249781 - Some of the characteristics of the sirat (bridge over Hell) that is mentioned in the hadiths

the question

How authentic is this hadith? As-Sayyidah `A’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) about the verse {on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [as well]} [Ibrahim 14:48]: Where will we be? The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “We will be on the sirat (bridge over Hell).” But at the time of crossing over the sirat there will be only three places: Hell, Paradise and the sirat. The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The first to pass over the sirat will be myself and my ummah. The first nation to pass over the sirat will be the ummah of Muhammad.” The definition: {on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [as well]} [Ibrahim 14:48]. There will only be two places there: Paradise and Hell. In order to reach Paradise you must pass over Hell; a bridge will be set up over Hell which is called as-sirat; it extends across the entire breadth of Hell. If you pass over it and reach the end of it, you will find the gate of Paradise before you, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) standing to welcome the people of Paradise. O Lord, I ask for Your Paradise.

The description of the sirat is: 1. It is narrower than a hair. 2. It is sharper than a sword. 3. It is very dark, and beneath it is Hell, black and gloomy; { almost bursting with rage} [al-Mulk 67:8]. 4. You will be carrying all of your sins in physical form on your back, which will make the crossing very slow for those whose sins are many – we seek refuge with Allah – or make it as fast as lightning for those whose the burden is light. 5. On it there are hooks and beneath you are sharp thorns which will injure and cut the feet, as an expiation for the sin of an unlawful word or unlawful glance… And so on. 6. You will hear the loud screaming of everyone whose foot slips and he falls into the pit of Hell. The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will be standing at the end of the sirat, at the gate of Paradise. He will see you place your foot on the beginning of the sirat and will pray for your safety: “O Lord, grant safety; O Lord, grant safety.” You are my

beloved, O Messenger of Allah. Among the people ahead of him, some of them will fall and some of them will be saved, but he will not care. A person may see his father and mother, but he will not care about them either. All he will care about at that moment is himself only.

Summary of answer

With regard to what is mentioned in the question, generally speaking the contents are sound in meaning, and some of the wording is sound, but not all of the words and contexts are sound. That becomes clear from reading the hadiths that we have quoted from the Sahihs of al-Bukhari and Muslim. The one who reads them will understand what is sufficient, in sha Allah, to have an idea about the sirat, which is one of the stages of the hereafter, and learn a lesson from it.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is mentioned in the question is not a hadith of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in text or wording. Rather it is commentary and a description of the sirat, which is one of the stages of the hereafter, that has been gathered from a number of hadiths narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and from his noble Companions.

One of these hadiths is that which was narrated from Abu Sa`id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said – in part of a lengthy hadith –:

“Then the bridge will be brought and set up over Hell.”

We said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the bridge?

He said: “A slippery place, in which there are hooks and spikes and large thorns [the word translated here as thorns refers to a plant of the tribulus genus, known as puncture vine] with rough fruits (burrs) that catch onto sheep’s wool; something similar may be made of iron which is

a tool of war]. It has thorns with crooked ends, [like] a plant that is found in Najd called as-sa`dan.

The believer will cross it in the blink of an eye, like lightning, like the wind, like the swiftest horses and camels. Some will cross safe and sound, some will be scratched then let go, some will be piled up in the Fire of Hell, and the last of them will be dragged across it. You cannot be more keen to claim from me a right that has clearly been proven to be yours than the believer who will intercede with the Almighty on that day [for his Muslim brothers]."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (7439) and Muslim (183).

Muslim added: Abu Sa`id said: I heard that the bridge is narrower than a hair and sharper than a knife.

The explanation of the meaning of the words is taken from *Fat-h al-Bari*, 13/429.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

"Then the bridge (as-sirat) will be set up over Hell, and I and my ummah will be the first ones to cross it. On that day, no one but the Messengers will speak, and the prayer of the Messengers then will be: 'O Allah, grant safety, grant safety!' In Hell there will be hooks like the thorns of as-sa`dan (a thorny tree); have you seen the thorns of as-sa`dan?" They said: Yes, O Messenger of Allah. He said: "They are like the thorns of as-sa`dan, except that no one knows how big they are except Allah. They will snatch the people according to their deeds. Some of them will be doomed because of their deeds, and some will punished (by being torn into small pieces), then be saved."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (806) and by Muslim in his *Sahih* (182).

And it was narrated from Abu Hurayrah and Hudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with them) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Trustworthiness and the ties of kinship will be sent and they will stand on either side of the sirat, on the right and left. The first of you will cross like lightning." I said: May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, what does like lightning mean? He said: "Do you not see how the lightning goes and returns in the blink of an

eye? Then they will cross like the wind, or like birds, or like swiftly-running men. People's progress will be in accordance with their deeds, and your Prophet will be standing on the sirat saying, 'O Lord, grant safety, grant safety.' Then people's deeds will fail them, until a man comes, able to move only by crawling. At the sides of the sirat there will be hooks hanging, which are commanded to seize those whom they are commanded. Some will be scratched and saved, and others will be piled up in the Fire." By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Abu Hurayrah, the depth of Hell is (a distance of) seventy years. Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (401-402).

Imam al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, responding to those who misinterpreted what has been narrated about the description of the sirat:

… The One Who holds the birds in the air is able to hold the believer on the sirat and make him run or walk. We should not interpret anything in any way other than the apparent meaning and resort to metaphorical thinking except when the apparent meaning is impossible, but it is not impossible in this case, because of the reports which speak of that, as it is proven by sound narrators, {And he to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light} [an-Nur 24:40].

End quote from *At-Tadhkirah bi Ahwal al-Mawta wa Umur al-Akhirah*, p. 758; and in the Dar al-Minhaj edition, annotated by Dr. as-Sadiq ibn Ibrahim, 2/757-758.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is the straight path, which is sharper than a sword and narrower than a hair; for the one to whom Allah does not grant light, he will have no light.(*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 4/375).

Imam as-Sakhawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

… Whatever the case, the report narrated by Abu Sa`id referred to here was deemed by some scholars to be marfu` when narrated from others through many chains of narration which strengthen one another. In fact al-Hakim narrated some of them in his book *Al-Mustadrak `ala as-Sahihayn*. Al-Bayhaqi, Ibn al-Mubarak, Ibn Abid-Dunya and others all narrated the hadith of `Ubayd ibn `Umayr in both marfu` and mursal forms: "The sirat which passes over Hell is like the edge of

a sword.” Similarly, al-Bayhaqi and his shaykh, al-Hakim, narrated from Ibn Mas`ud in a marfu` report: “The sirat is like the edge of a sword.” Al-Bayhaqi alone narrated from Ziyad an-Numayri, from Anas, a marfu` report which says: “The sirat is as narrow as a hair or the edge of a sword.” In a marfu` report narrated by Yazid ar-Raqashi from Anas, it says: “It is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.” Abu Ya`la and Ibn Munayyi` narrated in their *Musnad*s from Abu Hurayrah in a marfu` report: “The sirat is like the edge of a sword.” And Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrated that in his *Musnad* from al-Qasim, from `A’ishah, in a marfu` hadith. The original report was narrated by Abu Dawud from al-Hasan al-Basri, from `A’ishah: “Hell has a bridge that is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.” Ibn Abid-Dunya narrated from a man of Kindah from `A’ishah a marfu` hadith which says: “The sirat will be so narrow and sharp that it will be like the edge of a sword, and it will become so hot that it will be like a burning ember.” In the hadith of Abu `Uthman an-Nahdi from Salman al-Farisi, it is narrated that he said: “On the Day of Resurrection, the sirat will be set up over Hell; it will be like the edge of a razor.” The report is deemed to be marfu`…

End quote from *Al-Ajwibah al-Murdiyah fima su’ila as-Sakhawi `anhu min al-Ahadith an-Nabawiyyah*, 3/905-907.

Conclusion:

With regard to what is mentioned in the question, generally speaking the contents are sound in meaning, and some of the wording is sound, but not all of the words and contexts are sound. That becomes clear from reading the hadiths that we have quoted from the *Sahih*s of al-Bukhari and Muslim. The one who reads them will understand what is sufficient, in sha Allah, to have an idea about the sirat, which is one of the stages of the hereafter, and learn a lesson from it.

And Allah knows best.