām b. Ḥizām (d. 54 AH/674 CE) reciting *sūrat al-Furqān* in a slightly different way than the way ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb learned from the Prophet. ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb brought him to the Prophet to verify his recitation, and the Prophet confirmed both recitations.¹³⁴ ‘Ā’iṣa bt. ‘Abī Bakr (d. 58 AH/678 CE), one of the Prophet’s spouses, also reported that she was always verifying all *ḥadīth* she heard with the Prophet.¹³⁵ Even during the early period after the death of the Prophet, there was no urgent need to compile, write, and classify all *ḥadīth* because *al-Ṣaḥābah* were considered *‘udūl* (upright, honourable, and honest), they were living the *sunnah*, and corrected each other. In addition, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that transmitting *ḥadīth* as they witnessed could grant them Paradise and reporting a lie about the Prophet would lead them to a seat in *Ġahannam*. Zayd b. Ṭābit (d. 45 AH/665 CE)¹³⁶ reported that the Prophet asked Allah to grant Paradise to those who transmit his *ḥadīth*,¹³⁷ and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr (d. 73 AH/692 CE) reported that the Prophet warned that whoever intentionally told a lie about him would surely get a seat in Hellfire.¹³⁸ ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar also said that the Prophet urged *al-Ṣaḥābah*

¹³⁴ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 3:122.

¹³⁵ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:32.

¹³⁶ One of the early *Ṣaḥābah* and one of the personal scribes of the Prophet. He transmitted Prophetic *ḥadīth* along with Companions’ *ḥadīth*. Šams al-Dīn al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar ‘A‘lam al-Nubalā’*, 4:67. ‘Alī al-Šaybānī, *‘Uṣd al-Ġābah fī Ma‘rifat al-Ṣaḥābah*, 8 vols., ed. ‘Alī Mu‘awwaḍ and ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawġūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994), 2:346.

¹³⁷ The editor indicates that the *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to al-‘Albānī. ibn Māġah, *Sunan ibn Māġah*, 1:84. Šu‘ayb al-‘Arna‘ūt indicates that the *matn* of the *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*. Muḥammad ibn Māġah, *Sunan ibn Māġah*, 5 vols., ed. Šu‘ayb al-‘Arna‘ūt et al. (Damascus Dār al-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 2009), 1:156.

¹³⁸ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:33.

to transmit his teachings, even if he was only transmitting an *'āyah* (a verse he included in his speech)¹³⁹ and warned them not to deliberately transmit false reports.¹⁴⁰

However, during the time of the first Caliph 'Abū Bakr (d. 13 AH/634 CE), the first generation started to take precautions to guard *ḥadīth*, particularly *ḥadīth* that were not famous among them. 'Abū Bakr himself asked for two of *al-Ṣaḥābah* to testify, verify, and confirm the inheritance a grandmother could get according to the Prophet's instructions.¹⁴¹ The second Caliph, 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb also asked for a witness to verify one *ḥadīth* he was unfamiliar with.¹⁴² In addition, the Companions' practice of examining *ḥadīth* was also paying attention to their content, in particular with reference to the Qur'ān. That can be evidently seen in 'Ā'isha's *ḥadīth*.¹⁴³ 'Ā'isha bt. 'Abī Bakr rejected the statement made by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar that the Prophet had said a deceased person can be punished because of their family's mourning over them.¹⁴⁴ 'Ā'isha said that this statement contradicts the Qur'ān where it clearly states: "That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another."¹⁴⁵ Another example of her *matn* criticism, 'Ā'isha applied her own life experience in correcting a Companion who claimed that the Prophet said that prayer becomes invalid if a woman, a black dog, or a donkey passes in front of the one who prays. To that, 'Ā'isha said: "You have compared us to donkeys and dogs! By Allah, the Prophet used to pray with me lying on the bed in front of him (between him and the direction of *qiblah*; direction of prayer towards Mecca), and he would still continue his prayer."¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ ibn Ḥaḡar al-Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 6:498.

¹⁴⁰ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 4:170.

¹⁴¹ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 3:491.

¹⁴² al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 8:54; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1694.

¹⁴³ al-Zarkaṣī included some of 'Ā'isha's *ḥadīth* that are related to *matn* criticism in his book under the title *al-'Īgābah limā Istadrakat 'Ā'isha 'alā al-Ṣaḥābah*. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zarkaṣī, *al-'Īgābah limā Istadrakat 'Ā'isha 'alā al-Ṣaḥābah*, ed. Rif'at 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥanḡī, 2001).

¹⁴⁴ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 2:79.

¹⁴⁵ *Sūra* 53, al-Naḡm, verse 38. *Saheeh International Translation*, 479.

¹⁴⁶ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 1:109; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:366. J. Brown indicates that "we have no surviving documentary evidence of how the Companions approached *ḥadīth* criticism." Then, he says that "almost

During the Companions' period, *ḥadīth* authentication remained mainly in verbal form. However, after the first *Fitna* or the civil war (35–41 AH/656–661 CE), Muslims started to pay closer attention to the *'isnād* according to the Successor Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110 AH/729 CE).¹⁴⁷ Further, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak considered *'isnād* to be part of the religion, saying that without *'isnād* anyone could say whatever he wants to say.¹⁴⁸ Zayn al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan (d. 795AH/1392 CE) says that what was written during the time of *al-Ṣaḥābah* and *al-Tābi 'īn* was only for preservation and reviewing. However, during the time of the *Tābi 'ū al-Tābi 'īn*, the classification process became more serious where a group of *'ulamā'* devoted themselves to gathering Prophetic *ḥadīth* and others to gathering Companions' *ḥadīth*.¹⁴⁹ Muḥammad Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī (d. 748 AH/1348 CE) says that the Successor of the Successors 'Abd al-Malik b. Ğurayġ (d. 150 AH/768 CE) was the first to compile and classify *ḥadīth* in Mecca¹⁵⁰ and Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 150 AH/767 CE) was the first to compile and classify *ḥadīth* in al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah (Medina).¹⁵¹ Those *ḥadīth* collections contained some unauthenticated *ḥadīth*. However, their authors made sure to mention *ḥadīth*'s chain of narrators to protect themselves from being accused of forgery in case *ḥadīth* they included in their works was fake. In addition, they included the *'isnād* for later verification.¹⁵² Later, they established a *ḥadīth* as

all stories about content criticism in the first two generations of the Muslim community come from the Sunni ḥadīth collections compiled in the mid 3rd/9th century." Jonathan Brown, "How We Know Early Hadīth Critics Did Matn Criticism and Why It's so Hard to Find," *Islamic Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2008): 149. However, I'm not sure how mid-3rd/9th-century *ḥadīth* with sound *'isnād* showing how *al-Ṣaḥābah* were examining the *matn* of a *ḥadīth* during the first and second century of Islam are not valid evidence for content criticism in the first two generations of the Muslim community.

¹⁴⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:15. It was only during the Second *Fitna* (60–72 AH/680–692 CE) that enlisting past authorities became a requirement. Pavlovitch, "Forgery in Ḥadīth."

¹⁴⁸ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:15.

¹⁴⁹ Zayn al-Dīn al-Ḥasan, *Šarḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidī*, 2 vols., ed. Hammām Sa'īd (Jordan, al-Zarqa: Maktabat al-Manār, 1987), 1:341.

¹⁵⁰ Muḥammad Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī, *Siyar 'A'lam al-Nubalā'*, 25 vols., ed. Šu'ayb al-'Arna'ūt (Beirut: Mu'assat al-Risālah, 1985), 6:326.

¹⁵¹ Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī, *Siyar 'A'lam al-Nubalā'*, 7:35.

¹⁵² 'Umar al-'Andalusī, *'Adā' ma Waġaba min Bayān Waq' al-Waqqā'īn fī Raġb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Šawīš and Muḥammad Našir al-Dīn al-'Albānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1998), 129.

authentic only after verifying all narrators in its chain of narrators. Šu‘bah b. al-Ḥaḡāḡ (d. 160 AH/776 CE) says that a *ḥadīth* could be authentic only if its *’isnād* is authentic.¹⁵³ That was because of the problem of *tadlīs* (assigning notable but faked *’isnāds* to false *ḥadīth*), which became more serious because of political and theological reasons. The chain of narrators and narrators’ biographies were extremely important for *muḥaddithūn* where they used that knowledge for *ḥadīth* authentication. If a chain was found to be reliable, then the text reported through that chain was identified as authentic as long as its content was sound. By the time of al-Buḡārī and Muslim al-Naysābūrī, many *ḥadīth* compilations had been written; however, they included some problems related to their authenticity. Therefore, they both aimed independently to produce their own works containing only the most authentic *ḥadīth* available. In their examination of *ḥadīth*, they rigorously examined every *ḥadīth* chain of narrators before including it in their works. Al-Buḡārī and al-Naysābūrī’s methods for the classification and examination of *ḥadīth* laid the foundation for the methodology of *ḥadīth* authentication for years to come. In fact, their methodology is still respected and used by some of the modern *muḥaddithūn* today.

One of the earliest and most important books concerning the topic of *’uṣūl al-ḥadīth* (*ḥadīth* fundamentals which include description and qualification of *ḥadīth*’s student, narrator’s biography, *ḥadīth* science, acceptable narrators, acceptable narrations, and *ḥadīth* criticism) is *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil Bayna al-Rāwī wa al-Wā’i* by al-Ḥasan al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360 AH/970 CE).¹⁵⁴ Another important book on the same subject is *Ma’rifat ’Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Kammiyyat ’Aḡnāsihi* by Muḥammad al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405 AH/1014 CE).¹⁵⁵ Later, Taqī al-Dīn

¹⁵³ al-Ḥasan, *Šarḥ ’Ilal al-Tirmidī*, 360.

¹⁵⁴ al-Ḥasan al-Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil Bayna al-Rāwī wa al-Wā’i*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭīb (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984).

¹⁵⁵ Muḥammad al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Ma’rifat ’Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Kammiyyat ’Aḡnāsihi*, ed. Aḡmad al-Salūm (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003).

‘Uṭmān b. al-Ṣalāḥ al-Šahrazūrī (d. 643 AH/1245 CE) produced his prominent work *Muqaddimat ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* where he was reluctant to declare that the individual judgment of *muḥaddiṭūn* should not continue on matters related to *ḥadīṭ* authentication. He reasoned that early *muḥaddiṭūn* did all that is possible to examine *ḥadīṭ*, and there is nothing more that current or future *muḥaddiṭūn* can do.¹⁵⁶ However, prominent scholars and *muḥaddiṭūn*, such as Muḥammad Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī and Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalānī, emerged and refused Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s reasoning and produced valuable works concerning *‘uṣūl al-ḥadīṭ* and *ḥadīṭ* criticism.

Overall, the issue of the authenticity and authority of *ḥadīṭ* is crucial to Islamic scholarship and practice. In addition, it is essential for Muslims because *ḥadīṭ* plays a central role in Islamic law, practice, and beliefs. Muslims look to the Qur’ān as the primary source of guidance, but they also turn to *ḥadīṭ* as an important and a complementary source for more detailed information on how to practice Islam. Authenticity ensures that the reports are genuine, and authority confirms the position of *ḥadīṭ* as a valid source of Islamic law and guidance. If the authenticity of *ḥadīṭ* is in doubt, then its authority and validity as a source of Islamic law and guidance are also called into question.

The earliest Muslims paid special attention to the preservation and authentication of the Prophet’s *ḥadīṭ* and the Companions’ *ḥadīṭ*. During the Companions’ time, *ḥadīṭ* were first examined from the perspective of their *matn* only because there was no need to examine the narrators, as they themselves were the first narrators after the Prophet. Later, reports were scrutinised by examining the chain of the narrators, and by examining their *matn* or *naṣṣ*, in relation to the Qur’ān and other more authentic and well-established *nuṣūṣ*. *Muḥaddiṭūn* then

¹⁵⁶ ‘Uṭmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Šahrazūrī, *Muqaddimat ibn al-Ṣalāḥ - Ma‘rifat ‘Anwā‘ ‘Ulūm al-ḥadīṭ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Antar (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1986), 17.

developed criteria wherein the narrator's examination was the central point of interest, which then produced what came to be known as *'ilm al-riḡāl* and *al-ḡarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*. They examined the *'adālah* (uprightness and honesty) and *ḍabt* (reliability, precision, and accuracy) of each narrator and produced enormous works showing the status of each narrator, where they generally referred to *kutub al-riḡāl* (men) and *kutub al-tarāḡim* (biography). The reason behind all this attention to the *'isnād* and making it the first step in the process of authenticating a *ḥadīth* is because if the *'isnād* was forged, then there would be no need to examine the *naṣṣ*. After establishing the authenticity of the *'isnād*, *muḥaddithūn* moved to apply *al-muqāranah* (comparison) in which they identified the different *'isnād* of a *ḥadīth* and then compared them along with their *nuṣūṣ*.¹⁵⁷ Another aspect of *al-muqāranah* was to examine the *naṣṣ* against well-established historical events. If a *ḥadīth* contradicted a well-established historical fact, then it was ruled inauthentic. Sufyān al-Ṭawrī indicated that when narrators started to use lies, we began to use history against them.¹⁵⁸ One of the prominent scholars in the *al-muqāranah* field was 'Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, who authored *al-Faṣl li al-Wuṣūl al-Mudraḡ fī al-Naql*.¹⁵⁹ On the science of *ḥadīth*, al-Baḡdādī produced his book *al-Kifāyah fī Ma'rifat 'Uṣūl 'Ilm al-Riwāyah*,¹⁶⁰ where he discussed the criteria of forged *ḥadīth*. Al-Baḡdādī, with regard to *matn* criticism, says that *ḥadīth* that are evidently false can be identified by one or more of the following criteria:

First, they contradict reason (*al-'uqūl*), for example, the statement that no Creator exists. Second, the *ḥadīth* contradicts the Qur'ān, a widely established precedent of the Prophet (*al-sunna al-mutawātira*) or a report that the Muslim community has agreed upon (*'ijmā'*) as being authentic. Third, the report conveys information that is so essential for Muslims that God would not allow it to be reported by a means other than one that assured its certainty.

¹⁵⁷ Muslim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Tamyīz* (al-Murabba', K.S.A: Maktabat al-Kawṭar, 1410AH), 209.

¹⁵⁸ al-Šahrazūrī, *Ma'rifat 'Anwā' 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth - Muqaddimat ibn al-Šalāh*, 484.

¹⁵⁹ 'Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, *al-Faṣl li al-Wuṣūl al-Mudraḡ fī al-Naql*, ed. Muḥammad al-Zahrānī (K.S.A: Dār al-Hiḡrah, 1997).

¹⁶⁰ al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī Ma'rifat 'Uṣūl 'Ilm al-Riwāyah*.

Finally, a report about some evident, unmistakable event that, if it had occurred, would have necessarily been described via widely transmitted reports.¹⁶¹

Along with *al-muqāranah*, some *muḥaddithūn* developed a sense by which they were able to recognize the language characteristics of a narrator along with the period in which a *ḥadīth* was composed. With regard to the *naṣṣ* of a *ḥadīth*, they paid close attention to the language characteristics of the Prophet and *al-Ṣaḥābah*. This included the words and grammatical choices, the general sentence and paragraph structure, and the author's voice.¹⁶²

c. Western scholarship and the problem of *ḥadīth* authenticity

Ḥadīth criticism in Western scholarship mainly deals with the issue of the origins and authenticity of *ḥadīth* with almost no attention being given to the issue of authority.¹⁶³ Exceptions to this are Daniel Brown's *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*,¹⁶⁴ Joseph Schacht's *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*,¹⁶⁵ and John Burton's *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation*.¹⁶⁶ In these works, the authors touch on the question of the authority of *ḥadīth*. With *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*,¹⁶⁷ Harald Motzki produced a reference book in which he included articles by sixteen well-known scholars: J. Fueck, Joseph Schacht, John Burton, Ignaz Goldziher, Gregor Schoeler, Etan Kohlberg, Joseph Horowitz, James

¹⁶¹ Brown, "How We Know Early Hadīth Critics Did Matn Criticism and Why It's so Hard to Find," 151.

¹⁶² 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Ṣarḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, 2 vols., ed. 'Abū Qutaybah al-Fāryābī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 2006), 1:296.

¹⁶³ Authenticity pertains to the extent to which a specific *ḥadīth* or report can be reliably traced back to the Prophet or one or more of his *Ṣaḥābah* with a high level of certainty. Authority, on the other hand, relates to the recognition and acceptance of *ḥadīth* as a significant source of religious law and guidance.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁶⁵ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

¹⁶⁶ John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁷ *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*.

Robson, G. H. A. Juynboll, Michael Cook, J. H. Kramers, R. Marston Speight, M. J. Kister, Albrecht Noth, Maher Jarrar, and himself. This admirable work reflects the Western scholars' main views on *ḥadīṭ* and presents the evolution of the views of Western scholars on the origins of *ḥadīṭ*. However, the articles show that it is difficult to find two scholars that agree on one consistent view on the origins of *ḥadīṭ*. Motzki, however, indicates in his introduction that Western scholars currently tended to believe that the origins of *ḥadīṭ* are much earlier than previous Western scholars believed.

Regarding *ḥadīṭ* authenticity, most Western scholarship is influenced by the views of Goldziher and Schacht. Their observations became the most important basis for the study of *ḥadīṭ* in the West.¹⁶⁸ Since Goldziher's contributions, Western scholarship has generally accepted his conclusion that *muḥaddithūn* during the early centuries of Islam paid attention only to the *'isnād* and not to the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ* in their efforts to examine *ḥadīṭ* authenticity. This argument casts doubt on using *ḥadīṭ* as a reliable historical source. However, some Western scholars agree on the importance and value of examining the *'isnād* of *ḥadīṭ* for *ḥadīṭ* authentication. Alfred Guillaume says that "the importance and value of the examination of the *'isnād* is obvious."¹⁶⁹ In addition, with the existing practice of rejecting *ḥadīṭ* that contain anachronisms, some modern Western scholars agree that to a certain degree early *ḥadīṭ* critics did apply *matn* criticism, but not as modern historians would do. John Burton states that "criticism of the *matn* was not so rare as is sometimes claimed."¹⁷⁰ In general, Western scholars and Muslim *muḥaddithūn* agree that *ḥadīṭ* were first transmitted orally and eventually through a

¹⁶⁸ Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), 12.

¹⁶⁹ Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam; An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 89.

¹⁷⁰ Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth*, 169.

mixture of written and oral methods. However, Muslim *ḥadīth* study and the Western academic study of *ḥadīth* took two different approaches to evaluate the authenticity of *ḥadīth*. Both are critical in that they are both concerned with the question of the reliability of historical sources. However, it is safe to say that the problem of authenticating *ḥadīth* originates mainly from the understanding that Muslim scholars did not pay attention to the *matn* of *ḥadīth* in their attempts to authenticate *ḥadīth*. That led to the rejection of *ḥadīth*, as they were considered fabricated. Goldziher believed that “Muslim critics have no feeling for even the crudest anachronisms provided that the *’isnād* is correct. Muḥammad’s prophetic gift is used as a factor to smooth over such difficulties.”¹⁷¹ Alfred Guillaume also found that:

Hadith was not criticized from the point of view of what was inherently reasonable and to be regarded as worthy of credence, but from a consideration of the reputation which the guarantors of the tradition bore. However, the doctrine of *’Ijmā’* may have had a restraining influence on purely subjective criticism, for quite early it had been extended to cover the sphere of hadith, and what the community agreed upon was above serious questioning.¹⁷²

He also indicated that “if the subject-matter (*matn*) contained an obvious absurdity or an anachronism there was no ground for rejecting the hadith if the *’isnād* was sound.”¹⁷³ However, *muḥaddithūn* such as ‘Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī, and Muḥammad Naṣīr al-Dīn al-‘Albānī rejected the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet allegedly said: “After my death, a man named al-Nu‘mān b. Thābit, who will be called ‘Abū Ḥanīfa, will emerge. Allah will use him to restore Allah’s religion [Islam] and my *Sunna*,”¹⁷⁴ because it contains anachronism and because of its *’isnād*.¹⁷⁵ Using this example and the previously mentioned ‘Ā’iṣa’s *ḥadīth*, it is

¹⁷¹ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, 2 vols., ed. S. M. Stern (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1973), 2:141.

¹⁷² Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam; An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature*, 80.

¹⁷³ Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam; An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature*, 89.

¹⁷⁴ al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ Baġdād*, 3:103.

¹⁷⁵ al-‘Albānī, *Silsilat al-‘Aḥādīth al-Ḍa‘īfah wa al-Mawḍū‘ah*, 13:555.

important to note that contrary to Goldziher's and Guillaume's statements, *al-Ṣaḥābah*, along with later *muḥaddithūn*, did reject some *ḥadīth* because of their *matn*, even if their *'isnād* was sound. However, *muḥaddithūn* tended to not always examine the *naṣṣ* or *matn* once the *'isnād* was established as inauthentic.¹⁷⁶

For Western scholarship, the primary focus on *ḥadīth* authenticity was obtained through a historical and textual (*matn/naṣṣ*) perspective. While some scholars such as Goldziher, Schacht, and Juynboll, who studied *ḥadīth* and concluded that during the second and third centuries of Islam, *ḥadīth* were fabricated and then attributed to the Prophet and his *Ṣaḥābah*,¹⁷⁷ other scholars did not completely agree with them. Harald Motzki noticed that regarding the question of the historical value of *ḥadīth*, late nineteenth century Western scholarship did not provide a definite answer. Some scholars accepted *ḥadīth* as a historical source; however, others rejected that idea because they believed that *ḥadīth* have been influenced by political, religious, and legal developments.¹⁷⁸ To solve the issue of authenticity, Motzki proposed the following:

There are ways to escape this sterile situation. On the one hand, we can critically examine the previous attempts to assess the historical value of the Muslim traditions and seek to establish whether their premises, methods and conclusions are really satisfactory. On the other, we can examine anew the sources themselves, with the aim of finding criteria which will allow safe judgements on their historical value.¹⁷⁹

Motzki's unique approach in which he calls for a focus on individual *ḥadīth* rather than relying on generalizations can be seen as one of the most important approaches to the study of *ḥadīth* in Western scholarship today. Another admirable approach to the study of *ḥadīth* was Herbert Berg's

¹⁷⁶ Aḥmad Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunnah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Qaḥṭānī (Dammam, K.S.A.: Dār ibn al-Qayyim, 1986), 76.

¹⁷⁷ Musa, *Hadīth as Scripture: A Discussion on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam*, 8.

¹⁷⁸ Harald Motzki, Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, and Sean W. Anthony, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 47.

¹⁷⁹ Motzki, Boekhoff-van der Voort, and Anthony, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth*, 48.

approach. In his book *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period*, Berg's main focus was on the issue of authenticity, using his method of constructing stylistic profiles to analyze *ḥadīth* and determine their authenticity.¹⁸⁰ With regard to Western scholarship's different approach to investigate the past, one can note that to examine the reliability of a report, Western scholars mainly employed the historical critical method, or it may be more accurate to say historical critical methods. These encompass historical criticism, where *ḥadīth*, as a historical source, are examined to investigate what actually happened in the events *ḥadīth* described; source criticism, where the origins of *ḥadīth* are investigated; tradition criticism, which is used to examine how the tradition was developed through history; form criticism, which is used to examine the characteristics of the different forms of *ḥadīth* and how they represent a certain period; and redaction criticism, which uses the results of the other methods to examine the theological, political, or social purposes of *ḥadīth* and why they were produced or modified. The historical critical method has dominated much of *ḥadīth* research undertaken by Western scholarship, as scholars mainly believe that to analyze historical sources and to identify which parts of a text served which historical agenda, doubts should be cast on any historical text or historical report regarding their authenticity and reliability. Doubts should also be cast on any orthodox narratives presented in those texts or reports. When dealing with *ḥadīth* as a historical source, the purpose was to investigate what actually happened or was said in the events mentioned in *ḥadīth* and what and how important were their motives, in order to create a comprehensive understanding of the historical record. Scholars adopting these methods came to surprising and sometimes shocking conclusions about the origins of *ḥadīth*, the narrators, and why they reported those *ḥadīth*. Many of these conclusions pose a problem to modern *muḥaddithūn* who

¹⁸⁰ Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, 227.

hold that *ḥadīth* is reliable and authoritative. Those problems include discrepancies with other *ḥadīth*, discrepancies with non-*ḥadīth* reports, historical discrepancies, doubts or impossibilities, or insufficient evidence to support the *ḥadīth*. Although using critical methods to determine the accuracy and credibility of *ḥadīth* could be useful to form a historical hypothesis, it is not always possible to arrive at certainty. There may be several possibilities available, each of which is equally probable. Therefore, Western scholarship's method of historical criticism should not overshadow the method of *muḥaddithūn*, as both are critical.

Muḥaddithūn define '*ilm al-ḥadīth* (the science of *ḥadīth*)' as "the knowledge of the bases or the foundations that identify the status of the narrator (*ḥadīth* transmitter) and what was narrated (*ḥadīth* that was transmitted)".¹⁸¹ Muḥammad b. al-'Akfānī (d. 749 AH/1348 CE) said that '*ilm al-ḥadīth* is divided into two types. The first is '*ilm al-ḥadīth al-ḥāṣṣ bi al-riwāyah*, which is concerned about transmitting the sayings and the actions of the Prophet including how they were transmitted, their accuracy, and how accurate the words used to recount the report. The second is '*ilm al-ḥadīth al-ḥāṣṣ bi al-dirāyah*, which is concerned about the narration nature including the narration's kinds, conditions, and rulings. In addition, it includes the status of the narrators, their conditions, the categories of narrations, and any other matter related to the narrations.¹⁸²

According to those definitions, it appears that *muḥaddithūn* were concerned not only about the '*isnād*' but also about the *matn*. For Muslim *muḥaddithūn*, a *ḥadīth* must fulfil five standards to be accepted as *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic or sound). Three of them are related to the '*isnād*', and two of them are related to the *matn*. They state that *ḥadīth* must be reported by known, trustworthy, and righteous narrators. Each of the narrators must have a reliable, precise, and accurate memory or a

¹⁸¹ Ḡalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Ṣarḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, 1:26.

¹⁸² Ḡalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Ṣarḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, 1:25-26.

reliable, precise, and accurate written document that allows him/her to recall what he/she heard. The *'isnād* must be *muttaṣil* (connected) in which each of the narrators in the *'isnād* was able to meet and hear from his/her predecessor. *Ḥadīṭ* must be free of irregularity in its text such as contradicting a verse in the Qur'ān or contradicting another, sounder *ḥadīṭ*. Finally, the text of *ḥadīṭ* must be free from an obvious or a hidden flaw (*'illah*).¹⁸³ With regard to irregularities and flaws, while they are usually applied to the *matn*, they could also be applied to the *'isnād*. An example of a flaw or an irregularity in *'isnād* could be that it was impossible for two of the narrators in the *'isnād* to meet or for one of them to hear from his/her predecessor.

Early *muḥaddithūn* did pay attention to the *'isnād* and to the *matn* as can be seen in the definition of *'ilm al- ḥadīṭ* (the science of *ḥadīṭ*) and the five criteria for *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ*. In addition, it is important to know that *'isnād* criticism is related to *matn* criticism. Aside from being known by his/her *'adl* (honesty) and *ḍabt* (reliability and accuracy), a narrator in *'isnād* is considered to be trustworthy after examining his/her narrations and comparing them with other well-established narrations. In fact, Muslim scholars developed new genres in *'ilm al- ḥadīṭ* concerned with *matn* examination. Those are *'ilm 'ilal al-ḥadīṭ* that examines the defects in the *'isnād* and the defects in the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ*, *'ilm ḡarīb al- ḥadīṭ* that scrutinizes the words in the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ*, *'ilm muškil al- ḥadīṭ* that examines contradicting *mutūn* (texts) of *ḥadīṭ*, and *'ilm al-nāsiḥ wa al-mansūḥ* that studies contradicting *mutūn* (plur. of *matn*) in relation to the time they were uttered by the Prophet. However, early *muḥaddithūn* from the first and the second century of Islam did not develop a criticism methodology such as the later methodology introduced and used by the *'ulamā'* such as Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī or Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al- Tirmidī, but that does not mean that they did not examine the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ*. It is true that the earliest

¹⁸³ al-Šāhrazūrī, *Muqaddimat ibn al-Šalāḥ - Ma'rifat 'Anwā' 'Ulūm al-ḥadīṭ*, 11.

specialized book we can find on the application of examining *ḥadīṭ matn* is *al-Manār al-Munīf fi al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍaʿīf* by Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah.¹⁸⁴ However, evidence shows that *matn* criticism was practiced earlier than the time of Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah. Nabia Abbott says that although *ʿisnād* criticism was established after the *Fitna*,¹⁸⁵ *al-Ṣaḥābah* practiced *matn* criticism to verify reports about the Prophet as seen in ʿĀʿiṣa's *ḥadīṭ*.¹⁸⁶ In addition, by the third century of Islam onward many clear examples of *matn* criticism could be easily found.¹⁸⁷

Western scholars, along with the majority of Muslim scholars, who reasoned that early *muḥaddithūn* practiced *matn* criticism relied mainly on sources produced during the third century of Islam or later.¹⁸⁸ The examples they used to prove their understandings were obtained from *ḥadīṭ ʿulamāʾ* such as Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buḥārī, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī, Muḥammad b. Khuzayma (d. 311 AH/923 CE), and Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354 AH/965 CE), whose works show that they practiced *matn* criticism and that they rejected *ḥadīṭ* contradicting what they believed to be historically, logically, dogmatically, or legitimately untrue. The examples I mentioned previously including ʿĀʿiṣa's *ḥadīṭ*,¹⁸⁹ do establish the practice of *matn* criticism during the first and second century of Islam. However, *matn* examination was not always done due to the fact that once *ḥadīṭ ʿisnād* was established as inauthentic, the whole *ḥadīṭ* was rejected, and *muḥaddithūn* believed that there would then be no

¹⁸⁴ Muḥammad ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *al-Manār al-Munīf fi al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍaʿīf* ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāh ʿAbū Ġuddah (Aleppo, Syria: Maktabat al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyyah, 1970).

¹⁸⁵ Abbott did not mention whether it was the first or the second *Fitna*; however, I believe the author meant the first civil war in Islam where the Caliph ʿUṭmān b. ʿAffān (d. 36 AH/ 656 CE) was killed.

¹⁸⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:109, 2:79; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:366.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, "How We Know Early Hadīth Critics Did Matn Criticism and Why It's so Hard to Find," 154-62. The author introduced fifteen examples of content criticism from the formative 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries of the Sunnī *ḥadīṭ* tradition.

¹⁸⁸ Brown, "How We Know Early Hadīth Critics Did Matn Criticism and Why It's so Hard to Find," 154-62. The author introduced fifteen examples of content criticism from the formative 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries of the Sunnī *ḥadīṭ* tradition.

¹⁸⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:109, 2:79; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:366.

need to examine its content. Eerik Dickinson says that *matn* criticism examples are difficult to find in the early period because of the understanding that the authenticity of *ḥadīṭ* depended mainly on the reliability of its transmitters, and an unreliable *matn* of a *ḥadīṭ* was rejected if one or more of *ḥadīṭ* transmitters was found to be unreliable.¹⁹⁰ In addition, the examination of *matn* is considered as a routine part of *ʿisnād* examination as early *muḥaddiṭūn* believed that a problem in the *matn* indicates a problem in the *ʿisnād*.

Matn criticism as a technical term was not used by early *muḥaddiṭūn*; however, those scholars who believed that early *muḥaddiṭūn* did not practice *matn* criticism failed to notice that during the first generation, or the time of *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *ʿisnād* criticism was not yet established. In fact, what the Companions really engaged in was *matn* criticism. According to al-Qurṭubī, ‘Alī b. ‘Abī Ṭālib is reported to have said: “The truth is not known through men; men are known through the truth.”¹⁹¹ This statement implies that the truth should be acknowledged based on its inherent qualities, and that those who follow the truth can be identified by their adherence to it. In addition, they failed to notice that in relation to the *matn*, early *muḥaddiṭūn* rejected any *ḥadīṭ* that shows one or more of the following defects: it contradicts the Qur’ān, well-established *ḥadīṭ*, or well-established agreement; the *matn* contains illogical information; the *matn* contains words or structures that are different than the words or the structures used by the Prophet; the *matn* contradicts a well-established historical fact; the *matn* reports something that should have been reported by many eyewitnesses, but it was not reported by anyone except the narrator of the *matn* in question; the *matn* reports a huge reward for minor righteous deeds or severe punishment for minor misdeeds; and, finally, the *matn* promotes a certain opinion and was reported by someone

¹⁹⁰ Dickinson, *The Development of Early Sunnite Hadith Criticism: The Taqdima of ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī* (240/854-327/938), 85.

¹⁹¹ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ġāmi‘ li-’Aḥkam al-Qur’ān - Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 1:340.

who supports that opinion or someone who follows a *madhab* (movement, school, or sect) that supports that opinion.

It is widely accepted among both Western and Muslim scholars that the early *muḥaddithūn* placed greater emphasis on *'isnād* criticism than on *matn* criticism. This conclusion was reached after a comprehensive analysis of the available evidence and was not influenced by any ulterior motives or covert intention against *ḥadīth* or Islam. Therefore, it is fair to say that the assertion that early *muḥaddithūn* did not practice *matn* criticism is based on scholarly research rather than bias or prejudice. That, for them, was a red flag that should be expected because from a modern historical investigation perspective, it is important to consider the content of the narrative to ensure that the historical account is accurate and reliable; narratives that ignore this aspect should be viewed with skepticism. However, the choices made by *muḥaddithūn* that do not match Western academic standards are not a reason to cast doubts on the effectiveness of the method of *Sunnī* Muslim *ḥadīth* criticism.¹⁹² What appeared to be suspicious or illogical examples used by them does not accurately represent the reality of early Muslims' *ḥadīth* criticism. In addition, the introduction of faked *'isnāds*, which were meant to underscore *ḥadīth*'s reliability, worked in favour of refining *'isnād* authenticating processes.

¹⁹² Brown, *Hadith*, 199–200.

Chapter II. Explaining Ġahannam

a. The unseen; *al-ġayb*

Believing in the unseen or *al-ġayb* is an important matter for Muslims. The Qur'ān teaches that believing in *al-ġayb* is a sign that reveals those who have *taqwā* (piety, righteousness, fear, and love of Allah).¹⁹³ Because it was revealed to the Prophet and then stated in the Qur'ān in ten locations,¹⁹⁴ Muslims believe that the world created by Allah is divided into two inseparable worlds: *'ālam al-šahādah* (the witnessed or seen world) and *'ālam al-ġayb* (the unseen or invisible world).¹⁹⁵ *'Ālam al-šahādah* is the world that exists in reality, and people can witness its existence. It includes the physical world we live in and the things around it that we are able to sense such as stars, planets, and any other physical objects. *'Ālam al-ġayb* is also the world that exists in reality; however, we are unable to witness or sense its existence. It includes, for example, the world of angels and the world of *ġinn* (devils and demons). *Al-Šaḥābah* learned about and believed in the existence of *'ālam al-ġayb* through the Prophet, even though it was unseen to them. For them, *'ālam al-ġayb* included *'ālam al-'arwāḥ* (the world of spirits), *'ālam al-malā'ikah* (the world of angels), *'ālam al-ġinn* (the world of devils and demons), and *al-dār al-'āḥirah*, which includes Heavens, Hell, and the other components of the Judgment Day.

¹⁹³ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 2. A.B. al-Mehri, ed. *Saheeh International Translation* (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2010), 32. *Saheeh International Translation*, 32.

¹⁹⁴ *Sūra* 6, al-'An'ām, verse 73; *Sūra* 9, al-Tawbah, verse 94, 105; *Sūra* 13, al-Ra'd, verse 9; *Sūra* 23, al-Mu'minūn, verse 92; *Sūra* 32, al-Saġdah, verse 6; *Sūra* 39, al-Zumar, verse 46; *Sūra* 59, al-Ḥašr, verse 22; *Sūra* 62, al-Jum'ah, verse 8; and *Sūra* 64, al-Tagābun, verse 18.

¹⁹⁵ It is important to note that part of the unseen world or *'ālam al-ġayb* is *al-barzah*. The word *'barzah*' literally means "barrier"; however, in this context it refers to the time or the world between death and resurrection.

The meaning of the term *al-ġayb* in the Arabic language is “the unseen” regardless of whether it is known or not.¹⁹⁶ The word *ġayb* can be translated as absent, unknowable, or invisible. According to al-Ġawharī, the term *al-ġayb* refers to anything that is hidden or unseen.¹⁹⁷ This includes hidden matters, absolute knowledge, the divine, knowledge about events that happened in the past that a person did not witness, knowledge about events that are happening at the present that a person is not sensing, and knowledge about events that will happen in the future. The word *ġayb* in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* refers to all things that we cannot detect with our senses, events that we did not witness, and things that only Allah knows. In addition, depending on the context, it can indicate what is absent, invisible, unnoticeable, covered, veiled, concealed, or unknown. *Al-Ṣaḥābah* understood *al-ġayb* to be divided into two main categories. The first could be called *al-ġayb al-muṭlaq* (absolute *ġayb*), which only Allah knows. Interestingly, the Qur’ān states that none except Allah know the keys of the unseen.¹⁹⁸ According to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, there are five of these keys: what is created in wombs and every aspect of the fetus’ present and future existence, what will happen in the future, when the rain is coming, where a person will die, and the time of the Judgment Day.¹⁹⁹ ‘Ā’iša bt. ‘Abī Bakr said that whoever claimed that he/she can tell what will happen in the future fabricated a great lie against Allah.²⁰⁰ However, Allah may choose to reveal some of *al-ġayb*, other than those five keys,²⁰¹ to some of His messengers. “[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone. Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before

¹⁹⁶ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 1:654.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād al-Ġawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ: Taġ al-Luġah wa Ṣiḥāḥ al-‘Arabiyah*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘ilm li-l-malāyīn, 1987).

¹⁹⁸ *Sūra* 6, al-‘An‘ām, verse 59. *Saheeh International Translation*, 116.

¹⁹⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:116.

²⁰⁰ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:159.

²⁰¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘Āy al-Qur’ān*, 20:160.

him [i.e., each messenger] and behind him observers.”²⁰² However, not to cause any confusion, the Prophet was specifically instructed by Allah to teach that he has no knowledge of his own about *al-ġayb*.

Say, O Muḥammad, “I do not claim that I have the depositories of God at my disposal or that I possess knowledge of the unseen, nor do I assert that I am an angel. I only follow what has been revealed to me.” Say, “Can the blind be compared to the seeing? Will you not then reflect and ponder?”²⁰³

The second category is *al-ġayb al-nisbī* (relative *ġayb*), which Allah also has all the knowledge about; however, some people may also have some knowledge or have learned about it. This includes those who lived the experience, those who learned about some events that happened in the past through a trusted source, and those who learned about it through revelation. In addition, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that some of *al-ġayb* can be revealed to some upright people through *al-ru'yah al-ḥasanah*²⁰⁴ (good vision) or through *al-'ilhām* (inspiration).²⁰⁵ However, they seemed to believe that *al-ġayb* revealed through *al-ru'yah al-ḥasanah* or *al-'ilhām* are not to be taken seriously unless they are interpreted correctly by a trusted knowledgeable person such as the Prophet. An example of that understanding is the *ḥadīth* in which 'Abū Bakr tried to interpret one of the Companions' visions. After listening to 'Abū Bakr's interpretation, the Prophet told him that his interpretation was good, but it was not flawless.²⁰⁶ The only way *al-Ṣaḥābah* accepted *al-ru'yah al-ḥasanah* or *al-'ilhām* as revelation from Allah was when they were revealed to the Prophet himself or when they were revealed to someone and then a knowledgeable person, such as the Prophet, approved their interpretation as

²⁰² *Sūra* 72, al-Ġinn, verse 26,27. *Saheeh International Translation*, 560.

²⁰³ *Sūra* 6, al-'An'ām, verse 50. *Saheeh International Translation*, 115.

²⁰⁴ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:30.

²⁰⁵ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 4:174; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:1864.

²⁰⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:43; al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:115.

seen in the previous example. Once the interpretation was approved by the Prophet, then this interpretation was considered *ḥadīth*.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the only trusted sources for early Muslims during the Early Islamic Era to learn about *al-ḡayb* were the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. An example that shows that *al-Ṣaḥābah* only trusted those two sources can be seen in the *ḥadīth* where the Prophet, while he was with his *Ṣaḥābah*, heard a loud sound, as if something heavy had hit the ground after a free fall. He asked *al-Ṣaḥābah*: “Do you know what that was?” They answered him: “*Allah wa rasūluhu a'lam* (Allah and His Messenger know better).” The Prophet then explained that it was a stone thrown into Hell seventy years ago and it had just now reached the bottom.²⁰⁷ In addition to the main two sources earliest Muslims used to learn about *al-ḡayb*, I could suggest a third one. However, I did not find any report showing that *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Tābi'īn*, or *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn* used it to reveal some of *al-ḡayb* about *Ĝahannam*. Fascinatingly, this additional third way early Muslims could use to learn about *al-ḡayb* was by investigating the world around them. In fact, the Qur'ān encouraged *al-Ṣaḥābah*, as the first people who heard the Qur'ān, to investigate, observe, think about, and use *'ālam al-ṣahādah* to learn about some aspects of *'ālam al-ḡayb*.²⁰⁸

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember God while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], “Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”²⁰⁹

With regard to *Ĝahannam*, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed in the creation and existence of Hell as part of *'ālam al-ḡayb* simply because it was revealed by Allah *al-'Alīm* (the Omniscient) to his

²⁰⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2184.

²⁰⁸ *Sūra* 29, al-'Ankabūt, verse 20. *Saheeh International Translation*, 332. In this verse Allah is encouraging people to investigate how He began creation.

²⁰⁹ *Sūra* 3, 'āl-'Imrān, verse 190, 191. *Saheeh International Translation*, 75.

Prophet. Their understanding about Hell mainly depended on the Qur’ān and *ḥadīṭ*, as they were the only trusted sources they used to learn about that part of ‘*ālam al-ġayb*. The Qur’ān in *sūrat Hūd* shows that Allah revealed to His Prophet some information about the unseen. “This [information] is part of the news of the unseen that We reveal to you, [O Muḥammad]. Neither you nor your people knew it before this. So be patient, for the best outcome is for those who are righteous.”²¹⁰ By utilizing the material available to us in the Qur’ān and in authenticated *ḥadīṭ*, we will be able to construct a more comprehensive portrait of the beliefs of early Muslims during the Early Islamic Era about *Ĝahannam*.

b. Creation of Ĝahannam

The Companion ‘Abū Hūrayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him, said that *al-Nār* (the Fire) asked Allah: “O Lord, I am consuming myself and I would like you to grant me permission to breathe. So, Allah granted the request with two exhalations: one during winter and one during summer. The intense cold or *zamharīr* experienced during winter and the extreme heat during summer are a result of these exhalations.”²¹¹ Furthermore, it is reported that the Companion Ĝābir b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Anṣārī (d. 78 AH/697 CE) narrated that the Prophet once had *al-Nār* brought close to him while he was among his *Ṣaḥābah*. When the Prophet stepped back, the Companions asked him why he did so, to which he replied that he did it to protect himself from the heat of *al-Nār*.²¹² Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah says, according to the Qur’ān and those *ḥadīṭ*, *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Tābi‘īn*, and *Tābi‘ū al-Tābi‘īn* held that *Ĝahannam* was created a long time ago. For them, the understanding that it will

²¹⁰ *Sūra* 11, Hūd, verse 49. *Saheeh International Translation*, 184. “That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muḥammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. So be patient; indeed, the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”

²¹¹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:113; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:431; ibn Māğah, *Sunan ibn Māğah*, 2:1444.

²¹² al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:623.

be created during the Judgment Day contradicts the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.²¹³ The Qur'ān states in *sūrat 'āl-Imrān* that *Ĝahannam* has been prepared for sinners and disbelievers,²¹⁴ and in *sūrat al-Naba'* Allah says: "Indeed, Hell has been lying in wait."²¹⁵ The previously mentioned *ḥadīth* that was transmitted by the Companion 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar also shows that *al-Şahābah* understood that *Ĝahannam* has already been created. In fact, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar believed that those who will be admitted to *Ĝahannam* will be able to see their designated seats in it while they are in their graves before the Judgment Day.²¹⁶ The Companion 'Abū Hūrayrah also believed that Heavens and Hell were created even before the creation of Adam, the father of all people. 'Abū Hūrayrah was teaching that the Prophet told him that when Allah created Heavens and Hell, He sent the archangel *Ĝibrīl* (Gabriel) to investigate them and see what He had prepared for their occupants.²¹⁷ Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī says that this *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Abū Hūrayrah should be considered as one of the most important and clear examples that shows Hell has already been created and exists now.²¹⁸

While the previously mentioned evidence from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* shows that *Ĝahannam* has already been created and that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era apparently believed that it exists, an *'āyah* in the Qur'ān may indicate that Hell has not been created yet or at least it has been partially created. The Qur'ān says that before the resurrection, everything will be destroyed except Allah.²¹⁹ Therefore, one may think that it is nonsense to create *Ĝahannam* to only be

²¹³ Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah, *Hādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, 24.

²¹⁴ *Sūra* 3, 'āl-Imrān, verse 131. *Saheeh International Translation*, 70.

²¹⁵ *Sūra* 78, al-Naba', verse 21. *Saheeh International Translation*, 583. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that the word *mirşādā* (lying in wait) used in this verse indicates that *Ĝahannam* was created and is prepared to receive its inhabitants. al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr - Mafātīḥ al-Ĝayb*, 31:15.

²¹⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Şaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 2:99.

²¹⁷ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:274,5.

²¹⁸ Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Şarḥ Şaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:320.

²¹⁹ *Sūra* 28, al-Qaşaş, verse 88. *Saheeh International Translation*, 325.

destroyed before the Judgment Day, then recreated again to receive its dwellers after the resurrection. While that logic could be valid, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that Hell has already been created and is always tended by an angel named Mālik,²²⁰ and they were unlikely to believe that *Ĝahannam* will be destroyed before the Judgment Day. The Companions believed that there are few things that Allah will not destroy. This understanding can be seen in the *ḥadīth* in which 'Abū Hūrayrah reported that the Prophet said that, after death, humans' bodies will disintegrate except *'aḡbu al-ṭanab* (the smallest piece of bone at the bottom end of the spinal column) from which people will be recreated.²²¹ In addition, they also believed that all prophets' bodies do not disintegrate.²²² Looking closely at the *'āyah* in which Allah says that everything will be destroyed except Himself, one can find that scholars, such as al-Ḥasan al-Barbahārī (d. 329 AH/940 CE), understood that everything here refers to the things that Allah decreed will be destroyed. The exceptions, al-Barbahārī says, are Heavens and Hell, Allah's throne and chair, the preserved tablet, the pen, and souls.²²³ Thereby, using verse 88 of *sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ* to imply that Muslims during Early Islamic Era believed that *Ĝahannam* is to be destroyed and then created does not stand. Furthermore, there are many verses and *ḥadīth*²²⁴ showing that it is more probable that *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that *Ĝahannam* has already been created, and its existence does not contradict verse 88 of *sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*.

Regarding its location, there are no reports that clearly declare that Muslims during Early Islamic Era learned about its location except that it is in *'ālam al-ḡayb*. Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 / 1505 CE) says that the location of *Ĝahannam* is known only by Allah, and there is no

²²⁰ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:44.

²²¹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:165.

²²² al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 1:275; ibn Māḡah, *Sunan ibn Māḡah*, 1:345.

²²³ al-Ḥasan al-Barbahārī, *Ṣarḥ al-Sunnah*, ed. Ḥālid al-Radādī (Medina, K.S.A.: Maktabat al-Ġurabā' al-'Aṭariyah, 1993), 85.

²²⁴ ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, 33-46.

authentic *ḥadīth* that reveals it.²²⁵ However, there are some conflicting unauthenticated reports showing its location to be somewhere under the sea.²²⁶ Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774 AH/1373 CE) and al-Baḡawī (d. 516 AH/1122 CE) mentioned that there is a fire under a sea,²²⁷ but it is not clear what kind of fire it is or what sea it is under.

c. The Nature and Topography of Ğahannam

It is said that *Ğahannam* was kindled for a thousand years until it turned red, then it was kindled for another thousand years until it turned white, then it was kindled for an extra thousand years until it turned black; now, it is black and dark.²²⁸ While this is the general image of *Ğahannam* in the minds of many Muslims, it may not be how Muslims during the Early Islamic Era imagined it. This is because this *ḥadīth* allegedly narrated only by 'Abū Hūrayrah has been ruled to be inauthentic.²²⁹ For Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, *Ğahannam* is a place very deep underground, such as a well²³⁰ with an inconceivably deep bottom, and seven levels that are enclosed individually by a boundary or a pavilion called *surādiq* made of fire or smoke.²³¹ The *surādiq* is made of four walls with an estimated thickness of each wall equal to the distance one can cross in forty years.²³² *Ğahannam* is also understood to be a vast, wide place that can accommodate all of its inhabitants and more.²³³ The estimated number of its inhabitants is nine

²²⁵ Ğalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Itmām al-Dirāyah li-Qurrā' al-Niqāyah*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-'Aḡūz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1985), 15.

²²⁶ al-Suyūṭī, *Itmām al-Dirāyah li-Qurrā' al-Niqāyah*, 15-16.

²²⁷ Ismā'īl ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm – Tafsīr ibn Kaṭīr*, 8 vols., ed. Sāmī Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 1999), 4:521; al-Baḡawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Baḡawī*, 7:386.

²²⁸ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ğāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:291.

²²⁹ al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah*, 3:470.

²³⁰ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:40.

²³¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ğāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 18:11.

²³² al-Tirmidī, *al-Ğāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:287.

²³³ *Sūra* 50, Qāf, verse 30. *Saheeh International Translation*, 465.

hundred and ninety-nine of each thousand rational beings²³⁴ ever created on this Earth.²³⁵ That includes, according to Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī, nine hundred and ninety-nine of each thousand of the Prophet’s nation.²³⁶ To imagine how big it is, *al-Ṣaḡābah* believed that the huge number of sinners and disbelievers since the creation of Adam until the Judgment Day will reside in *Ġahannam* after their bodies increase in size²³⁷ so that the distance between their shoulders will be equal to the distance a fast mounted rider can cover in three days,²³⁸ and the size of one of their molars is equal to the size of ‘Uḡud Mountain.²³⁹ In the Judgment Day, *Ġahannam* will be brought²⁴⁰ and dragged by an enormous number of angels and then attended by nineteen angels²⁴¹ after sinners are admitted to it. Each angel is equipped with an iron sledgehammer or a mace that can tumble down seventy thousand.²⁴² Each level of *Ġahannam*, called *darakah*,²⁴³ has its own gate. The fuel of *Ġahannam* is some kind of rock;²⁴⁴ however, during the Judgment day,

²³⁴ I used ‘intelligent being’ to include those who have ‘*aql* (sense, reason, or intellect) and are responsible for their actions. Intelligent beings here are humans who live in this earth including the people of *Ya ḡūḡ* and *Ma ḡūḡ* (Gog and Magog) and *Ġinn*.

²³⁵ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḡīḡ al-Buḡārī*, 4:138.

²³⁶ ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī, *Faḡḡ al-Bārī fī Ṣaḡḡ Ṣaḡīḡ al-Buḡārī*, 11:390. It is important to note that the people of *Ya ḡūḡ* and *Ma ḡūḡ* are believed to be included among the nine hundred and ninety-nine of the Prophet’s nation according to *Ṣaḡīḡ al-Buḡārī* and *Ṣaḡīḡ Muslim*. al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḡīḡ al-Buḡārī*, 6:97; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḡīḡ Muslim*, 1:201.

²³⁷ Their physical forms will undergo a transformation, resulting in a larger size that amplifies their discomfort and agony. Except those how were arrogantly believing that they are superior; they will be reduced to the size of ants to be more humiliated. al-Tirmiḡī, *al-Ġāmi‘ al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmiḡī*, 4:236.

²³⁸ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḡīḡ al-Buḡārī*, 8:114.

²³⁹ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḡīḡ Muslim*, 4:2189; al-Tirmiḡī, *al-Ġāmi‘ al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmiḡī*, 4:284.

²⁴⁰ It is not clear where it will be brought, however, it reasonable to understand that it will be brought to ‘*arḡ al-maḡṣar wa al-manṣar* (the land of gathering and resurrection) to be seen by the people who were resurrected and gathered waiting for their judgment. Yet, in his description of the Judgment Day, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī indicates that a group of commentators, that he did not name, said: “It will be placed at the left side of Allah’s throne.” al-Rāzī, *al-Taḡṣīr al-Kabīr - Maḡāṡīḡ al-Ġayb*, 31:159.

²⁴¹ *Sūra* 74, al-Muddattir, verse 30. *Saḡeḡ International Translation*, 567.

²⁴² al-Mubāarak, *Kitāb al-Zuḡd wa Yalīḡi Kitāb al-Raḡā‘iq*, 505.

²⁴³ *Darakah* (plural *daraḡāt*) means a step and mostly indicates descent, as *Ġahannam*’s levels are descending. However, a level in Hell is sometimes called *daraḡaḡ* (plural *daraḡāt*), which also means a step, but the word mostly indicates ascending. The word *daraḡāt* referring to Hell can be seen in the *Sūra* 3, ‘āl-‘Imrān, verse 162 - 163.

²⁴⁴ *Sūra* 66, al-Taḡrīm, verse 6. *Saḡeḡ International Translation*, 537. Ibn Kaḡīr along with al-Ṭabarī say that authentic reports show that ‘Abd Allāḡ b. Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abbās said that those rocks were made of sulfur. ibn Kaḡīr, *Taḡṣīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘Azīm - Taḡṣīr ibn Kaḡīr*, 1:201; Muḡammad Ġarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taḡṣīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta‘wīl ‘Āy al-Qur‘ān*, 26 vols., ed. ‘Abd ‘Allah al-Turkī (Giza: Dār Ḥaḡar, 2001), 1:403.

rocks, people,²⁴⁵ and what was worshipped other than Allah will be used as fuel.²⁴⁶ *Ĝahannam* is portrayed as a place of never-ending rage, with its fire never subsiding.²⁴⁷ It is imagined to throw black or copper-colored sparks, which can be as large as a palace, fortress, or palm trunks.²⁴⁸ With regard to its levels, each of the seven levels is more severe than the one above it, as the heat increases seventy times with each descending level. In each level, hot winds called *samūm* continually circulate and a black cloud made of smoke called *yaḥmūm* covers its top.²⁴⁹ The *yaḥmūm* should provide some shade; however, in *Ĝahannam* the Qur'ān describes *yaḥmūm*'s shade to be “neither cool nor beneficial.”²⁵⁰ In addition, there are layers of clouds made of fire that will cover *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers from above and below.²⁵¹ At the bottom of *Ĝahannam* there is a tree with some kind of unpleasant fruit that neither nourishes nor is useful against hunger called *Zaqqūm* that rises to reach all *Ĝahannam*'s levels.²⁵² In addition, it appears that there are plants growing in *Ĝahannam*. The Qur'ān reads: “For them there will be no food except from a poisonous, thorny plant.”²⁵³ This plant is called *Ḍarī'* in the Qur'ān, which could be *al-Šubruq* or *al-Šibriq* (*Ononis spinosa*) according to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH/687 CE).²⁵⁴

Ĝahannam appears to be huge; it needs seventy thousand angels to drag each of its seventy thousand leashes according to *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.²⁵⁵ From the top of *Ĝahannam* to its bottom, the depth is estimated as being equal to the distance that a large stone would cover after a seventy-year drop from its edge to reach the bottom. Interestingly, *Ĝahannam* has two eyes enabling it to

²⁴⁵ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 24. *Saheeh International Translation*, 33.

²⁴⁶ *Sūra* 21, al-'Anbiyā', verse 98. *Saheeh International Translation*, 268.

²⁴⁷ *Sūra* 17, al-Isrā', verse 97. *Saheeh International Translation*, 233.

²⁴⁸ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 23:603.

²⁴⁹ *Sūra* 56, al-Wāqī'ah, verse 44. *Saheeh International Translation*, 492.

²⁵⁰ *Sūra* 56, al-Wāqī'ah, verse 44. *Saheeh International Translation*, 492.

²⁵¹ *Sūra* 39, al-Zumar, verse 16. *Saheeh International Translation*, 398.

²⁵² ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm - Tafsīr ibn Kaṭīr*, 7:18.

²⁵³ *Sūra* 88, al-Ġāshiyah, verse 6. *Saheeh International Translation*, 611.

²⁵⁴ ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm - Tafsīr ibn Kaṭīr*, 8:385.

²⁵⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2184.

see, two ears enabling it to hear, and the ability to understand what it hears and then soundly replies.²⁵⁶ The Qur'ān states: “When it [i.e., the Hellfire] sees them from a distant place, they will hear its fury and roaring.”²⁵⁷ In *Sūra Qāf*, the Qur'ān states that it can hear and talk to Allah “On the Day We will say²⁵⁸ to Hell, have you been filled? And it will say, are there some more?”²⁵⁹

Ĝahannam is also described as having steep slopes. Those are to be used as a form of punishment. The Qur'ān uses the word *ṣa'ūd* to describe the kind of punishment that one of the disbelievers, al-Walīd b. al-Muġīrah (d. 1 AH/622 CE), will receive. *Ṣa'ūd* may also refer to the name of a mountain in Hell that al-Walīd b. al-Muġīrah will be forced to keep climbing. However, what is affirmed is that *Ĝahannam* has steep slopes that are used to torment its inhabitants by forcing them to climb those slopes. Then, once they reach the top, they find themselves down to restart their journey in an endless cycle. Such slopes may only be located in one of *Ĝahannam*'s levels, as al-Walīd b. al-Muġīrah is said to be on a level that may have the name *Saqar*. Regarding mountains, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* shows that those who kill themselves by throwing themselves from the top of a mountain are to be tormented in Hell in the same way they killed themselves in an endless cycle. Considering that mountains exist in *Ĝahannam*, then it is logical to conclude that *Ĝahannam* has valleys. According to some *ḥadīth*, *Ĝahannam* has more than one valley where rivers of pus and blood are flowing and from which sinners are drinking. In addition, some of them are home to serpents and scorpions.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:282.

²⁵⁷ *Sūra 25*, al-Furqān, verse 12. *Saheeh International Translation*, 298.

²⁵⁸ According to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* Hell literally said the phrase ‘*Hal min mazīd?*’ (are there some more?) three times indicating that *al-Ṣaḥābah* understood that Hell is actually able to hear and understand what is said to it, then provide an answer. al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:134.

²⁵⁹ *Sūra 50*, Qāf, verse 30. *Saheeh International Translation*, 465.

²⁶⁰ Muḥammad Naṣir al-Dīn al-'Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targīb wa al-Tarhīb*, 3 vols. (Riyadh, K.S.A.: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 2000), 3:477.

I. The Seven Gates of Hell

Al-Ṣaḥābah believed that Hell has seven physical gates, as mentioned in the Qur'ān in *sūrat al-Ḥiğr*: “It [the Hell] has seven gates, and each gate is assigned to a specific group [portion] of [Satan's] followers.”²⁶¹ Al-Qurṭubī says that an Arabian woman asked the Prophet about this *'āyah* (verse). She was wondering whether, if she is to be admitted to *Ĝahannam*, different portions of her body are to be designated to different gates for torture. The Prophet told her that the *'āyah* means that at each gate a group of people will be admitted according to their deeds.²⁶²

However, what are commonly said to be the names of Hell's gates, or of its layers, does not enjoy support by strong evidence. *Al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that Hell itself has more than one name; that it has seven gates on top of each other;²⁶³ that each level is more intense than the one on top of it, and that sinners will be admitted to Hell's different levels according to their deserts. What is clear is that the lowest level²⁶⁴ is designated, though not exclusively, for *al-munāfiqūn* (hypocrites or false Muslims), as is mentioned in *sūrat al-Nisā'*. “Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper.”²⁶⁵ Those gates are to be opened to receive Hell's inhabitants, and for each gate a portion is designated.²⁶⁶ Then they will be sealed. *Al-Ṣaḥābah* also believed that those gates open and close until the Day of Judgment. In fact, reports show that some of them are opened and then shut from time to time.

²⁶¹ *Sūra 15, al-Ḥiğr, verse 44 Saheeh International Translation, 213.* “It [the Hell] has seven gates; for every gate is of them [i.e., Satan's followers] a portion designated.”

²⁶² al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ĝāmi' li-ʿAḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 10:32.

²⁶³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 17:105.

²⁶⁴ A similar image can be seen in Dante's Hell where “heretics are placed in the sixth circle in flaming tombs, right behind the gates of the city of Dis.” Maria Esposito Frank, “Dante's Muḥammad: Parallels Between Islam and Arianism,” in *Dante and Islam*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 169.

²⁶⁵ *Sūra 4, al-Nisā', verse 145 Saheeh International Translation, 92.*

²⁶⁶ *Sūra 15, al-Ḥiğr, verse 43-44. Saheeh International Translation, 212-13.*

'Abū Hūrayrah reported that the Prophet said that during the month of Ramadan, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Fire [Hell] are closed, and the devils are restrained.²⁶⁷

Although there are various interpretations of the gates of Hell, including metaphorical interpretations, it is important to note that in the beliefs of *al-Ṣaḥābah*, the gates of Hell were considered to be physical gates, with each one opening into one of the seven layers of Hell.

According to al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ṣaḥābah* demonstrated the positioning of the gates of *Ĝahannam* by placing one hand on top of the other to indicate their vertical arrangement.²⁶⁸

However, contrary to the general contemporary understanding, the names of the gates are not mentioned in any *'āyah* of the Qur'ān, nor they are stated in any of the authenticated *ḥadīṭ*.

Though, it is fair to say that scholars did not fabricate the well-recognized list of the gates'

names. Many early scholars and commentators cited those names in their works, depending on

reports attributed to the Prophet's *Ṣaḥābah* or their *Tābi'īn*. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Baḡawī along with

others reported that its first gate is called *Ĝahannam*, which is where Muslim sinners will stay

for a certain period before being evacuated, then *Laḏa*, then *al-Ḥuṭamah*, then *al-Sa'īr*, then

Saqar, then *al-Ĝāḥīm*, and then *al-Hāwīyah*.²⁶⁹ Al-Qurṭubī arranged them in a different order. He

says that the lowest gate is *Ĝahannam*.²⁷⁰ On top of it is *al-Ḥuṭamah*, then *Saqar*, then *al-Ĝāḥīm*,

²⁶⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:758. In his explanation regarding the gates of Heavens and the gates of Hell, al-Nawawī suggests that "It is possible that the opening of the gates of Paradise refers to what Allah - exalted be He - opens for His servants of acts of obedience in this month that are generally not present in other months, such as fasting, night prayer, doing good deeds, and avoiding many transgressions. These are reasons for entering Paradise, and they could serve as gates for it. Similarly, the closing of the gates of Hell and putting the devils in chains refer to what they abstain from in terms of transgressions." Yaḥyā b. Šaraf al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāġ fī Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim b. al-Ḥaġġāġ*, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turaṭ, 1392 AH), 7:188.

²⁶⁸ While it could be understood that the gates of Hell are metaphorical gates and the opening of Heavens gates and closing Hell's gates during Ramadan is to draw people toward Paradise and away from Hell, this *ḥadīṭ* shows that *al-Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) thought that those gates are real material gates that actually open and close. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 17:106. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ĝāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 10:30.

²⁶⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 17:107. al-Baḡawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Baḡawī*, 3:59.

²⁷⁰ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ĝāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 10:30.

then *Laḏa*, then *al-Sa‘īr*, and then *al-Hāwiyah*. Al-Qurṭubī also says that the intensity of each layer is seventy times greater than the one before it. Regardless of the authenticity of these reports, the terms used in such reports to name Hell’s gates are mentioned in the Qur’ān. However, they refer to *al-Nār* without indicating that any of them is a specific name for one of its gates.

II. Names of Hell According to the Earliest Muslims

Contrary to the common understanding, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era used more than seven names for Hell. Each of them provides a glimpse into their understanding of Hell. Earliest Muslims referred to Hell as *al-Nār*, *Ġahannam*, *al-Ġaḥīm*, *Laḏa*, *Saqar*, *al-Hāwiyah*, *Sa‘īr*, *al-Ḥuṭamah*, *Dār al-Fāsiqīn*, *Dār al-Bawār*, and *al-Samūm*. In addition, some – with a great deal of uncertainty – referred to it as *al-Ḥāfirah*. The most common name of Hell is *al-Nār* (which literally means “the Fire”). Because *al-Nār* is self-explanatory, I will start with the next most common name of Hell, *Ġahannam*.

a. Ġahannam

Ġahannam is mentioned seventy-seven times in the Qur’ān. According to *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Arabs call a deep well *ġahannam*. Because of the depth of Hell’s pit, this afterlife place of punishment is called *Ġahannam*.²⁷¹ I previously quoted ‘Abū Hūrayrah’s *ḥadīṡ* in which he reported that while he, along with some of the Companions, were with the Messenger of Allah, they heard a noise. The Prophet asked: Do you know what that was? They answered: Allah and His Messenger know. He said: It was a stone thrown into the Fire seventy years ago. It has been falling until it reached its bottom now.²⁷² The Companion ‘Utbah b. Ġazwān (d. 17 AH/638 CE)

²⁷¹ ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 1090.

²⁷² al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2184.

also reported that the Prophet said that a huge rock thrown in *Ġahannam* needs seventy years to reach its bottom.²⁷³

b. al-Ġaḥīm

This word is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur'ān as one of Hell's names. It is the second most common name referring to Hell in the Qur'ān after *Ġahannam*. However, there is one mention of the term referring to an earthly fire – a fire that was ignited to burn the Prophet Abraham.²⁷⁴

In this context, the meaning of the word *ḡaḥīm* is clear; it is fire ignited or kindled to reach an intense heat. In addition, according to Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711 AH/1311 CE), it refers to intensive fire ignited on top of already existing fire.²⁷⁵ That is, layers of fire on top of each other or one part above another. Al-Zamaḥṣarī teaches that *al-ḡaḥīm* is burning levels of coal upon one another and layer of fire upon layer of fire.²⁷⁶

c. Laẓa

This word is a proper name that means fire; however, its meaning also implies that it is an intense fire. If the word is written with an article as *al-laẓa*, then it refers to the fire's smokeless pure flames.²⁷⁷ There is another reference to this word but in a different form: *talazzā*, which is used as a description of Hell's fire as blazing or intense. According to *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* the Prophet described Hell's fire to the Companions by saying that this fire of yours – that which is lit by the sons of Adam – is one part of seventy parts of the fire of Hell. The Companions replied: By

²⁷³ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:283.

²⁷⁴ *Sūrat al-Sāffāt* 37: 97. *Saheeh International Translation*, 385.

²⁷⁵ ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 12:84.

²⁷⁶ al-Zamaḥṣarī, *al-Kaššāf 'an Haqā'iq wa Ġawamiḍ al-Tanzīl*, 4:52.

²⁷⁷ ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15:248.

Allah, if it was like our fire, then it would be sufficient, O Messenger of Allah. He said: But it is sixty-nine parts more, each one of which is like it [earthly fire] in heat.²⁷⁸

d. Saqar

Saqar is also a proper name of Hell that is mentioned in the Qur'ān four times. Al-Šawkānī teaches that *Saqar* is one of Hell's names and a level in *Ĝahannam*.²⁷⁹ Ibn Manzūr says that Hell was called *Saqar* because in its intensity it melts bodies and souls.²⁸⁰ The Qur'ān states that it consumes everything; that it melts, alters, and blackens skin.²⁸¹

e. al-Hāwiyah²⁸²

In the Qur'ān, the word *hāwiyah* came to be known as a name of Hell because of the context in which the word was mentioned. The Qur'ān reads in *sūra* al-Qāri'ah: "And as for him whose

²⁷⁸ al-Naysābūrī, *Šaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2184.

²⁷⁹ al-Šawkānī, *Faḥḥ al-Qadīr*, 5:393.

²⁸⁰ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4:372.

²⁸¹ *Sūra* 74, al-Muddattir, verse 28-29. *Saheeh International Translation*, 567.

²⁸² The word *hāwiyah* is an Arabic word that has different interpretations among scholars and commentators of the Qur'ān. However, the majority of scholars and commentators agree that it refers to a place of punishment or Hellfire where those who have committed evil deeds will be thrown into as a punishment. al-Zamaḥšarī, *al-Kaššāf 'an Haqā'iq wa Ĝawamiḍ al-Tanzīl*, 4:790; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24:595; al-Baġawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Baġawī*, 5:297. However, the exact nature and details of what *hāwiyah* entails are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān nor in *ḥadīṡ*. al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr - Mafātīḥ al-Ĝayb*, 32:266. Regarding the translation of *fa'ummuhu hāwiyah*, James A. Bellamy concluded that "the mistake in *Sūra* 101:19 [should be *Sūra* 101:9] resulted from the substitution of something familiar for something strange, a common source of error in manuscripts, which textual critics call "trivialization." Many corruptions in manuscripts are too deep to be healed. Fortunately the text of the Koran at this point was accurately transmitted so the mistake could be corrected by a relatively simple critical examination." James A. Bellamy, "Fa-Ummuhu Hāwiyah: A Note on *Sūra* 101:9," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, no. 3 (1992): 487. However, because this study is concerned with the understanding of Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, it worth to note that according to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH / 687 CE) and the Successor Qatādah b. Du'āmah al-Sadūsiy (d. 118 AH/736 CE), in this verse Hellfire is described to be as a mother that shelter or accommodate (*ma'wā*) those who have committed evil deeds. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24:576; 'Ismā'il 'Umar ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 9 vols., ed. Muḥammad Šams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1419 AH), 8:448. The Successor Qatādah b. Du'āmah al-Sadūsiy, also said that Arabs are saying *hawāt 'ummuhu* if a person is distressed or was suffering from hardship. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24:595.

scales are light [lacking good deeds], Then his refuge will be an abyss [*hāwiyah*]. And what can make you know what that is? It is a Fire, intensely hot.”²⁸³

The term is usually translated as “chasm” or “abyss.” However, the word in Arabic, with or without an article, usually refers to any chasm or pit with an unfathomably deep bottom.²⁸⁴ In its Qur’ānic context, it refers to scorching fire that will swallow up its inhabitants.²⁸⁵

f. *al-Sa‘īr*

al-Sa‘īr is not a proper name for Hell; however, it is a common noun used to refer to Hell or to describe its fire, indicating that it is ignited, hot, and scorching. The root or the verb *sa‘‘ara* means kindled, ignited, or inflamed.²⁸⁶ The word is commonly translated as ferociously blazing fire. However, in some cases with a relation to fire or war, it refers to its high intensity or its flames.²⁸⁷

g. *al-Ḥuṭamah*

This word is mentioned two times in the Qur’ān. The word comes from the root *ḥaṭṭama*, which means, as a verb, to break, smash, or crash something. A destructive flood or torrent is called *ḥuṭam* because it destroys everything in its path. However, the word *ḥuṭam* or *ḥuṭām* refers to any dry substance that has been broken into pieces. Arabs usually use that word to describe a dry land where the top layer of it is cracked due to drought. In the Qur’ān, *al-Ḥuṭamah* is used as a name of Hell meaning crushing, destroying, or consuming fire because it destroys and

²⁸³ *Sūra* 101, al-Qāri‘ah, verses 8-11. *Saheeh International Translation*, 639. Other translations used the original term: “He will have his home in *Hawiyah* (pit, i.e. Hell).” Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur’an in the English Language* (Madīnah: King Fahd Complex, 1427AH), 686.

²⁸⁴ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 15:373.

²⁸⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ğāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘Āy al-Qur’ān*, 24:576.

²⁸⁶ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 4:365. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ğāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘Āy al-Qur’ān*, 8:483.

²⁸⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ğāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘Āy al-Qur’ān*, 7:30.

consumes everything within its reach or because it breaks and crushes everything thrown into it.²⁸⁸

h. Dār al-Fāsiqīn

The word *Dār* means a home or a dwelling place. *Fāsiqūn* refers to those who are unchaste, immoral, dissolute, rebellious, or disobedient to Allah.²⁸⁹ The two words together are mentioned one time in the Qur'ān, and al-Ṭabarī explains that it refers to the fire that Allah had prepared for His enemies.²⁹⁰

i. Dār al-Bawār

The term *Dār al-Bawār* is mentioned one time in the Qur'ān in *Sūra* 14, 'Ibrāhīm, verse 28. It refers to the dwelling place of the disbelievers in the afterlife, which is Hell. The literal meaning of the term is “home of ruin or destruction.” It is usually translated as “home of ruin” or “abode of destruction” where it emphasizes the severe punishment and torment that awaits those who reject faith and disobey Allah's commandments.

j. al-Samūm

The term is mentioned three times in the Qur'ān. In one of these mentions, the word is related to the creation of *ġinn*,²⁹¹ and in the other two the word is related to *Ĝahannam*. In *sūrat* al-Ṭūr, the Qur'ān reads “So God conferred favor upon us and protected us from the punishment of [al-Samūm] the Scorching Fire.”²⁹² In *sūrat* al-Wāqī'ah, the Qur'ān reads “[They will be] in [Samūmin] scorching fire and scalding water.”²⁹³ The original meaning of *al-Samūm* describes a

²⁸⁸ al-Rāzī, *Muhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, 76.

²⁸⁹ Unchastity here refers to any sexual behavior, before or after marriage, of a man or woman that is not acceptable according to Islamic moral standards.

²⁹⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 13:110.

²⁹¹ *Sūra* 15, al-Ḥiġr, verse 27.

²⁹² *Sūra* 52, al-Ṭūr, verse 27. *Saheeh International Translation*, 473.

²⁹³ *Sūra* 56, al-Wāqī'ah, verse 42. *Saheeh International Translation*, 492.

hot wind coming from hot regions.²⁹⁴ However, in those contexts the word refers to *al-Nār* or to one of *Ĝahannam*'s names.²⁹⁵

k. al-Ḥāfirah

This word is mentioned one time in the Qur'ān *Sūra* 79, *al-Nāzi'āt*, verse 10. Al-Qurṭubī and al-Ṭabarī report that many scholars agree that *al-ḥāfirah* is one of Hell's names.²⁹⁶ However, al-Ṭabarī also mentions that the word in this verse can also refer to the meaning that a person returns to where they came from, to their original status in life, or to the earth or world. The word's literal meaning is a piece of land in which graves were dug, with no explicit reference to Hell.²⁹⁷

III. *Ĝahannam*'s Landmarks

Before introducing *Ĝahannam*'s landmarks according to the understanding of Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, it is important to clarify that while it is possible that there might be mountains, valleys, and trees in *Ĝahannam*, there is no indication that the earliest Muslims knew about them by name unless they were mentioned clearly in the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ*. *Ṣa'ūd*, for example, is commonly understood as a mountain's name in *Ĝahannam* mainly because the word is mentioned in the Qur'ān when Allah revealed Ibn al-Muġīrah's punishment in Hell. Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* said that 'Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī reported that the Prophet said that *Ṣa'ūd* is a mountain made of fire in Hell that its dwellers are forced to climb; however, once they put their hands or feet on it, they will melt and then regenerate once they are raised.²⁹⁸ However, this *ḥadīth* is

²⁹⁴ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4:177.

²⁹⁵ al-Baġawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Baġawī*, 4:294.

²⁹⁶ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ĝāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 197. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 24:193.

²⁹⁷ ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4:206.

²⁹⁸ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 23:426.

inauthentic,²⁹⁹ and thereby it does not necessarily reflect early generations' understanding. It is more likely that *al-Ṣaḥābah* did not recognise *Ṣa'ūd* to be the name of a mountain in Hell. Ibn Kaṭīr explains the *'āyah* in which the word *ṣa'ūd* was mentioned by saying that it is not strictly related to a mountain in *Ĝahannam*. It could be, according to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās, a huge rock in *Ĝahannam*, or it could be describing how difficult the punishment is in Hell.³⁰⁰ Also, it is assumed that *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that there are valleys in *Ĝahannam* they knew by name. One of these well-known valleys is called *Wayl*. According to 'Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī, *Wayl* is a very deep valley, as it takes a sinner or disbeliever forty years of freefalling to reach its bottom. However, the majority of *ḥadīth* critics, such as al-'Albānī and Nūr al-Dīn al-Hayṭamī (d.807 AH/1405 CE),³⁰¹ consider the *ḥadīth* to be inauthentic. Thus, it is unlikely that *al-Ṣaḥābah* knew about its name or its existence. Another inauthentic but well-known valley in *Ĝahannam* mentioned by Ibn 'Abī al-Dunyā³⁰² is *al-Ġayy*. Al-Baġawī,³⁰³ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209-10 CE),³⁰⁴ and al-Šawkānī³⁰⁵ also say that *al-Ġayy* is a valley in *Ĝahannam* that is prepared for those who insist on committing adultery, drinking alcohol, dealing with *ribā* (usury), disrespecting their parents, or making false testimonies. However, this is another inauthentic *ḥadīth*,³⁰⁶ and therefore it cannot be used to accurately reflect early Muslims' understanding during the Early Islamic Era. Nūr al-Dīn al-Hayṭamī also indicates that al-Ḥabāl,³⁰⁷ Habhab, and

²⁹⁹ Nūr al-Dīn al-Hayṭamī, *Maġma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 10 vols., ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1994), 7:131.

³⁰⁰ ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm – Tafsīr ibn Kaṭīr*, 8:266.

³⁰¹ al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 5:198; al-Hayṭamī, *Maġma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 7:135.

³⁰² Muḥammad, *Ṣifāt al-Nār*, 26.

³⁰³ al-Baġawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Baġawī*, 5:241.

³⁰⁴ al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr - Maḡātib al-Ġayb*, 21:552.

³⁰⁵ al-Šawkānī, *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*, 3:403.

³⁰⁶ al-Hayṭamī, *Maġma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 7:55.

³⁰⁷ al-Ḥabāl is most likely to be understood as a river in Hell. al-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 3:355.

al-Ḥazan are mentioned in some *ḥadīṭ* referring to valleys in *Ĝahannam*; however, the *ḥadīṭ* in which they were mentioned have been proven to be inauthentic.³⁰⁸ Due to the large number of *ḥadīṭ* mentioning mountains and valleys in *Ĝahannam*, one could assume that earliest Muslims believed that they do exist in *Ĝahannam* but they did not associate them with specific names. Another famous example of a landmark is a tree in *Ĝahannam* called *al-Šuḥḥ* (stinginess).³⁰⁹ This tree, also called *al-Buḥl* (stinginess), is said to be located in *al-Nār* and its branches extend to reach our Earth. If a person chooses to take one of its branches, it will drag him/her to Hell. However, while it is mentioned in many *ḥadīṭ*, none of them are proven to be *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ*.³¹⁰

Yet, one of the best-known landmarks of *Ĝahannam* is the *Zaqqūm* tree located at the bottom of *Ĝahannam*, the lowest *darak* in which hypocrites will be confined.³¹¹ The *Zaqqūm* tree is raised to reach all of *Ĝahannam*'s levels to provide food for *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers, though it neither nourishes nor is useful against hunger. This tree is mentioned in the Qur'an, which describes it thus:

Is that [i.e., Paradise] a better accommodation or the tree of zaqqūm?
 Indeed, We have made it a torment for the wrongdoers.
 Indeed, it is a tree issuing from the bottom of the Hellfire,
 Its emerging fruit as if it was heads of the devils.
 And indeed, they will eat from it and fill with it their bellies.
 Then indeed, they will have after it a mixture of scalding water.³¹²

The tree is also mentioned in *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ*.³¹³ Al-Ṭabarī reports that Ibn 'Abbās said that if one drop from *Zaqqūm* was to land on Earth, then it would ruin people's lives.³¹⁴ There is no

³⁰⁸ al-Hayṭamī, *Maḡma 'al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 5:72,10:226 ,10:388.

³⁰⁹ al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīṭ al-Ḍa'īfah wa al-Mawḍū'ah*, 14:1071.

³¹⁰ al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, *Tārīḥ Baḡdād*, 5:224.

³¹¹ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā', verse 145. *Saheeh International Translation*, 92.

³¹² *Sūra* 37, al-Šaffāt, verse 62-67. *Saheeh International Translation*, 384.

³¹³ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:288.

³¹⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 21:126.

mention, however, of how it would do so. The Qur'ān refers to it as *al-šağarah al-mal'ūnah* (the cursed tree) without indicating why it is cursed.³¹⁵ The Qur'ān reads in *sūrat al-Isrā'*:

And [remember, O Muhammad], when We told you, “Indeed, your Lord has encompassed the people.” And We did not make the sight which We showed you except as a trial for the people, as was the accursed tree [mentioned] in the Qur'an. And We threaten [i.e., warn] them, but it increases them not except in great transgression.³¹⁶

The disbelievers (*al-kāfirūn*) failed to recognize that the verse was describing the kind of punishment they will face in *Ĝahannam* and that the nature of things, including themselves, will be different than what they are familiar with on Earth. 'Amr b. al-Muğīrah (d. 2 AH/624 CE), who was also known as 'Abū Ĝahl, said that the Prophet promised us [the disbelievers] a fire that consumes rocks. Then he claims that a tree is growing in it, but everyone knows that fire consumes wood! Then, 'Abū Ĝahl confidently asserted that we all know what *Zaqqūm* is and called for his servant, instructing her *zaqqimīnā* (feed us *Zaqqūm*). The servant brought them dates and butter.³¹⁷ Al-Ṭabarī along with al-Bağawī say that the trial related to *al-šağarah al-mal'ūnah* comes from disbelievers' failure to recognize the warning of the severe punishment waiting for them resulted from their focus on trivial things like the tree in the fire, and *Zaqqūm* as a kind of pleasant food.

The Red River, or the Blood River, is another landmark in *Ĝahannam* where it represents the punishment reserved for those involved in usury, known as *murābūn* (usurers).³¹⁸ The *al-Ĝūṭah* river is also one of the landmarks known to the earliest Muslims. It was described as a river of pus and sweat flowing from the genitals of prostitutes. In addition, it produces a foul smell that

³¹⁵ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 5:54.

³¹⁶ *Sūra* 17, al-Isrā', verse 60. *Saheeh International Translation*, 231.

³¹⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 14:652; al-Bağawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr al-Bağawī*, 5:103.

³¹⁸ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 3:59, 9:44.

causes discomfort to *Ĝahannam*'s inhabitants.³¹⁹ Another name mentioned for this river, or maybe a branch of this river which is designated to host those who consume alcohol and die before repenting, is *al-Ḥabāl* river.³²⁰ However, in some *ḥadīth* the river's mud is called *al-Ḥabāl*.³²¹ Following *al-Ḥabāl* mud leads to another landmark: the Bulasa Prison. This prison is designed for those who were arrogantly thinking they are superior and better than other people. Allah will gather them in Bulasa Prison after reducing their body's size to that of an ant. In this prison, they will be veiled and cloaked with humility. The fire, called *Nār al-'anyār* (the fire of fires), will be on top of them, and they will drink *al-Ḥabāl* mud.³²²

The last of *Ĝahannam*'s landmarks included in this study is the *al-Zamharīr* region, known for its popularity and the different views about it among Muslims. Ironically, *al-Zamharīr* is a home, a place, or a region in Hell whose dwellers are punished by severe cold according to Ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī.³²³ This may be a type of punishment that causes something similar to ice burns or frostbite! While the word *zamharīr* is mentioned earlier in 'Abū Hūrayrah's *ḥadīth* where the Prophet mentioned Hell's two exhalations,³²⁴ the existence of such a place in Hell might seem to contradict a verse in *sūrat al-Naba'*: "They will not taste therein [any] coolness or drink."³²⁵ However, al-Šawkānī says that Companions such as 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32 AH/653 CE) reported that while it is cold, *Ĝahannam*'s *zamharīr* is a form of punishment for disbelievers. 'Abū Hūrayrah also said that the coldness here is severe, as it is a type of punishment and not a relief from *Ĝahannam*'s heat.³²⁶ To confirm this understanding, the Qur'ān

³¹⁹ al-Hayṭamī, *Maḡma 'al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 5:74.

³²⁰ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 3:355.

³²¹ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḡīḥ Muslim*, 3:1587; al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 3:327.

³²² al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:236.

³²³ ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Faṭḥ al-Bārī fī Šarḥ Ṣaḡīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 2:19.

³²⁴ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḡīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 1:113; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḡīḥ Muslim*, 1:431; ibn Māḡah, *Sunan ibn Māḡah*, 2:1444.

³²⁵ *Sūra* 78, *al-Naba'*, verse 24. *Saheeh International Translation*, 583.

³²⁶ al-Šawkānī, *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*, 5:444.

describes the comfortable life of those who are admitted to Paradise using the term “*zamharīr*” to convey the idea that they will not be harmed as a result of being exposed to freezing cold. The relevant verse reads “[They will be] reclining therein on adorned couches. They will not see therein any [burning] sun or [freezing] cold.”³²⁷

d. Occupancy

There are three kinds of rational creatures that will coexist in *Ĝahannam*. In addition, there will be two kinds of animals living in it. Angels will manage *Ĝahannam* and torture its inhabitants, the sinners among humans along with *ġinn* will be punished and tortured in it, and the animals will be used to torture *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers. While angels and animals are permanent residents of Hell, humans and *ġinn* can leave it to go to Heavens after being cleansed of their sins.

I. Ĝahannam's Angels

Hell's angels or *malā'ikat al-nār* are also known as its *al-zabāniyah*,³²⁸ *hazanat al-nār* (Fire keepers), or *malā'ikat al-'adāb*³²⁹ (angels of torment). According to the Qur'ān, there are nineteen angels in total.³³⁰ Their leader's name is Mālik³³¹, and he is described to be the one responsible for *Ĝahannam* in general and for keeping it ignited.³³² *Malā'ikat al-nār* are described as strong, harsh, and brutal; in addition, they do not disobey Allah when He commands them.³³³ Their job is to manage *Ĝahannam* and to apply punishment to those who inhabit Hell.

³²⁷ *Sūra* 76, al-'Insān, verse 13. *Saheeh International Translation*, 575. The translator used the word 'cold' instead of the original word '*zamharīrā*'.

³²⁸ They are called *zabāniya* because they are tough, and they use force to push sinners and disbelievers into Hell. ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 13:194.

³²⁹ al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīṭ al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 1:558.

³³⁰ *Sūra* 74, al-Muddattir, verse 30. *Saheeh International Translation*, 567.

³³¹ *Sūra* 43, al-Zuḥruf, verse 77. *Saheeh International Translation*, 431.

³³² al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 2:100.

³³³ *Sūra* 66, al-Taḥrīm, verse 6. *Saheeh International Translation*, 537.

II. Humans and Ğinn

Sinners and disbelievers will be admitted to the different levels of *Ĝahannam* according to their misdeeds. Those include members of humans and *ğinn* or *šayāṭīn* (devils) according to the Qur'ān. “So by your Lord, We will surely gather them and the devils [*al-šayāṭīn*]; then We will bring them to be present around Hell upon their knees.”³³⁴ Some of them, called *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*, are assumed to stay in Hell forever; however, others will stay in it for a certain period as they are purified, and then they will be admitted to Heavens. Those who are assumed to stay for eternity or *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* from among humans and *ğinn* are mainly *al-kāfirūn* (disbelievers), *al-munāfiqūn* (hypocrites or false Muslims), and *al-mušrikūn* (polytheists who associate anyone or anything with Allah).³³⁵ The Qur'ān also describes *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* as those who *yuhādīdūn* (singular *yuhādīd*, which means ‘opposes’) Allah and his Messenger. In *sūrat al-Tawbah*, the Qur'ān reads: “Do they not know that whoever opposes God and His Messenger – that for him is the fire of Hell, wherein he will abide eternally? That is the great disgrace.”³³⁶

While *al-kāfirūn* and *al-mušrikūn* are the main groups of *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*, others such as those who deny or do not perform their religious duties and those who deny the Day of Judgment will also be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*, even if they believed in Allah and His last Messenger, Muḥammad.

[And they will be asked], “What put you into Saqar?” They will say, “We were not of those who prayed, nor did we feed the poor. And we used to enter into vain discourse with those who engaged [in it], and we used to deny the Day of Recompense Until there came to us the certainty [i.e., death].”³³⁷

³³⁴ *Sūra* 19, Maryam, verse 68. *Saheeh International Translation*, 249.

³³⁵ *Sūra* 7, al-'A'rāf, verse 36; *Sūra* 35, Fāṭir, verse 36. *Saheeh International Translation*, 129, 373.

³³⁶ *Sūra* 9, al-Tawbah, verse 63 *Saheeh International Translation*, 163.

³³⁷ *Sūra* 74, al-Muddattir, verse 42-47. *Saheeh International Translation*, 568.

Another group that could also be among *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār* is those who deny the Resurrection. “That [Hell] is their recompense because they disbelieved in Our verses and said, when we are bones and crumbled particles, will we [truly] be resurrected [in] a new creation?”³³⁸ *Nifāq* (Hypocrisy) would also lead to eternal Hell. “God has promised the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers the fire of Hell, wherein they will abide eternally. It is sufficient for them. And God has cursed them, and for them is an enduring punishment.”³³⁹ In *sūrat al-ʿAʿrāf*, the Qurʾān shows that *al-kibr* (being arrogant) could lead a person to be one of *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār*. “But the ones who deny Our verses and are arrogant toward them - those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.”³⁴⁰ ʿAbū Hūrayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* says that during the Judgment Day, *al-mustakbir* (an arrogant person) is going to get severe punishment.³⁴¹ Those who practice magic, as it could be considered an act of *kufr*, are also to be among *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār*.³⁴² Another group that would be among *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār* are those who deliberately report lies about the Prophet.³⁴³ Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī indicates that the majority of ʿulamāʾ ruled that deliberately reporting lies on behalf of the Prophet is one of *al-kabāʾir* (major, great, or grave sins). A grave sin may lead the sinner to be one of *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār*, as it could be an act of *kufr* (to not believe in Allah or to be an infidel) according to ʿAbd Allāh al-Ġuwaynī (d. 438 AH/1047 CE) and ʿAbū Bakr al-ʿArabī (d. 543 AH/1092 CE).³⁴⁴

³³⁸ *Sūra* 17, al-Isrāʾ, verse 98. *Saheeh International Translation*, 233, 34.

³³⁹ *Sūra* 9, al-Tawbah, verse 68. *Saheeh International Translation*, 163.

³⁴⁰ *Sūra* 7, al-ʿAʿrāf, verse 36. *Saheeh International Translation*, 129.

³⁴¹ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:102.

³⁴² *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 102.

³⁴³ al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 1:33.

³⁴⁴ ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḡārī*, 6:499.

Along with al-Walīd b. al-Muğīrah, some individuals of *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* were mentioned in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. One of them is ʿAmr b. Laḥiyy³⁴⁵, who was seen by the Prophet in *Ġahannam* with his guts spilled out according to ʿĀʾiša bt. ʿAbī Bakr.³⁴⁶ Another person is the one whom the Prophet predicted would kill the Companion ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (d. 56 AH/566 CE). His name is said to be ʿAbū al-Ġādiyāh al-Ġuhanī.³⁴⁷ Also the Egyptian Pharaoh who ruled during the time of the Messenger Mūsā (Moses) was mentioned to be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*. The Qurʾān reads: “He [Pharaoh] will precede his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them into the Fire; and wretched is the place to which they are led.”³⁴⁸ In addition, from among *ġinn*, *Iblīs* is one of *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*.³⁴⁹ Allah promised *Iblīs* in the Qurʾān, saying: “I will surely fill Hell with you [*Iblīs*] and those of them that follow you all together.”³⁵⁰

From among women, the Qurʾān indicates that the wife of the Prophet Nūḥ (Noah) and the wife of the Prophet Lūṭ (Lot) are to be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*.

God presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so they [i.e., those prophets] did not avail them from God at all, and it was said, “Enter the Fire with those who enter.”³⁵¹

Another woman mentioned in the Qurʾān is the wife of ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 2 AH/624 CE), also known as ʿAbū Lahab, as it is described in *sūrat* al-Masad that she will be in Hell and a rope of twisted fiber will be placed around her neck.³⁵²

³⁴⁵ Known to be the first person who brought idols to Mecca.

³⁴⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 2:65; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2191.

³⁴⁷ al-ʿAlbānī, *Silsilat al-ʾAḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 5:18-19.

³⁴⁸ *Sūra* 11, Hūd, verse 98. *Saheeh International Translation*, 188.

³⁴⁹ *Iblīs* is a name given to Satan in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. A name that means the one who is despaired or gave up hope, or the one who shut down, is puzzled, or is confused because he was unable to prove his argument. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ġāmiʿ li-ʾAḥkam al-Qurʾān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 6:427.

³⁵⁰ *Sūra* 38, Ṣād, verse 85. *Saheeh International Translation*, 395.

³⁵¹ *Sūra* 66, al-Taḥrīm, verse 10. *Saheeh International Translation*, 537.

³⁵² *Sūra* 111, al-Masad. *Saheeh International Translation*, 668.

Regarding *'ahl al-Nār* (the inhabitants of Hell) who are not considered to be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*, it is important to note that *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that they should be *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists)³⁵³ or true believers,³⁵⁴ and repentant (*tā'ibūn* or sinners who asked for forgiveness) before their death, to be saved through Allah's mercy. Furthermore, they believed that while forgiveness will ultimately be granted to *'ahl al-Nār* from among humans and *ġinn*, visiting Hell is a grave matter that one should make every effort to avoid. The Companion 'Anas b. Mālik (93 AH/712 CE) reported that the Prophet said: On the Day of Judgment, a sinner who lived a life of ease and abundance will be brought forth and dipped once in the Fire. Then, they will be asked, "O son/daughter of Adam, have you ever experienced any comfort? Have you ever lived a life of luxury?" The person will respond, "By Allah, no."³⁵⁵ In addition, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that the slightest punishment prepared for *'ahl al-Nār* is placing smoldering embers under the sinner's feet, which will make their brains boil.³⁵⁶

According to *al-Ṣaḥābah*, among *'ahl al-Nār* who are not considered to be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* are those who do not follow *al-ġamā'ah* (the congregation). The Prophet said: "... By the One Who has the soul of Muḥammad in His hand, my nation will split into seventy-three sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hell." The Companions then asked: "O Messenger of Allah, who are they?" He replied: "*al-ġamā'ah* (the congregation)." Muḥammad 'Abd al-Bāqī, the editor of *Sunan Ibn Māğah*, explains that *al-ġamā'ah* in this *ḥadīth* are those

³⁵³ Al-Ġazālī explains in *'Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* in *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* and *Kitāb al-Tawbah* that *al-muwaḥḥidūn* will be taken out of *Ġahannam* after vengeance has been obtained, until, by the grace of Allah, no true monotheist will remain in *Ġahannam*. 'Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *'Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1982), 1:86, 4:28.

³⁵⁴ A true believer (*mu'min*, feminine *mu'mina*) here means that he or she has complete submission to Allah and has faith firmly established in his or her mind and heart.

³⁵⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2162.

³⁵⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 8:115.

who adhere to the beliefs and practices of the Prophet's Companions.³⁵⁷ However, the precise identification of *al-firqah al-nāğiyah* (the saved group) has been a subject of debate among scholars. While there are varying opinions among Muslim scholars as well as Western scholars regarding the identification of *al-firqah al-nāğiyah*. Muslim scholars, such as al-Qurṭubī and al-Ḥāzin, interpretations suggest that *al-firqah al-nāğiyah* encompasses all groups of Muslims who adhere to *ʿuṣuul al-dīn* (the principles or fundamentals of Islam), as opposed to deviant or extremist sects who reject or interpret *ʿuṣuul al-dīn* to suit their needs.³⁵⁸ In this view, the saved group is considered to be those who uphold the principles of unity or *al-ğamāʿah*, moderation, and adherence to the teachings of Islam. J. van Ess's work, *Der Eine und das Andere*, which delves into the history of this *ḥadīth* also suggest different opinions. However, it is pertinent to this study to focus on the understanding of the Companions of the Prophet at that particular time. While there was no other source of knowledge except from the Prophet, it is more likely that *al-Ṣaḥābah* perceived *al-firqah al-nāğiyah* as those who adhered to the beliefs and practices of the Prophet (i.e., the Companions their self) and subsequently those who would follow in the footsteps of the Companions.

Nevertheless, there are certain transgressions that may result in a prolonged stay in *Ġahannam* rather than an eternal one. These include the deliberate injustice of a judge who rules against the truth, and a judge who accepts being appointed as a judge and starts to judge people while he has no knowledge or training.³⁵⁹ In addition, there are those who deceive others in order to take their belongings or money, in particular, those who deceive orphans. Allah says in the Qurʾān: “Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into

³⁵⁷ ibn Māğah, *Sunan ibn Māğah*, 2:1322.

³⁵⁸ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ğāmiʿ li-ʿAḥkam al-Qurʾān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 12:130; ʿAlaʿ al-Dīn ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Šīḥī, *Tafṣīr al-Ḥāzin - Lubāb al-Taʾwīl fi Maʾānī al-Tanzīl*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dāl al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1415 AH), 2:177.

³⁵⁹ al-Siğistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 3:299.

their bellies fire. And they will be burned in a Blaze [i.e., Hellfire].”³⁶⁰ Other groups of people that are promised to stay in *Ĝahannam* for a very long time are those who commit unjustified manslaughter,³⁶¹ those who create idols or statues,³⁶² those who support unjust people,³⁶³ those who unjustly lash people,³⁶⁴ women who wear immodest clothes that show parts of their bodies to seduce men,³⁶⁵ those who torture animals,³⁶⁶ those who use utensils made of gold or silver,³⁶⁷ those who commit suicide,³⁶⁸ those who run from a battlefield,³⁶⁹ and those who defame or tarnish the character of innocent and virtuous women.³⁷⁰

III. Animals

There are two kinds of animals mentioned in *ḥadīṭ* to be in *Ĝahannam*; however, they are there to inflict pain on *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers and not to be tortured. Al-'Albānī authenticated two *ḥadīṭ* in which the Companion 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith b. Ğuz' (d. 86 AH/705 CE) reported that the Prophet said there are some valleys in *Ĝahannam* where serpents the size of a camel's neck are waiting, and the heat of their stings lasts seventy years. In addition, scorpions the size of a mule are also waiting, and the heat of their stings lasts forty years. Al-'Albānī also reported that the Companion Yazīd b. Ṣağarah (d. 58 AH/677 CE) narrated a similar *ḥadīṭ* in which he mentioned the serpents and scorpions but added that *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers will also be tortured

³⁶⁰ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā', verse 10. *Saheeh International Translation*, 80.

³⁶¹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:2.

³⁶² al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1670.

³⁶³ *Sūra* 11, Hūd, verse 113.

³⁶⁴ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1680.

³⁶⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1680.

³⁶⁶ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:622.

³⁶⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:113.

³⁶⁸ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:103.

³⁶⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 4:10.

³⁷⁰ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 4:10.

by intense itching (*ġarab* or scabies) that goes right down to their bones, which may indicate the existence of the tiny burrowing mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei*.³⁷¹

e. Types of Punishment in *Ĝahannam*

The punishment that *malā'ikat al-Nār* apply to to *Ĝahannam*'s dwellers consists of two parts: Physical and psychological. Regarding the psychological punishment, Allah, in *sūrat al-Zumar*, says that *malā'ikat al-Nār* will rebuke *Ĝahannam*'s inhabitants, saying to them at the gates of Hell, when they have been driven there in groups:

Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the verses of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say, "Yes, but the word [i.e., decree] of punishment has come into effect upon the disbelievers." [To them] it will be said, "Enter the gates of Hell to abide eternally therein, and wretched is the residence of the arrogant."³⁷²

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī says that this is one of many verses in which Allah mentioned how

Ĝahannam's inhabitants are to be rebuked during the Judgment Day.³⁷³ Thereby, according to Ibn Kaṭīr, they blame themselves and regret what they did, though this regret is of no use.³⁷⁴

Malā'ikat al-Nār will also listen but ignore *Ĝahannam*'s inhabitants' calls for help. In fact, after ignoring them for a long period, they will torment them more in response to their calls for help.

The Qur'ān reads: "...And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces."³⁷⁵ Another incident revealed by Allah in the Qur'ān that shows

psychological punishment is when *Ĝahannam*'s inhabitants become dispirited to the point that they wish for death. They will call the angel Mālik and ask him to ask Allah to put an end to their

³⁷¹ al-' Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targīb wa al-Tarhīb*, 3:477.

³⁷² *Sūra* 39, al-Zumar, verse 71,72. *Saheeh International Translation*, 401, 02.

³⁷³ al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥf al-Kabīr - Maḥāṣin al-Ġayb*, 13:150.

³⁷⁴ ibn Kaṭīr, *Taḥf al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm - Taḥf ibn Kaṭīr*, 8:178.

³⁷⁵ *Sūra* 18, al-Kahf, verse 29. *Saheeh International Translation*, 238.

being. Mālik will answer their call and say to them “indeed you will remain.”³⁷⁶ In addition, and while *malā'ikat al-Nār* is torturing them, they will mock them by saying: “Taste! Indeed, you are the honoured, the noble! Indeed, this is what you used to dispute.”³⁷⁷ Still more, they will say to them: “This is the Fire which you used to deny. Then is this magic, or do you not see?”³⁷⁸

Aside from the previously mentioned physical types of punishment, such as Ibn al-Muğīrah’s punishment, some of the inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* will be introduced to some particular types of punishment according to their sins. *Al-Şahābah* learned about those types of punishment introduced by *malā'ikat al-Nār* mainly from the Qur’ān and, to some extent, from *ḥadīṭ*. One particular group of *ḥadīṭ* that describes those kinds of punishment is the one in which the Prophet recounts his Night Journey, known as *riḥlat al-’isrā’ wa al-mi’rāğ* or the two-part journey the Prophet Muḥammad took during a single night around the year 621 CE. In the first part of the journey known as *al-’isrā’*, the Prophet travelled on the back of a white mount smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey³⁷⁹ called *al-Burāq* to Jerusalem and visited al-’Aqṣā Mosque where he led other prophets in prayer. In the second part of the journey known as *al-Mi’rāğ*, he ascended into Heavens where he spoke to Allah. On his tour, he also talked with some Messengers and Prophets such as Adam, John, Jesus, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham. In addition, he met some angels including Mālik, the guardian of *Ĝahannam*. As part of his tours, he visited some of the landmarks such as *Sidrat al-Munthā* (the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary) that marks the end of the seventh heaven, *al-bayt al-ma’mūr* (the Inhabited

³⁷⁶ *Sūra* 43, al-Zuḥruf, verse 77. *Saheeh International Translation*, 431.

³⁷⁷ *Sūra* 44, al-Duḥḥān, verse 49, 50. *Saheeh International Translation*, 435.

³⁷⁸ *Sūra* 52, al-Ṭūr, verse 14, 15. *Saheeh International Translation*, 472.

³⁷⁹ Contrary to what is commonly known and contrary to what is portrayed in artwork, I could not find an authentic report that shows Muslims during the Early Islamic Era imagining *al-Burāq* as a winged mount or a winged steed.

House), and *al-Kawtar* river according to al-Buḥārī.³⁸⁰ *Mi 'rāğ ḥadīṭ* describes some scenes from Hell. In *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 'Anas b. Mālik reported that during his *Mi 'rāğ*, the Prophet saw people with fingernails made of copper which they used to scrape their faces and chests to reveal their own bones. The Prophet asked the archangel *Ĝibrīl* (Gabriel) about them, and he answered that those are the people who used to slander and violate the honour of others behind their backs.³⁸¹ In *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, there are two scenes the Prophet saw during *al-Mi 'rāğ*. In the first one, he witnessed people cutting their lips with scissors made of fire, and upon inquiring, he was informed that they were the preachers who preached righteousness to others but did not practice it themselves.³⁸² In the second scene, the Prophet saw a man swimming in a river while being fed stones, and upon asking about it, he was told that it represented those who consumed [accept] usury (the practice of lending money to those in need and then accepting interest upon its return).³⁸³

Interestingly, within the limited number of accounts of what the Prophet saw in *riḥlat al- 'isrā'* *wa al-mi 'rāğ* regarding *Ĝahannam*, there are unauthenticated *ḥadīṭ* that contradict each other, *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ*, or the Qur'ān. However, we can still get a better idea about Muslims' understanding of *Ĝahannam* during the Early Islamic Era if we combine the authentic reports, such as those mentioned earlier, with what is offered in the Qur'ān. Earlier in this study, *Ĝahannam* was described as having different levels called *darakāt*. Each of them is assigned to a group of sinners who experience different levels of agony. The Companions Samurah b. Ĝundab (d. 59 AH/679 CE), Nu'mān b. Baṣīr (d. 65 AH/684 CE), Ibn 'Abbās, and 'Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī narrated that the Prophet said that the least punishment, or lowest level of agony, in *Ĝahannam* is to place

³⁸⁰ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 5:52, 6:178.

³⁸¹ al-Siğistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 4:269.

³⁸² Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, 19:244.

³⁸³ Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, 33:293-4.

two embers under the feet of a person or to wear some kind of shoes made of fire that causes his/her brain to boil like a steam boiler.³⁸⁴ For others, the Fire will take some up to their ankles, some up to their knees, some up to their waists, and some up to their collarbones.³⁸⁵ The Qur’ān shows how the potential inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* are first prepared, and then brought into it. In *sūrat ’āl-’Imrān*, Allah revealed that they will be humiliated, and their faces will be darkened. “On the Day [some] faces will turn white and [some] faces will turn black. As for those whose faces turn black, [to them it will be said], did you disbelieve [i.e., reject faith] after your belief? Then taste the punishment for what you used to reject.”³⁸⁶ In *sūrat al-Isrā’*, Allah says: “... We will gather them on the Day of Resurrection [fallen] on their faces blind, dumb and deaf. Their refuge is Hell; every time it subsides, We increase them in blazing fire.”³⁸⁷ Then, they will be pushed toward *Ĝahannam*, “the Day they are thrust toward the fire of Hell with a [violent] thrust, [its angels will say], this is the Fire which you used to deny.”³⁸⁸ Then, they are to be dragged on their faces (“the Day they are dragged into the Fire on their faces [it will be said], taste the touch of Saqar”)³⁸⁹ and chained (“... they are going to know, when the shackles are around their necks and the chains; they will be dragged. In boiling water; then in the Fire they will be filled [with flame].”)³⁹⁰ Those chains are described in the Qur’ān to be very long: “then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is seventy cubits insert him,”³⁹¹ “and you will see the criminals that Day bound together in shackles.”³⁹² Except those who will get partial punishment

³⁸⁴ Those *hadīth* show that *al-Ṣaḥābah* more likely thought that the punishments in *Ĝahannam* are not metaphorical, they are actual and physical punishments according to those *hadīth* and the like. *al-Buḥārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 8:115; *al-Naysābūrī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:196, 4:2185.

³⁸⁵ *al-Buḥārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 8:115; *al-Naysābūrī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:195-6.

³⁸⁶ *Sūra* 3, *’āl-’Imrān*, verse 106. *Saheeh International Translation*, 68.

³⁸⁷ *Sūra* 17, *al-Isrā’*, verse 97. *Saheeh International Translation*, 233.

³⁸⁸ *Sūra* 52, *al-Ṭūr*, verse 13-4. *Saheeh International Translation*, 472.

³⁸⁹ *Sūra* 54, *al-Qamar*, verse 48. *Saheeh International Translation*, 484.

³⁹⁰ *Sūra* 40, *Ġāfir*, verses 70-2. *Saheeh International Translation*, 408.

³⁹¹ *Sūra* 69, *al-Ḥāqqah*, verse 31-2. *Saheeh International Translation*, 549.

³⁹² *Sūra* 14, *’Ibrāhīm*, verse 49. *Saheeh International Translation*, 209.

or those who will be tormented by smoldering embers under their feet, the inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* will be surrounded by fire from all directions. Then, once they ask for water, boiling water will be poured on them to scald their faces. "... Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces."³⁹³ Their food is mainly from a tree of some kind of unpleasant fruit called *Zaqqūm* that neither nourishes nor is useful against hunger.³⁹⁴ In addition, along with the previously mentioned plant called *Ḍarī'*, they will also be eating *gislīn* (the pus produced by *'ahl al-Nār*, also called *ġassāq* in *Sūra* 78, al-Naba', verse 25 when they use it as a drink), "so there is not for him here this Day any devoted friend. Nor any food except from the discharge of wounds."³⁹⁵ Those kinds of food they will eat will cause them more pain than their hunger pains. "Indeed, with Us [for them] are shackles and burning fire. And food that chokes and a painful punishment."³⁹⁶ They will also be dressed in clothes made of *quṭrān* (tar pitch), "their garments of liquid pitch and their faces covered by the Fire,"³⁹⁷ or clothes made of fire "... But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water. By which is melted that within their bellies and [their] skins."³⁹⁸ After their skin is gone, it will be regenerated to inflict more pain on them. "Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our verses - We will drive them into a fire. Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, God is ever Exalted in Might and Wise."³⁹⁹ The inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* who try to escape will be forced to stay in it using maces of iron. "And for [striking] them are

³⁹³ *Sūra* 18, al-Kahf, verse 29. *Saheeh International Translation*, 238.

³⁹⁴ ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm – Tafsīr ibn Kaṭīr*, 7:18.

³⁹⁵ *Sūra* 69, al-Hāqqah, verse 35-6. *Saheeh International Translation*, 549.

³⁹⁶ *Sūra* 73, al-Muzzammil, verses 12-3. *Saheeh International Translation*, 563.

³⁹⁷ *Sūra* 14, 'Ibrāhīm, verse 50. *Saheeh International Translation*, 209.

³⁹⁸ *Sūra* 22, al-Ḥaġ, verse 21-2. *Saheeh International Translation*, 273.

³⁹⁹ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā', verse 56. *Saheeh International Translation*, 84.

maces of iron. Every time they want to get out of it [i.e., Hellfire] from anguish, they will be returned to it, and [it will be said], taste the punishment of the Burning Fire!”⁴⁰⁰

f. Permanency

Regarding *Ĝahannam*'s permanency and the time *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* will spend in it, *al-Ṣaḥābah* were more likely to believe that they would stay in *Ĝahannam* eternally. Reports suggest that, for them, *Ĝahannam* will never cease to exist and *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* will continue in their misery forever. The Companions, such as 'Abū Hūrayrah along with 'Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī and 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, believed and reported that the Prophet said: “Once the people of Heavens enter Paradise, and the people of Hell enter Hell, death will be brought and slaughtered between them. It will be proclaimed that there is no more death, and that they will abide forever either in Paradise or Hell.”⁴⁰¹ Thereby, it appears that it was a strong belief in the hearts of *al-Ṣaḥābah* that Hell will be the eternal 'home' for *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*. This is supported by verse 151 of *sūrat 'āl-'Imrān*, “And their refuge will be the Fire, and wretched is the residence of the wrongdoers.”⁴⁰² That is to include humans and *ġinn*, as indicated in *sūrat Fāṭir*: “Surely, Satan is an enemy to you, so treat him as an enemy. He only calls his followers to be among the inhabitants of the Blaze.”⁴⁰³ Furthermore, the Qur'ān several times clearly states that the torments of *Ĝahannam* will be eternal. The Qur'ān reads in *sūrat Yūnus*, “then it will be said to those who had wronged, taste the punishment of eternity; are you being recompensed except for what you used to earn?”⁴⁰⁴ In *sūrat al-Saḡdah*, “so taste [punishment] because you forgot the meeting of this, your Day; indeed, We have [accordingly] forgotten you. And taste the

⁴⁰⁰ *Sūra* 22, al-Ḥaḡ, verse 21-2. *Saheeh International Translation*, 273.

⁴⁰¹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:93, 8:113.

⁴⁰² *Sūra* 3, 'āl-'Imrān, verse 151. *Saheeh International Translation*, 71.

⁴⁰³ *Sūra* 35, Fāṭir, verse 6. *Saheeh International Translation*, 371. “Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze.”

⁴⁰⁴ *Sūra* 10, Yūnus, verse 52. *Saheeh International Translation*, 175.

punishment of eternity for what you used to do.”⁴⁰⁵ And in *sūrat* Fuṣṣilat, “that is the recompense of the enemies of God – the Fire. For them therein is the home of eternity as recompense for what they, of Our verses, were rejecting.”⁴⁰⁶ Special attention should be also paid to the two verses in which the Jews, according to the Qur’ān, said that if they were to end up in *Ĝahannam*, they would only spend a short period in it. The Qur’ān reads:

And they say, “Never will the Fire touch us, except for [a few] numbered days.” Say, “Have you taken a covenant with God? For God will never break His covenant. Or do you say about God that which you do not know?”⁴⁰⁷

That is because they say, “Never will the Fire touch us except for [a few] numbered days,” and [because] they were deluded in their religion by what they were inventing.⁴⁰⁸

Yet, while there are many verses in the Qur’ān and many *ḥadīth* indicating that *al-Ṣahābah* believed in the eternity of *Ĝahannam*, some may become confused after learning that they believed that the inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* could be saved and then placed in Heaven.

It is important to note that while the descriptions of suffering in *Ĝahannam* mentioned early may suggest a tendency to punish people without mercy, the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* show that Allah is more likely to forgive sins and to give sinners a better chance than what they deserve according to their deeds. However, this leniency is only for those who committed acts that made them eligible for punishment but also believed in Him, being among *al-muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists) who did not commit the grave sin of *al-muṣṣrikūn* (polytheists who associate anyone or anything with Allah), and repented before their death.⁴⁰⁹ “Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others

⁴⁰⁵ *Sūra* 32, al-Saḡdah, verse 14. *Saheeh International Translation*, 348.

⁴⁰⁶ *Sūra* 41, Fuṣṣilat, verse 28. *Saheeh International Translation*, 414.

⁴⁰⁷ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 80. *Saheeh International Translation*, 37.

⁴⁰⁸ *Sūra* 3, ‘al-‘Imrān, verse 24. *Saheeh International Translation*, 62.

⁴⁰⁹ It should be noted that misdeeds involving other people are only forgiven by Allah after the aggressor is forgiven by the victim.

with God has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.”⁴¹⁰ Abū Hūrayrah reported that the Prophet said that Allah has a hundred *rahmah* (hundred mercies), but only one of them was sent and it was divided between *ġinn*, humans, animals, and *hawām* (pests, crawlers, and vermin). The remaining ninety-nine *rahmah* were delayed to be cast over His creation during the Judgment Day.⁴¹¹ In *sūrat* al-Zumar, Allah says: “Say, O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”⁴¹² In addition, Allah will allow *ṣafā‘ah*⁴¹³ (acts of mediation or intercession) on Judgement Day. The first *ṣafā‘ah* will be given to the Prophet Muḥammad. He will be approached by people to ask Allah for forgiveness and for entrance to Heavens. The Prophet will then ask permission to speak with Allah, and he will be allowed *ṣafā‘ah* for a number of people. According to al-Buḥārī, the Prophet will go back to ask for *ṣafā‘ah* three more times, and he will be allowed *ṣafā‘ah* for a number of people each time.⁴¹⁴ The second *ṣafā‘ah* will be given to the angels, other messengers and prophets, and righteous people.⁴¹⁵ The third *ṣafā‘ah* will be given to the *ṣuhadā‘* (those who die as martyrs), and each of them will be allowed *ṣafā‘ah* for seventy members of his family.⁴¹⁶ The fourth *ṣafā‘ah* is for the Qur’ān; it will come on Judgement Day and ask for *ṣafā‘ah* for those who learned it.⁴¹⁷

The question one could ask here is what will happen to *Ĝahannam* itself after the saving of its inhabitants? Did the earliest Muslims believe *Ĝahannam* (or parts of it) an impermanent place? To answer this question, it should be noted that the Qur’ān agrees with the idea that sinning

⁴¹⁰ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā’, verse 48. *Saheeh International Translation*, 84.

⁴¹¹ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2108.

⁴¹² *Sūra* 39, al-Zumar, verse 53. *Saheeh International Translation*, 400.

⁴¹³ Intercession; ask Allah on their behalf for forgiveness.

⁴¹⁴ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:17.

⁴¹⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:167.

⁴¹⁶ al-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 3:15.

⁴¹⁷ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:553.

believers will stay in *Ĝahannam* temporarily for purification; however, it is more likely that the Qur'ān does not agree with the idea that *Ĝahannam* itself is an impermanent place that will eventually cease to exist. Muslims during the Early Islamic Era more likely assumed that some sinners punished in *Ĝahannam* are to stay at one of its layers until Allah orders angels to take them out. In the *ḥadīth* narrated by the Companions 'Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī and 'Abū Hūrayrah famously known as *ḥadīth ru'yat Allah* (seeing Allah), the Prophet says that while people are trying to cross the bridge leading to Heavens known as *al-ṣirāṭ*, many of them will be taken away to *Ĝahannam* on account of their sins. However, Allah will choose to forgive, from among of those sinners, *al-muwahḥidūn* or *ahl al-tawḥīd* (monotheists), those who worshiped him and performed prayers. Therefore, He will order angels to take them out where they will be recognized by the marks left on their foreheads from *suġūd* (prostration) which Allah had forbidden *Ĝahannam* to consume.⁴¹⁸ Here one should be noting that, according to al-Buḥārī, those who are to be saved and forgiven are a group from among *al-muwahḥidūn* who performed prayers. However, according to al-Naysābūrī, there is a group from among the believers who professed *lā 'ilāh 'illā Allah* (there is no god but Allah) which also will be recognized by the marks left from *suġūd*.⁴¹⁹

Interestingly, in the same *ḥadīth*, the Prophet mentions the account of the last person who will be granted Heaven. In this account the Prophet says: *huwa 'āḥiru 'ahli al-Nār duḥūlan al-Jannah* (the last person from among the dwellers of *Ĝahannam* to enter Heaven), which indicates that some will keep staying in *Ĝahannam* after the last person being saved.

Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī indicates that some will never get out of *Ĝahannam* according to the

⁴¹⁸ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:44, 8:117; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:167, 4:2279.

⁴¹⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:160. al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:163.

Qur'ān as shown in the verse in which Allah says: “They will wish to get out of the Fire, but never are they to emerge therefrom, and for them is an enduring punishment.”⁴²⁰ In fact, al-Ṭabarī says, in this verse Allah Himself refutes the claim that the torment of non-believers in *Ĝahannam* will come to an end; their torture will be with no limits, nor it will end.⁴²¹ Accordingly, inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* from among *al-muwaḥḥidūn* who performed their duties as true believers – including monotheists who were living during the time of earlier Prophets – but were admitted to *Ĝahannam* because of their sins may stay in it for a certain period; however, because of Allah’s mercy they eventually will leave it. In fact, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that everyone will be exposed to *Ĝahannam* and their main concern was to be spared *Ĝahannam* through Allah’s mercy.

According to the Qur'ān,⁴²² Allah says, *wa 'in minkum 'illa wāriduhā*, which means in this context according to the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās that everyone is deemed to get into *Ĝahannam*, or at least be exposed to it while crossing *al-ṣirāt*,⁴²³ even if they were the most righteous.⁴²⁴ To further confirm this meaning is the *ḥadīth* mentioned in *Sunan Ibn Māğah* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* in which the Prophet hoped, while he was at the house of his wife Ḥafṣa bt. ‘Umar (d. 45 AH/665 CE), that none of his *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) who attended the battle of Badr (2 AH/ 624 CE) and *Ṣulḥ al-Ḥudaybiyyah* (Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah) (6 AH/627 CE)⁴²⁵ will end up in *Ĝahannam*. Ḥafṣa responded by quoting the Qur'ān saying *wa 'in minkum 'illa wāriduhā*. However, the Prophet reminded her that Allah also said in the verse after her quoting: *tumma nunağğī al-*

⁴²⁰ *Sūra* 5, al-Ma'idah, verse 37. *Saheeh International Translation*, 101.

⁴²¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 3:299.

⁴²² *Sūra* 19, Maryam, verse 71.

⁴²³ ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 5:227.

⁴²⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 18:230.

⁴²⁵ ibn Māğah, *Sunan ibn Māğah*, 2:1431. Before *Ṣulḥ al-Ḥudaybiyyah* takes place, an incident took place known as *Bay'at al-Ṣağarah* (Pledge of the Tree) or *Bay'at al-Riḍwān* (Pledge of Satisfaction) where it led eventually to seal *Ṣulḥ al-Ḥudaybiyyah*. al-Naysābūrī used *Bay'at al-Ṣağarah* in his *ḥadīth*. al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:1942.

ladīna ttaqū wa nadaru al-zālimīn fihā gitiyyan; i.e., righteous people who gets in *Ĝahannam*, then, will be taken out and *Ĝahannam* will be left with *al-zālimīn* (those who transgressed against themselves by sinning) kneeling on both knees.⁴²⁶ Yet, *Ĝahannam* will not cause any harm to those whom Allah chooses.⁴²⁷

It should be pointed out that it is true that later generations debated *Ĝahannam*'s permanency, as will be explained in the next chapter; however, it can be shown with a high level of certainty that *al-Ṣaḥābah* did believe that *Ĝahannam* is everlasting and that a group from among *al-muwaḥḥidūn* who transgressed against themselves by sinning will be taken out after they have spent some time in it.⁴²⁸ In sum, being granted entrance to Heaven or Paradise is an act of Allah's mercy. In addition, the idea that *ahl al-tawḥīd* who were put in *Ĝahannam* can exit from it was well-established in the minds of the Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, as shown in the narratives that go back to *al-Ṣaḥābah* and *al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors). Further, the verses and *ḥadīth* discussed above also show clear evidence in favor of the idea of everlasting *Ĝahannam*. Lastly, the lack of reports discussing the idea of *Ĝahannam* ceasing to exist or *fanā' al-Nār* among *al-Ṣaḥābah* suggests that this concept was not widely entertained by the earliest Muslim community.

⁴²⁶ *Sūra* 19, Maryam, verse 72. "Then We will save those who feared God and leave the wrongdoers within it, on their knees." *Saheeh International Translation*, 249.

⁴²⁷ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ĝāmi' li-'Aḥkam al-Qur'ān - Tafṣīr al-Qurṭubī*, 11:139. Also *Sūra* 21, al-'Anbiyā', verse 101 shows the same understanding. "Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us — they are from it [*Ĝahannam*] far removed. *Saheeh International Translation*, 268.

⁴²⁸ al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi' al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 4:294. al-'Albānī, *Silsilat al-'Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 5:580.

Chapter III. Unresolved Questions

a. Transmission issues

Since the 19th century, a significant number of Western scholars of Islam have questioned the reliability and authenticity of *ḥadīth* and have therefore challenged their historical value. In fact, the works of Goldziher, H. Lammens, and Schacht show that the majority of *ḥadīth* are a total fabrication and have no historical basis. Lammens, for example, states that “the ‘science of the *ḥadīth*’ only employs external criteria. It shuts its eyes to the anachronisms and impossibilities, logical or historical, of the *matn*”.⁴²⁹ Along with Goldziher, H. Lammens, and Schacht, other Muslim scholars such as F. Rahman⁴³⁰ and A. Fyzee,⁴³¹ and Western scholars such as G. Weil⁴³² and W. Muir in his writings about the original sources for the biography of Muḥammad,⁴³³ proposed almost the same position. However, the stance of Western scholars of Islam is evolving towards a more receptive attitude regarding the reliability of the methodology used by *muḥaddithūn* to authenticate *ḥadīth*. For instance, J. Burton has taken a different approach than some of his peers who entirely dismiss the use of *ḥadīth*. He states:

My own position is that the wholesale rejection of the *ḥadīths* as mere invention and fabrication misses the point that many of the *ḥadīths* can be shown to spring from an ancient source in the primitive exegeses. Were that argument accepted, then part of the *ḥadīth* at least could be said to reach back to the first attempts to understand the Book of God. Such *ḥadīths* would preserve some material on the thinking of Muslims, if not precisely in the age of the Prophet, then very soon after, in what might be called the age of the Quran.⁴³⁴

⁴²⁹ Henri Lammens, *Islām: Beliefs and Institutions*, trans. E. Denison Ross (London: Routledge, 2008), 73.

⁴³⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1964).

⁴³¹ Asaf Ali Asghar Fyzee, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴³² Gustav Weil, *Geschichte der Chalifen*, 5 volumes vols. (Mannheim: Verlag von Friedrich Bassermann, 1846), 2:62-291.

⁴³³ Sir William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira: With Introductory Chapters on the Original Sources for the Biography of Mahomet and on the Pre-Islamite History of Arabia* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/30969679.html>, 1 online resource (4 volumes) : illustrations.

⁴³⁴ Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth*, 181.

In addition, he acknowledged that *'isnād* and *matn* criticism of *ḥadīth* were practiced by Muslim critics, stating that:

The Muslim critic who entertained any reservation about the content of such reports might tend more usually to express some dissatisfaction with one or other element in the *'isnād*, but criticism of the *matn* is not so rare as is sometimes claimed.⁴³⁵

Furthermore, H. Motzki, who used to think *ḥadīth* are unreliable, came to believe the opposite.

Motzki says:

While studying the *Muṣannaf of 'Abd al-Razzāq*, I came to the conclusion that the theory championed by Goldziher, Schachat, and, in their footsteps, many others -myself included- which, in general rejects *ḥadīth* literature as historically reliable source for the first century A.H., deprives the historical study of early Islam of an important and useful type of source.⁴³⁶

There is no doubt that *ḥadīth* played and continue to play an important role in Muslims' lives as they are one of the main tools used to understand Islam after the Qur'ān. Thus, many analytical studies were made by Muslim scholars as well as Western scholars of Islam to determine the reliability of *ḥadīth*. Walid Saleh writes:

Qur'anic commentary stands at the heart of the Islamic literatures produced in any age. In it one finds reflected the concerns of every generation of Muslim intellectuals. In fact, the role of Qur'anic commentary as the most important bearer of religious thinking has only increased during the centuries.⁴³⁷

While Qur'anic commentaries or *tafsīr* are one of the important references Muslims used to understand their faith, a huge portion of *tafsīr* is formed of authentic *ḥadīth* along with the sum of all reported sayings, actions, and endorsements attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. The

⁴³⁵ Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth*, 196.

⁴³⁶ *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*, 307.

⁴³⁷ Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: the Qur'ān Commentary of al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2.

fourteenth-century Sunni scholar and reformer, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), advocated in his treatise on the principles of *tafsīr* for the acceptance of the testaments of the Qur’an, that the Prophet’s *tafsīr* and the earliest generation of Muslims’ *tafsīr* [the interpretations, judgements, or opinions of *al-Ṣaḥābah* that were untraceable to the Prophet known as *ḥadīth mawqūf*] are the most reliable and correct explanations of the Qur’an’s *’āyāt* whether they were *muḥkam* (solid) or *mutaṣābih* (ambiguous).⁴³⁸ Because of its essential role in every Muslim’s life and faith, *’ilm al- ḥadīth* (the science of *ḥadīth*) necessitated a complex verification process to authenticate the accuracy of each report, linking it back to the Prophet through one of his Companions or at least link the *ḥadīth* back to one of the Companions. The verification process paid more attention to systematically evaluating the chains of narrators (*’asānīd*) than to the *nuṣūṣ* or *mutūn* (text of the reports). This is because if the *’isnād* proved to be false or unreliable there would be no need to examine *naṣṣ*. Although the evidence proves that the early *muḥaddithūn* practiced *’isnād* and *matn* criticism, we should not consider their method infallible. For example, while I was investigating the gates of *Ĝahannam*, I found an authenticated report⁴³⁹ in which Muslims are forbidden to pray during certain periods of the day. The reason, according to the *ḥadīth*, is that the gates of *Ĝahannam* are open during those periods of the day. What is interesting here is that according to the *ḥadīth*, the gates of *Ĝahannam* are open during specific periods of the day, but it does not mention which city's time zone is being referred to; the *ḥadīth* leaves this detail unspecified.⁴⁴⁰ In addition, why some *muḥaddithūn*, such as

⁴³⁸ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī ’Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1980), 39-46.

⁴³⁹ Aḥmad Šu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, *al-Muḡtabā min al-Sunan - al-Sunan al-Ṣuḡrā li al-Nasā’ī*, 9 vols., ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāh ’Abū Ġuddah (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū‘āt al-’Islāmiyyah, 1986), 1:279.

⁴⁴⁰ Additionally, the *ḥadīth* in which the fire asks Allah for permission to breathe, and then Allah grants it two exhalations - one during winter and one during summer - requires further analysis. It is important to note that the occurrence of summer and winter does not take place simultaneously in the Southern and Northern Hemispheres. Therefore, those *ḥadīth* may not be understood in a literal sense. Instead, it is more plausible to interpret these *ḥadīth*

Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Buḥārī and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī, included in their works few *ḥadīth* that have suspicious *‘isnād* or *matn* remains a problem that needs further investigation.⁴⁴¹

Although *Sunnī* Muslims consider *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* the most authentic books after the Qur’ān, Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī says that the total number of *‘ilal* (defects) in al-Buḥārī’s book amounts to one hundred and ten *ḥadīth*. Thirty-two *‘ilal* in *ḥadīth* can be also found in Muslim’s book along with seventy-eight *ḥadīth* unique to him. However, al-‘Asqalānī continued by stating that al-Buḥārī was well equipped to identify *‘ilal* (defects) because he acquired his knowledge from his master ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234 AH/849 CE) who was considered by *al-muḥaddiṭūn* at that time to be the most knowledgeable *muḥaddiṭ* in *ḥadīth ‘ilal*. In addition, al-‘Asqalānī indicated that al-Buḥārī himself stated that he did not include any *ḥadīth* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* except after asking Allah for guidance and making sure there was no doubt in his mind that the *ḥadīth* he wrote are *ṣaḥīḥ*. Muslim al-Naysābūrī also said that he did not include any *ḥadīth* in his book except after consulting ‘Abū Zur‘ah al-Rāzī (d. 234 AH/878 CE),⁴⁴² who was a well-known Imām and a respectable figure in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. Nevertheless, al-‘Asqalānī then introduced his long and detailed explanation on why expert *muḥaddiṭūn* who were trained to identify hidden *‘ilal* included those doubtful *ḥadīth* in their works mainly by relating every doubt to one or more narrator in the *‘isnād*. Taqī al-Dīn ‘Uṭmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Ṣahrazūrī (d. 643 AH/1245 CE) came to the same conclusion, where he explained that those doubtful *ḥadīth* were included for one or more of the following reasons. First, the narrators in the *‘isnād* who were considered unreliable by some scholars were judged as reliable by the authors. Second, some of

as metaphorical descriptions. Although *al-Ṣaḥābah* likely understood them literally, it is possible that the intent behind these narrations was not to provide a precise representation of *Ġahannam*.

⁴⁴¹ al-Ṣahrazūrī, *Muqaddimat ibn al-Ṣalāḥ - Ma‘rifat ‘Anwā‘ ‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 29.

⁴⁴² Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 1:346-7.

those narrators mentioned in their books who were considered unreliable by others have – after investigation – proved to be reliable. Third, those narrators in the *'isnād* considered unreliable later in their lives were reliable at the time when the authors acquired *ḥadīth* from them. An example would be Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Waḥb (d. 264 AH / 877 CE), who started to confuse and mix *ḥadīth* after he reached fifty years. Fourth, for some *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* that were narrated through trustworthy, reliable *'isnād*, they chose to include the same *ṣaḥīḥ naṣṣ* with a different *'isnād* that included an unreliable narrator. The reason for doing this, according to al-'Asqalānī, is to introduce the shortest chain of narrators to the Prophet known as *'isnād 'ālī*.⁴⁴³

Whether attempts by *muḥaddithūn* to solve problematic issues related to *ḥadīth* are convincing or not, the fact that *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, along with other *ḥadīth* collections, contained some problematic or anachronistic *ḥadīth* should lead us to investigate each *ḥadīth* and re-evaluate it from both sides: its *'isnād* and *matn*. In addition, modern scientific tools and historical methods should be utilised in the process of re-evaluation. Since *ḥadīth* are considered valuable, sacred, and *waḥy* by the majority of Muslims, intellectuals and specialists should use any tool possible to eliminate any doubt that those *ḥadīth* are in fact authentic. However, we should not make any assumptions that the whole *ḥadīth* body is unreliable as a historical source. That is because although the methods used by *muḥaddithūn* are considered by some scholars to be not as good as modern historians' methods, early *ḥadīth* critics played an important role in sifting through *ḥadīth* body by applying rigorous methods to examine *ḥadīth 'isnād* for *ḥadīth* authentication reasons. In fact, the introduction of faked *'isnād*, which used to underscore *ḥadīth's* reliability, yield the opposite effect. Alfred Guillaume states that “the importance and value of

⁴⁴³ al-Šahrazūrī, *Ma'rifat 'Anwā' 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth - Muqaddimat ibn al-Šalāḥ*, 84.

the examination of the *ʿisnād* is obvious.”⁴⁴⁴ In addition, the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ* also underwent examination, usually after authenticating *ʿisnād*. John Burton states that “criticism of the *matn* was not so rare as is sometimes claimed.”⁴⁴⁵

b. The nature of *Ĝahannam* and the attempts to fill gaps

According to Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, “no scripture devotes as much attention as the Koran [the Qur’ān] to describing the torments of hell and the delights of paradise.”⁴⁴⁶ Despite this statement, the Qur’ān, the Prophetic *ḥadīṭ*, and Companions’ *ḥadīṭ* do not provide a full description of *Ĝahannam*. One of the most important references Muslims use to understand and describe *Ĝahannam* is the account in which the Prophet visited *Ĝahannam* during his night journey *riḥlat al-ʿisrāʾ wa al-miʿrāj*, but even that leaves a few gaps that scholars seek to fill by employing *qiyās* (analogy)⁴⁴⁷ and, sometimes, their imagination. Muslim *ʿulamāʾ* attempt to fill gaps especially where important questions arise. For example, what was the view, or the views, of Muslims during the Early Islamic Era about the destiny of those who have not been appropriately introduced to the Message of the Prophet Muḥammad? Or those who rejected the faith and the Message because they were not convinced? More importantly, what will happen to those who will remain in Hell after the removal of all those whom Allah decides to grant entry to Heavens? While some maintain that those who at least hold a small grain of faith will eventually be granted entry to Heavens, is the punishment in *Ĝahannam* of the rest to be eternal?

⁴⁴⁴ Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam; An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature*, 89.

⁴⁴⁵ Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth*, 169.

⁴⁴⁶ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), 211.

⁴⁴⁷ *Qiyās* is a reasoned opinion in which a precedent situation extended to a novel issue or a situation that have similar circumstances.

According to Smith and Haddad, “in general it can be said that the non-eternity of the Fire has prevailed as the understanding of the Muslim community.”⁴⁴⁸ Some scholars, Imāms, and Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ from different Islamic schools have argued that while some will always remain in Hell, Hell will eventually not continue to exist or it may be transformed from a place of torment to a place of pleasure because of the transformation of the nature of its inhabitants.⁴⁴⁹ The leading Muslim scholar ‘Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (d. 505 AH/1111 CE), who was a disciple of the well-known ‘Aš‘arī theologian and Šafī‘ī jurist Imām al-Ḥaramayn⁴⁵⁰ ‘Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH/1085 CE), maintains that all Muslims will eventually go to Heaven, even if some must suffer in Hell temporarily. After the introduction of Islam, Islamic faith came to be the only path to escape Hell. However, Allah’s mercy will be granted to non-Muslims who did not learn about Islam or those who were not properly introduced to it, given that they were believing in One God; for the intellect has the capability to recognize the existence of God and that God must be undividable, perfect, and unique.⁴⁵¹ Al-Ġazālī argues that those other than Muslims, such as Christians, who lived far beyond the lands of Islam and have not received the Message of Allah will be covered by His mercy.⁴⁵² Only true unbelievers or *al-kāfirūn* who did not care to learn about Islam – the Prophet’s Message or *al-Risālah* – after receiving knowledge of it will not be covered by Allah’s mercy. For al-Ġazālī, these are those who hear about:

[T]he Prophet, his advent, his character, his miracles that defied the laws of nature - such as his splitting the moon, his causing pebbles to celebrate the praises of God, the springing forth

⁴⁴⁸ Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 95.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-‘Arwāḥ ‘ilā Bilād al-‘Afrāḥ*, 730-3.

⁴⁵⁰ Al-Ḥaramayn here refers to the two sacred mosques located in Mecca and Medina. Al-Ḥaramayn could also refer to the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, in which the two sacred mosques are located.

⁴⁵¹ *Kitāb Qawā‘id al-‘Aqā‘id*, al-Ġazālī, ‘Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn.

⁴⁵² Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: ‘Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghāzālī’s Fayṣal al-Tafrīqa bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126-8.

of water from his fingers, and the inimitable Qur’ān with which he challenged the masters of eloquence, all of whom failed to match it - whoever hears all of this and then turns away from it, ignores it, fails to investigate it, refuses to ponder it, and takes no initiative to confirm it, such a person is a cynical (self-) deceiver (*kādhīb*).⁴⁵³

Al-Ġazālī then says in *’Ihyā’ ’Ulūm al-Dīn* that on Judgment Day people will be divided into four categories: *al-hālikīn* (those who will be overcome by utter despair of Allah’s mercy), *al-mu’addabīn* (those who will be punished), *al-nājīn* (those who will be rescued), and *al-fā’izīn* (those who succeeded).⁴⁵⁴ Regarding the punishment of *al-hālikīn* (those who will perish) and *al-mu’addabīn* (those who will be punished), al-Ġazālī says that *al-hālikīn* will be forever deprived of Allah’s mercy and compassion, while *al-mu’addabīn* will eventually be taken out of *al-Nār* after spending some time there. What is important about al-Ġazālī’s attempt to fill the gaps here is the explanation of the specific conditions, which are not found in either the Qur’ān or *ḥadīth*, for determining those deserving of *Ġahannam*’s punishment from among non-Muslims.

While the majority of *Sunnī* Muslims would probably maintain the understanding of *al-Ṣaḥābah* that *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* are to stay in *Ġahannam* for eternity, a problem could call this understanding into question. The Companion ’Abū Hūrayrah reported that the Prophet said that whoever kills himself is to be *fī Ġahannam ḥālidan muḥladan fīhā* (immortal in *Ġahannam* for eternity).⁴⁵⁵ The Companion Ġundub b. ’Abd ’Allah al-Baġlī (d. 70 AH/689 CE) also reported that Allah prohibited those who commit suicide from entering the Paradises.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Qur’ān in *sūrat al-Nisā’* says, “but whoever kills a believer intentionally – his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and God has become angry with him and has cursed him

⁴⁵³ Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: ’Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġhāzālī’s Fayṣal al-Tafrīqa bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa*, 128.

⁴⁵⁴ al-Ġazālī, *’Ihyā’ ’Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4:25-32.

⁴⁵⁵ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 7:139; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:103.

⁴⁵⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 2:96; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:107.

and has prepared for him a great punishment.”⁴⁵⁷ Yet, while it is true that it is more likely that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era understood the verses in the Qur’ān where *ḥālidīna fīhā ‘abadan* is mentioned as immortality in Heavens or *Ĝahannam* for eternity,⁴⁵⁸ *ḥadīṭ* show that *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that true believers who committed grave sins may endure punishment in *al-Nār* for their sins, but those with even the smallest grain of belief will eventually get out of it.⁴⁵⁹ In addition, the Companion Salamah b. al-’Akwa’ (d. 74 AH/693 CE) reported that the Prophet affirmed that the Companion ‘Āmir b. al-’Akwa’ who killed himself during the battle of Ḥaybar (7 AH / 628 CE) is *muġāhid* (dedicated himself to the cause of Allah) and thereby he will be granted entry to Heavens.⁴⁶⁰ To address this apparent contradiction, ‘Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḥuzaymah (d. 311 AH/ 923 CE) stated that every punishment promised by Allah to the believers (*al-muwaḥḥidūn*) is to be understood to be applied only if Allah wants it because Allah told us that He can forgive all sins, except worshipping other than Him or worshipping others with Him.⁴⁶¹ The majority of *Sunnī ‘ulamā’* also explained that the fate of a true believer who commits suicide is for Allah to decide. He or she may be forgiven or admitted to *Ĝahannam* for a certain period.⁴⁶² In any case, al-Ṭabarī says that true believers will eventually be granted entry

⁴⁵⁷ *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā’, verse 93. *Saheeh International Translation*, 88.

⁴⁵⁸ Robson, "Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?," 386.

⁴⁵⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:129; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:167; ibn Māġah, *Sunan ibn Māġah*, 1:22; al-Tirmidī, *al-Ĝāmi‘ al-Kabīr - Sunan al-Tirmidī*, 3:429.

⁴⁶⁰ While it is true that the injury that caused his death was self-inflicted but maybe not intentional, the Companion in this *ḥadīṭ* firmly believed that because he caused his own death, he therefore thwarted his previously accumulated good deeds (i.e., because of the understanding that whoever kills himself is to be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*, the Companions understood that his good deeds are not useful to save him in the Day of Judgment). However, the Prophet corrected their understanding by saying that ‘Āmir was *ġāhidun muġāhid* (strived diligently to do good and dedicated himself to the cause of Allah), *wa ‘ayyu qatlin yazīduhu ‘alayhi* (nothing can top the reward he already got from Allah) without indicating that ‘Āmir’s death was accidental or even vaguely pointing that he did not kill himself. al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:7.

⁴⁶¹ Muḥammad Ḥuzaymah, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa ‘Iṭbāt Ṣifāt al-Rabb ‘Azz wa Ĝall*, 2 vols., ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ṣaḥwān (Riyadh, K.S.A: Maktabat al-Ruṣd, 1994), 2:868.

⁴⁶² *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah*, 45 vols. (Kuwait: Kuwait Ministry of ‘Awqāf and Islamic Affairs, 1983-2000), 6:291-2.

to Heavens according to *sūrat al-Nisā*'.⁴⁶³ Regarding the issue of spending eternity in *Ĝahannam*, while it is clearly stated that whoever committed suicide will be *fi Ĝahannam ḥālidan muḥladan fihā*, none of the *Sunnī* 'ulamā' ruled that he or she is *kāfir* or that he or she will stay in *Ĝahannam* for eternity.⁴⁶⁴ Yet, for those who committed suicide, there is no clear-cut evidence found in the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* that shows that being a believer is a condition that will save one from having to stay in *Ĝahannam* for eternity. Thus, to fill this gap, it seems that 'ulamā' used Ibn Qayyim's opinion that earliest Muslims may understood '*ḥālidīna fihā* 'abadan' regarding *Ĝahannam* as staying in it for an extremely long period, but this period will eventually end. The question remains: How will it end? As for the sinners whom Allah wishes to show mercy, they will be taken out of Hell and then raised the way a plant is raised, floating on (or on the sides of) Heavens' rivers.⁴⁶⁵

Early in Islam, the tales of *Ĝahannam* were strictly traced back to the Prophet, *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Tābi'īn*, and *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn*. However, because those tales were limited and did not cover all aspects of *Ĝahannam*, some tended to include unreliable reports to fill those gaps. An early example is the writings of 'Abu Bakr b. Muḥammad, known as Ibn 'Abī al-Dunyā in his book *Ṣifat al-Nār*.⁴⁶⁶ Others, however, claimed some other sources of information such as visions, theological views, and personal experiences that included their own tours of Heaven and Hell. An example would be al-Ma'arrī's book *Risālat al-Ġufrān*,⁴⁶⁷ in which he tries to comfort his old

⁴⁶³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ġāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 8:450. *Sūra* 4, al-Nisā', verse 48. "Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with God has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin." *Saheeh International Translation*, 84.

⁴⁶⁴ *al-Mawṣu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah*, 6:291-2.

⁴⁶⁵ al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:172.

⁴⁶⁶ Muḥammad, *Ṣifat al-Nār*.

⁴⁶⁷ 'Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Risālat al-Ġufrān*, ed. Kāmil Kīlānī (Cairo: Hindāwī, 2013).

friend, but more importantly includes his imaginative views and philosophical reflections in chapter six about *Ĝahannam*.

c. The question of the eternity of *Ĝahannam*

The debate amongst Muslims and between Muslims and Western scholars regarding the eternity of *Ĝahannam* is an old and continuous debate. However, the general understanding of the earliest Muslims was that since after death all creation will be resurrected, then humans along with *ġinn* will have their deeds weighed on a scale. Then comes the reckoning, then the crossing of *al-Širāṭ* (the bridge) that leads to Heavens, followed by eternal punishment in Hell or eternal reward in Heaven. With regard to the Qur'ānic descriptions of *Ĝahannam*, *al-Šaḥābah* most likely believed that *Ĝahannam* is everlasting. It should be kept in mind that there are many examples showing that *al-Šaḥābah* were asking the Prophet himself to clarify some verses in the Qur'ān which they did not clearly understand. The lack of discussion about the question of a temporary *Ĝahannam* during the early period of Islam may show that early generations did not entertain the idea that *Ĝahannam*, as a place, would eventually vanish. Depending on their understanding of the Qur'ān, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era assumed that *Ĝahannam* is everlasting and those who would be admitted in it would stay there eternally. However, this traditional position has been challenged in multiple ways by later competing views including multiple views regarding the final destination of those condemned to inhabit *Ĝahannam*.

To that effect, what can be said with certainty regarding those condemned to inhabit *Ĝahannam* is that some of them could be spared eternal punishment as there are some verses and *ḥadīṭ* that allow for the possibility of *šafā'ah* (intercession; asking Allah on behalf of the sinners for forgiveness) that could take place on the Day of Judgement. The Qur'ān clearly indicates that

during the Day of Judgment each individual will seek to save oneself,⁴⁶⁸ family members will flee from one another,⁴⁶⁹ no one will volunteer to bear others' burden⁴⁷⁰, no soul will suffice for another soul,⁴⁷¹ each soul will be pleading for itself,⁴⁷² and each soul will be compensated for what it earned.⁴⁷³ Yet, there are some verses that show the possibility of *ṣafā'ah* taking place during the Day of Judgment, though it only can take place with Allah's permission. The Qur'ān reads, "that Day, no intercession will benefit except [that of] one to whom the Most Merciful has given permission and has accepted his word."⁴⁷⁴ And then it reads, "and how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after God has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves."⁴⁷⁵ In addition, there is an abundance of *ḥadīth* showing that the inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* can get out of it without any obvious reason except Allah's mercy. However, while there is almost a general agreement (*'iğmā'*) among Islamic *'ulamā'* that believers will eventually be saved from the torments of *Ĝahannam*, there is debate about the fate of non-believers.

⁴⁶⁸ *Sūra* 23, al-Mu'minūn, verse 101. "So when the Horn is blown, no relationship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another." *Saheeh International Translation*, 283.

⁴⁶⁹ *Sūra* 80, 'Abasa, verses 34-37. "On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father. And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him." *Saheeh International Translation*, 592.

⁴⁷⁰ *Sūra* 6, al-'An'ām, verse 164. "Say, "Is it other than God I should desire as a lord while He is the Lord of all things? And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ." *Saheeh International Translation*, 125.

⁴⁷¹ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 123. "And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, and no compensation will be accepted from it, nor will any intercession benefit it, nor will they be aided." *Saheeh International Translation*, 41.

⁴⁷² *Sūra* 16, al-Naḥl, verse 111. "On the Day when every soul will come disputing [i.e., pleading] for itself, and every soul will be fully compensated for what it did, and they will not be wronged [i.e., treated unjustly]." *Saheeh International Translation*, 224.

⁴⁷³ *Sūra* 2, al-Baqarah, verse 281. "And fear a Day when you will be returned to God. Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned, and they will not be wronged [i.e., treated unjustly]." *Saheeh International Translation*, 57.

⁴⁷⁴ *Sūra* 20, Tāhā, verse 109. *Saheeh International Translation*, 259.

⁴⁷⁵ *Sūra* 53, al-Nağm, verse 26. *Saheeh International Translation*, 479.

It may be argued, though, that some verses in the Qur'ān along with some other logical opinions indicate that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era were somewhat against the idea of an eternal Hell. For example, some verses state that the punishment will last as long as Allah wants it to last. In *sūra* al-'An'ām, Allah says: "The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except for what God wills. Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing."⁴⁷⁶ A different verse in the Qur'ān asserts that the punishment will undergo as long as heavens and the earth exist. In *sūrat* Hūd, the Qur'ān reads: "[They will be] abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will. Indeed, your Lord is an effecter of what He intends."⁴⁷⁷ Those verses and the idea earliest Muslims held that Allah is the Most Merciful could present a challenge to accepting the idea that *Ĝahannam*'s inhabitants will continue to be tortured for eternity. It would be more logical to accept that even those who were considered as *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* will be saved in the end through Allah's mercy.⁴⁷⁸ After all, the Qur'ān says: "Say, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth? Say, 'To God.' He has decreed upon Himself mercy."⁴⁷⁹ And in *ḥadīṭ*, *al-Ṣaḥābah* learned that before making His creation, Allah wrote and kept above His throne that His mercy precedes His anger.⁴⁸⁰

In his book, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*,⁴⁸¹ Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah provides a comprehensive examination of perspectives that advocate for the eternal existence of *al-Ĝannah wa al-Nār* (Heavens and *Ĝahannam*) and perspectives that endorse the concept of *fanā' al-Ĝannah wa al-Nār* (the annihilation of Heavens and *Ĝahannam*). In his presentation, he argues that there are three possible views on the durations of *al-Ĝannah wa al-Nār*. The first is that

⁴⁷⁶ *Sūra* 6, al-'An'ām, verse 128. *Saheeh International Translation*, 122.

⁴⁷⁷ *Sūra* 11, Hūd, verse 107. *Saheeh International Translation*, 188.

⁴⁷⁸ Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, 142-43.

⁴⁷⁹ *Sūra* 6, al-'An'ām, verse 12. *Saheeh International Translation*, 112.

⁴⁸⁰ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 9:160.

⁴⁸¹ ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*.

because they were created, then both are to vanish. The second is that both are to remain forever. The third is that *al-Ġannah* remains forever while *al-Nār* vanishes.⁴⁸² Regarding the first possibility, Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah refused it, saying that this is the belief of al-Ġahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128 AH/746 CE) and those who followed him. Then he said that none of the Companions or Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed or accepted that understanding. In addition, he refuted the different views of some other Islamic schools and ‘*ulamā*’ who agreed with al-Ġahm b. Ṣafwān on the issue of *fanā’ al-Ġannah wa al-Nār* using some verses of the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, along with logic.⁴⁸³ His main point was that it would be possible for *al-Ġannah wa al-Nār* to exist forever if Allah wished it and that al-Ġahm b. Ṣafwān ignored the Qur’ānic verses indicating their eternity. Regarding the second and third possibilities, he started by quoting his master Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, saying that “about that [*fanā’ al-Nār*] there are two well-known sayings according to early and latter Muslims. The disagreement among the *al-Tābi’in* is well-known.” Then, he introduces us to his own collection of seven different sayings. These sayings indicate that the inhabitants of *al-Nār* will stay in it for eternity; the inhabitants of *al-Nār* will stay in it for a period, then their nature will become like *al-Nār* and they will enjoy their stay in it; the inhabitants of *al-Nār* will stay in it for a limited time, then another group will take their place in it; the inhabitants of *al-Nār* will get out of it, but it will stay empty for eternity; the inhabitants of *al-Nār* will not stay in it for eternity; *al-Nār* will exist for eternity, but its dwellers will become inanimate beings that cannot feel pain; and, lastly, that *al-Nār* will not exist for eternity because Allah created it to exist only for a certain period.⁴⁸⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah conducted a meticulous examination of those seven views held by

⁴⁸² ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-’Arwāḥ ’ilā Bilād al-’Afrāḥ*, 723.

⁴⁸³ ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-’Arwāḥ ’ilā Bilād al-’Afrāḥ*, 723-9.

⁴⁸⁴ ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-’Arwāḥ ’ilā Bilād al-’Afrāḥ*, 730-3.

proponents of the eternity of *al-Nār*, in which he detailed the arguments put forth by them to justify their position. These arguments included the claim that all Companions and Successors unanimously agreed on the eternal nature of *al-Nār*, as well as the assertion that the Qur'ān unambiguously confirms its perpetuity. Proponents of this view also relied on *ḥadīth* literature where it shows that believers may endure punishment and purification in *al-Nār* for their sins, but those with even the smallest grain of belief will eventually get out of it; therefore, if *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār* will not stay in it for eternity, then what is the difference between them and the believers who will be purified and then granted entrance to Heavens? In other words, if those sent to *al-Nār* for eternity would eventually be released, then there would be no essential difference between them and the believers who, having been purified, then gained entry into Heaven. The Prophet, according to proponents of this view, taught through *ḥadīth* that both *al-Nār* and *al-Ġannah* are eternal. Moreover, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era and *'ahl al-sunna* always believed that *al-Nār* and *al-Ġannah* are eternal. Finally, they argued that a rational mind would accept the idea that unbelievers would remain in *al-Nār* for all eternity.⁴⁸⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah critically evaluated each of these six arguments indicating his agreement or disagreement on the validity of each of them. He then introduced a set of twenty-five counterarguments that challenged the arguments of proponents of *dawām al-Nār* or the eternity of *al-Nār*.

Interestingly, Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah then introduced his understanding of the reason behind the creation of *Ġahannam*; it is not for vengeance but cleansing. In fact, Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah believed that the punishment in *Ġahannam* is *dawā'* (remedies or therapies) to

⁴⁸⁵ ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, 745-6.

remove *dā'* (malady).⁴⁸⁶ However, after presenting the twenty-five points showing that he is more tolerant of accepting the idea that *Ĝahannam* is not eternal, Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah closes by raising the question of where he stands. In his answer, he quotes *sūrat* Hūd, where the Qur'ān reads: “[They will be] abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will. Indeed, your Lord is an effecter of what He intends.”⁴⁸⁷ Then, he introduces the position of the Companion ‘Alī b. ‘Abī Tālib, quoting his saying that Allah does whatever He chooses to do.⁴⁸⁸ In my view, Ibn Qayyim's hesitant stance in declaring his belief in *fanā' al-Nār* can be seen as an effort to reconcile his views with the traditional *Sunnī* doctrine.

Whether the argument of Ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah or the other arguments are acceptable or not and whether the previously mentioned verses indicate that *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār* will eventually be saved or not, one cannot surely affirm that the entirety of the earliest Muslims understood that *Ĝahannam* is eternal. Despite this, it might be argued that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era were more likely to believe that *Ĝahannam* is eternal and that those judged to be among *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār* will remain there for eternity. However, this belief is not universal, and there are counterarguments to this position. Ultimately, the question of the eternity of *Ĝahannam* remains a complex issue with no clear resolution. After all, no one is to judge Allah with respect to His creatures or to assign them to *al-Ĝannah* or *al-Nār*. What is sure is that Allah decreed that *al-hālidūn fī al-Nār* will be raised blind, and then they will be ignored in *Ĝahannam* because they were informed and warned but they chose to ignore the clear message sent to them during their lifetime on Earth.⁴⁸⁹ The Qur'ān reads in *sūrat* Tāhā:

⁴⁸⁶ ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, 756-61.

⁴⁸⁷ *Sūra* 11, Hūd, verse 107. *Saheeh International Translation*, 188.

⁴⁸⁸ ibn Qayyim al-Ĝawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-'Arwāḥ 'ilā Bilād al-'Afrāḥ*, 791.

⁴⁸⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, 18:392-6.

And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, they will have a difficult life, and We will raise them on the Day of Resurrection blind. They will say, “My Lord, why have You raised me blind while I was once able to see?” Allah will say, “Thus did Our signs come to you, and you disregarded them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.” And thus do We recompense those who transgressed and did not believe in the signs of their Lord. The punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more lasting. Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed before them as they walk among their dwellings? Indeed, in that are signs for those who possess intelligence.⁴⁹⁰

Regarding the verses in *sūra* al-’An’ām and *sūrat* Hūd, they cannot be used as solid evidence that *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Tābi’īn*, and *Tābi’ū al-Tābi’īn* did not believe that *Ĝahannam* is eternal. Allah granting them forgiveness in both verses could be referring to those whom Allah wanted to not stay for eternity in *Ĝahannam* such as those who committed grave sins and needed purification before being admitted to Heavens.⁴⁹¹ In addition, for the other verses where the words *ḥālidīna fīhā* (immortality in it) or *ḥālidīna fīhā ’abadan* (immortality in it for eternity)⁴⁹² are mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that the same words would mean permanent existence if the verses are talking about Paradise and impermanent existence if the verses are talking about *Ĝahannam*. It is implausible to assume that *al-Ṣaḥābah* who first heard about them had understood them to have different meanings, particularly in the absence of any reports indicating any disagreements or discussions among them. To support the idea that *al-Ṣaḥābah* understood *ḥālidīna fīhā ’abadan* to be immortality in *Ĝahannam* for eternity, the following are some reports that indicate that understanding. In the long *ḥadīth* narrated by the Companion ’Anas b. Mālik, the Prophet clearly states that those who remain in *Ĝahannam* are those who were declared in the Qur’ān to stay for eternity.⁴⁹³ The Companion ’Abū Sa’īd al-Ḥudrī also reported that the Prophet stated that as for *’ahl al-Nār* who are ‘really’ its people, they will not die, nor

⁴⁹⁰ *Sūra* 20, Tāhā, verse 124-28. *Saheeh International Translation*, 260.

⁴⁹¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī - Ĝāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ’Āy al-Qur’ān*, 15:481-2.

⁴⁹² They are mentioned 24 times in the Qur’ān in relation to Heavens or *Ĝahannam*.

⁴⁹³ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:17; al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:180.

will they live in it. The Companion ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar reported that the Prophet said that after the people of Paradise get into Heavens and the people of Hell get into Hell, it will be declared that none will ever die; it is immortality in Heavens or Hell.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*, 6:93, 8:113.

Conclusion

Regarding its historical significance and the reliability of *ḥadīṭ* as a tool for understanding *Ĝahannam* according to Muslims during the Early Islamic Era, evidence suggests that it could reflect the understanding of the Islamic community at that time. While certain *ḥadīṭ* classified as *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ* may have a hidden *ʿillah* that was undetected, implying that they might not precisely reflect the views of the Prophet,⁴⁹⁵ it is important to note that these *ḥadīṭ* still embody the perspectives of *al-Ṣaḥābah*, their immediate *Tābi ʿīn*, and *Tābi ʿū al-Tābi ʿīn*. Since they were the primary narrators of these *ḥadīṭ*, their perspectives and understandings are embedded within the transmitted traditions. It is also important to recognize that the historical context and cultural milieu of the Early Islamic Era influenced the interpretation and understanding of *ḥadīṭ*. Though the content or the *matn* of *ḥadīṭ* was evaluated and scrutinized by *al-Ṣaḥābah* themselves, as with any religious text, the interpretation of *ḥadīṭ* can vary among individuals. However, despite these variations in interpretation, the significance of these narrations in shaping the understanding of Hell among Muslims cannot be overlooked. The *ḥadīṭ* literature served as a fundamental source that contributed significantly to the formation and elucidation of Muslims' comprehension of Hell.

For Muslims, the Prophet Muḥammad is held as the last of Allah's Messengers and Prophets who was sent to humankind and *ġinn* to provide guidance and salvation. The Prophet's main message is to deliver Allah's word, the Qur'ān, as it was revealed to him. However, *ḥadīṭ* came to occupy a special place in the faith of Muslims. *Ḥadīṭ* were to explain Allah's words, how to

⁴⁹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the minimum requirement for a *ḥadīṭ* to be classified as *ḥadīṭ ṣaḥīḥ* is that it must fulfill the five standards: It must be reported by known, trustworthy, and righteous narrators; each narrator must have a reliable, precise, and accurate memory or written document that allows them to recall what was heard; the *ʿisnād* must be *muttaṣil*; the *ḥadīṭ* must be free of irregularity in its text; and it must be free from an obvious or hidden flaw.

worship Allah, the regulations the Muslim community should follow, and matters related to *'alam al-ġayb* or the unseen world; thus, *ḥadīṭ* formed the second authority after the Qur'ān. In addition, *ḥadīṭ* provide a reference to understand what Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed and how they lived their lives. Moreover, the Prophet's *ḥadīṭ* and the interpretations of the Companions (*tafsīr al-Ṣaḥābah*) that were untraceable to the Prophet (*ḥadīṭ mawqūf*) are considered to be the most correct explanations of the *'āyāt* of the Qur'an.⁴⁹⁶ Throughout generations, collecting *ḥadīṭ* was a major concern for *'ulamā'*, resulting in the founding of *'ilm al-ḥadīṭ*, in which early *muḥaddithūn* and *ḥadīṭ* critics developed a broad set of tools to evaluate the reliability of each report they laid their hands on. Remarkably, *'ulamā'* not only collected the body of *ḥadīṭ* itself, known as *naṣṣ* or *matn*, but they also paid close attention to those who narrated *ḥadīṭ*; the *'isnād*.

Al-Ṣaḥābah believed that it was their duty to preserve *ḥadīṭ*. Thus, during the early period of Islam, *ḥadīṭ* were mainly transmitted orally because the community preferred memorization over writing, obtaining writing tools and mediums was difficult, and they feared they may confuse *ḥadīṭ* with the text of the Qur'ān. Yet, there were limited written recordings of *ḥadīṭ* by *al-Ṣaḥābah* after being granted permission from the Prophet. The following generation after the Companion, known as *al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors), and the generation after them, known as *Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn* (the Successors of the Successors), continued the duty of the Companions.⁴⁹⁷ However, regardless of the fear that *ḥadīṭ* may be confused with the text of the Qur'ān, books of *ḥadīṭ* started to appear to help *al-ḥuffāz* (master narrators) in their teaching assemblies, to keep

⁴⁹⁶ ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī 'Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 39-46.

⁴⁹⁷ Over the time of primarily oral transmission, it is logical to assume that a fraction of *ḥadīṭ* were lost due to the fact that they were recalled by those who memorized them from among *al-Ṣaḥābah* only when they were needed. In other words, in contrast to the Qur'ān, there was no system used by *al-Ṣaḥābah* to convey all of the *ḥadīṭ* memorized to the next generation.

track of collected *ḥadīṭ*, and to affirm what *al-ḥuffāz* and *muḥaddiṭūn* had memorized. Later, *ḥadīṭ* were systematically transcribed during the third and the fourth centuries of Islam. However, fabricated *ḥadīṭ* managed to find their way into those books. Some of them were deliberately fabricated, while others were simply a result of inaccurate copying. Consequently, *muḥaddiṭūn* developed a complex method for scrutinizing *ḥadīṭ*'s authenticity. One of *Sunnīs*' main tools was to examine the chain of narrators, which resulted in what came to be known as *ʿilm al-riḡāl* and *al-ḡarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*. However, they also scrutinized the text of *ḥadīṭ* as it was utilized by *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Tābiʿīn*, and *Tābiʿū al-Tābiʿīn*.

Before discussing the descriptions and characteristics of *Ĝahannam* as depicted in the Qurʾān and the books of *ḥadīṭ*, it is important to first provide an explanation of what is meant by *Ĝahannam* whenever it is mentioned in the Qurʾān or *ḥadīṭ*. According to *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *Ĝahannam* is a very hot place with a deep bottom where fire is raging all over the place. It is, in the eyes of *al-Ṣaḥābah*, a place prepared by Allah to torture a range of His creation during the Judgment Day. They are to be tortured because they refused to accept Allah's message, refused to believe in Him, refused to abide by His obligations, and died before repenting. In addition, they refused to use their minds, hearts, hearing, and vision to investigate the clear *ʿāyāt* (signs) sent to them proving His existence, His uniqueness, and His true divinity. This place is widely known as *al-Nār*; however, *al-Nār* is also synonymous with other names such as *Ĝahannam*, *al-Ĝahīm*, *Laḡa*, *Saqar*, *al-Hāwiyah*, *Saʿīr*, *al-Ḥuṭamah*, *Dār al-Fāsiqīn*, *Dār al-Bawār*, *al-Samūm*, and maybe *al-Ḥāfirah*. According to *al-Ṣaḥābah*, these names are sometimes used as descriptions or as names of Hell. For *al-Ṣaḥābah*, *Ĝahannam* is thought to have seven real gates, with each gate leading to a layer that is more intense than the one above it; however, *al-Ṣaḥābah* did not learn or believe that each of the gates or layers has a specific name. Moreover, evidence

shows that they believed that *Ĝahannam* has already been created and that it is in the form of a great raging creature that has seventy thousand leashes that seventy thousand angels use to drag it during the Judgment Day. Muslims during the Early Islamic Era also believed that it is operated by nineteen angels, and in each layer, they administer different types of punishment. *Ĝahannam*'s potential dwellers are to be driven, humiliated, and paraded on their knees before being dragged on their faces to spend eternity in *Ĝahannam* chained, blind, dumb, and deaf. In addition, they will be dressed in garments made of fire, and they will spend their time without any chance of enjoying shade or comfort. Moreover, they will stay while suffering from thirst and hunger. On top of that, *malā'ikat al-Nār* will force them to drink boiling water that will cut up their bowels. *Malā'ikat al-Nār*, who are charged with the physical torments, are also to introduce psychological torments. When the sinners arrive to *Ĝahannam*, *malā'ikat al-Nār* will reprimand them, saying: "Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the verses of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?"⁴⁹⁸ They will also keep mocking them, ignoring their calls for help, telling them that their torment will never end, and reminding them that this is the Hell they were denying.

Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that the torment in *Ĝahannam* is for those who denied the clear *'āyāt* (signs) sent to them through the Messenger Muḥammad and the previous Messengers and Prophets. The Qur'ān recounts the Prophet Mūsā (Moses) addressing his people, showing them the worth and outcome of both faith and deeds:

And he who believed said, "O my people, follow me, and I will guide you to the path of righteousness. O my people, this worldly life is only a passing enjoyment, while the Hereafter is the permanent abode. Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except with its like, but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer, those will enter Paradise and be given provision therein without account. O my people, why do you invite me to the Fire while I invite you to salvation? Why do you invite me to disbelieve in

⁴⁹⁸ *Sūra* 39, al-Zumar, verse 71. *Saheeh International Translation*, 401.

Allah and to associate with Him that of which I have no knowledge, while I invite you to the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver? Surely, that which you invite me to has no response to supplications in this world or in the Hereafter; our return is to Allah, and the transgressors will be companions of the Fire. You will remember what I say to you, and I entrust my affair to Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Seeing of His servants.”⁴⁹⁹

After all, their own tongues, hands, and feet testified against them, and they confessed their wrongdoing. “On a Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.”⁵⁰⁰ The sinners became arrogant and made conscious decisions to ignore Allah’s clear *’āyāt*; therefore, they are to be placed out of sight. In addition, Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that on the Day of Judgment, every individual will receive a book that contains a record of their deeds in the world. The punishment in *Ĝahannam* is considered to be just because it will be based on the nature and extent of the evil deeds committed by each person as recorded in the book. They will only be admitted to *Ĝahannam* if their evil deeds were more than their good deeds, as in this book an atom’s weight of good or evil deeds will be listed.⁵⁰¹ Those non-believers are to be in Hell for eternity, and they will be among *al-ḥālidūn fī al-Nār*. However, among *’ahl al-Nār* (the people of Hell) it is important to note that Muslims during the Early Islamic Era believed that some of them who were *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists), true believers, and *tā’ibūn* (those who asked for Allah’s forgiveness before their death) are to be saved through Allah’s mercy. *Muwaḥḥidūn* – including monotheists who were living during the time of earlier Prophets – who are inhabitants of *Ĝahannam* because of their sins may have to stay in it for a certain period; however, because of Allah’s mercy they eventually will leave it. Moreover, *al-Ṣaḥābah* believed that everyone will be exposed to

⁴⁹⁹ *Sūra* 40, *Ġāfir*, verses 38–44. *Saheeh International Translation*, 406.

⁵⁰⁰ *Sūra* 24, *al-Nūr*, verse 24. *Saheeh International Translation*, 291.

⁵⁰¹ *Sūra* 99, *al-Zalzalah*, verses 7,8. “So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” *Saheeh International Translation*, 635.

Ĝahannam, but their main concern was to be spared *Ĝahannam*'s torments through Allah's mercy.

Here, one may raise the question: Did Muslims during the Early Islamic Era only believe in a literal understanding of *Ĝahannam*, where it possesses physical features such as hands, eyes, chains, shackles, walls, and a tree that rises from its origin, and where various forms of torture actually take place? While a definitive answer is difficult to provide, it is more likely that they had both a physical and metaphorical understanding of Hell. However, the absence of reports regarding *Ĝahannam* indicating *al-Şahābah*'s metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* leaves room for uncertainty. Nevertheless, interpreting at least some aspects of *Ĝahannam* mentioned in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* metaphorically, rather than literally, is acceptable. It is also possible that early generations symbolically interpreted scriptural sources as a means of understanding Allah's teachings about the destiny of those who will be admitted to Hell. In addition, there are some cases in which approximation is used to explain *al-ġayb*. In fact, *al-Şahābah* knew that the full truth of the afterlife, being part of *'ālam al-ġayb*, is far from what the words mentioned in the Qur'ān and the books of *ḥadīth* are describing. The words used in the Qur'ān and the books of *ḥadīth* to describe *Ĝahannam* and the types of punishment in it are meant to give the audience an approximate picture of the reality of *Ĝahannam*. For example, when the Prophet described the intense heat of *Ĝahannam*, he said that this fire of yours – that which is lit by the sons of Adam – is one-seventieth part of the fire of Hell.⁵⁰² He used the Companions' understanding of the intensity of the earthly fire to explain to them that *Ĝahannam*'s fire is much more severe. It is impossible to imagine that the Companions learned about the exact level of heat or the precise temperature of *Ĝahannam*, yet they definitely understood that the torment in

⁵⁰² al-Naysābūrī, *Şahīḥ Muslim*, 4:2184.

Ĝahannam is much greater than the torment one could experience from being burned by earthly fire. This method of approximation to explain the unknown using what they are familiar with is employed on many different occasions. In the Qur’ān, for example, Allah described the tree of Hell called *Zaqqūm*, saying that its fruit looks like the heads of devils. While it is clearly stated in the Qur’ān that devils (*šayāṭīn*) are not visible to humans,⁵⁰³ *al-Šaḥābah* understood that the fruit looks ugly and undesirable because Arabs believed that *šayāṭīn* looks ugly, nasty, and unpleasant. In sum, the notion that *Ĝahannam* breathes or has physical characteristics could be open to interpretation, and it is reasonable to assume that not all Muslims during the Early Islamic Era held these narratives as literal descriptions of *Ĝahannam*. Therefore, the symbolic readings of the scriptural sources regarding *Ĝahannam* offered by subsequent generations as a way of comprehending Hell and filling the gaps in the original picture painted by the Companions could be acceptable.

Allah has pointed out in the Qur’ān that humans are unable to comprehend or grasp the true and full reality of what He prepared for them in Heavens.⁵⁰⁴ Hell, as well as the other components of *‘ālam al-ġayb*, is also not to be fully understood because no one can actually sense it. However, the concept of using approximation to understand the unknown in Allah’s speech is not foreign to the Companions. The Companions thought that Allah speaks, and has spoken from the beginning of creation, using words that His audiences are familiar with. When the Qur’ān describes *‘ālam al-ġayb*, the language used is related to the experiences of humans in this world. In other words, the Companions’ understanding of the references related to *‘ālam al-*

⁵⁰³ *Sūra 7*, al-’A’rāf, verse 27. “O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.” *Saheeh International Translation*, 128.

⁵⁰⁴ *Sūra 32*, al-Saġdah, verse 17. “And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes [i.e., satisfaction] as reward for what they used to do.” *Saheeh International Translation*, 349.

ġayb are dependent on their experience of the world they lived in. In addition, the Prophet was responsible for clarifying and explaining the Qur'ān⁵⁰⁵ where he used words that would allow the Companions to comprehend their meaning. Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī says that the Prophet explained the words and the meanings of the Qur'ān to his Companions. Therefore, disagreement among the Companions regarding *tafsīr al-Qur'ān* was unusual.⁵⁰⁶ Yet, depending on *ḥadīth* where the Prophet explained some verses of the Qur'ān related to *Ĝahannam* and *ḥadīth* that described aspects of *'ālam al-ġayb* including what will happen after death and resurrection, an image of *Ĝahannam* as understood by Muslims during the Early Islamic Era can be fairly reconstructed. Nevertheless, there are gaps in this image that came to be filled by later generations. The concept of Hell in Islam has been the subject of interpretation and speculation throughout Islamic history due to the lack of data in some narrations and symbolic interpretations. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* provide limited details about Hell, which has inspired people's minds to try to create their own comprehensive understanding of it using various methods such as claims of revelation, dreams, imagined tours of Heaven and Hell, or *'ilm min ladun Allah* (divine knowledge received directly from Allah). Furthermore, the cultural and historical context in which interpretations of Hell were developed has played a role in shaping the understanding of the concept. As a result, there are various interpretations and understandings of the original vision of Hell. Overall, the diverse interpretations of Hell throughout Islamic history highlight the complexity of this concept and the challenges of interpreting religious texts. However, it's important to note that the attempt to fill the gaps does

⁵⁰⁵ *Sūra* 16, al-Naḥl, verse 44. “[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur'an] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.” *Saheeh International Translation*, 219.

⁵⁰⁶ ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fi 'Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 9-10.

not necessarily indicate deviation, as all religious traditions employ symbolic and rational resources for providing interpretations. From a historical viewpoint, this is a natural process.

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