



A Typology of the Text and Chain of Transmission of the *Hadith* of "Placing the Foot" (*Waq' al-Qadam*) and an Analysis of Scholars' Strategies for Resolving Its Conflict with the Principle of Divine Transcendence

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Abstract

The hadith of "Placing the Foot" is among the most challenging narrations in Sunni tradition, as its literal meaning appears incompatible with the principle of Divine Transcendence and negates the rejection of anthropomorphism and composition in the Divine Essence. The present study, using an analytical-critical approach, seeks a scholarly mechanism to resolve this apparent conflict with the foundations of transcendent monotheism. It examines the written origins, analyzes the text and chains

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of transmission, and explores the strategies scholars have employed to overcome the literal complications of this narration. This hadith has been recorded in Sunni sources since the third century AH in three different formats and four variations (extended, intermediate, abridged, and the alternative substitution of "*Jabbār*" for "*Rabb*"). However, it lacks an independent line of transmission in early Imami works, appearing only in later literature through critical or allegorical approaches. A comparison of versions reveals instability, summarization, textual corruption, and variations in key wording, all of which undermine the validity of its literal interpretation. In addressing the conflict between the literal meaning of the hadith and the foundations of transcendence, scholars have adopted two primary strategies: "Allegorical interpretation (interpreting "Foot" as metaphor, e.g., a position, a group, the people of Hell, or a manifestation of Divine Power) and total rejection (emphasizing its fabrication or irreconcilable conflict with definitive rational and scriptural foundations)." Ultimately, this article rejects the literalist (anthropomorphic) approach and offers solutions such as "Interpreting it as an allegorical expression" or "Metaphorical interpretation" to resolve the conflict between the literal text and rational principles. By critiquing both approaches and dismissing the literalist (anthropomorphism-centered) reading, the study concludes that resolving the conflict between the literal text and definitive religious principles is only possible through metaphorical or allegorical interpretation.

Keywords: Hadith of Placing the Foot, Transcendent Theology, Anthropomorphism, Resolving Strategies for Conflict, *Mushkil al-Hadith* (Problematic Traditions), *Ikhtilāf al-Hadith* (Differing Traditions).

Problem Statement

Among the narrations reporting the attributes of the Essence of God Almighty, there is a report in early Sunni sources that has drawn the attention of scholars because its literal meaning, regarding its incompatibility with the firm beliefs of Imamiyyah and the majority of Sunnis, appears invalid and blasphemous, making its literal usage unacceptable. This narration, known as the "Placing the Foot" report, literally states that Hell will not be filled and will continuously ask for more until the Almighty God places His foot therein, at which point it will be filled: "...It [Hell] will say, 'Is there any more?' until our Lord (Mighty and Majestic is He) places His foot therein; then it will be filled..." (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 16, 3469)

The problem with this narration is that the possession of a "Foot" by God Almighty, especially in a way that fills Hell by occupying space, implies composition, and every composite being is created; yet, God Almighty is neither composite nor created. Therefore, the literal implication of the hadith is pure anthropomorphism, which contradicts rational proofs and must be rejected, unless it is interpreted allegorically and understood as a metaphorical expression (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 171-172).

In reality, the aforementioned narration raises the initial question: how can this expression be understood without necessitating anthropomorphism, embodiment, localization, or composition regarding God? This question is not merely a verbal dispute; it pertains to the methodology of understanding scriptural texts concerning Divine Attributes and the relationship between the literal meaning of a narration

and the transcendent principles of Islamic theology.

The research hypothesis posits that since the hadith of "Placing the Foot" lacks validity in its literal implications due to textual instability, corruption, and variations in key wording, the only methodological approach to resolving this conflict (assuming the attribution of the narration to the impeccable Imam is accepted) is to interpret it through metaphorical and figurative meanings that are compatible with both the linguistic structure of the narration and the principles of Divine Transcendence. Thus, the core problem of this research, beyond the validation of the narration, is how to interpret it and find a scholarly mechanism to resolve the apparent conflict with the foundations of transcendent monotheism.

The necessity of addressing this issue lies in the fact that the present narration is reported in primary Sunni sources, including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and *Musnad Aḥmad*, with authentic chains of transmission, and it possesses scholarly weight according to Sunni hadith methodology. Therefore, a hasty acceptance or rejection of the narration, without a precise examination of its origin of issuance, various versions, linguistic implications, and metaphorical or hidden meanings, is indefensible from a methodological standpoint. Consequently, this topic sits at the intersection of hadith studies and transcendent theology, and its investigation is of serious importance for clarifying the boundaries between literal understanding, systematic interpretation, and critical analysis of narrative texts.

Relying on library research and an analytical-deductive method, **58** this study examines the issue on several levels. First, it studies the

origin of the narration and the pathways of transmission in primary sources to clarify the hadith environment in which the report emerged and how it was recorded across various sources. Next, the different versions of the report are compared to determine the extent of their stability or textual instability. In the third step, the approaches scholars have adopted when facing this narration are analyzed.

The present study aims to demonstrate that although the narration in question appears to involve concepts of physicality and anthropomorphism on the surface, a reading can be presented through precise textual analysis and scholarly evidence that is compatible with both the linguistic structure of the narration and the principle of Divine Transcendence. In other words, the goal is not merely to defend or reject a narration, but to scientifically explain how to encounter problematic texts in the realm of Divine Attributes, texts whose understanding without simultaneous attention to linguistics, hadith studies, and theology could lead to incorrect conclusions.

Based on the above, the present study seeks to clarify that the intention behind the expression "Placing the Foot" in this narration is not the literal or physical meaning, which is incompatible with the principles of Divine Transcendence, but rather a metaphorical and interpretive meaning that is consistent with the linguistic structure of the report and rational foundations.

Accordingly, the primary research question is: What is the intended meaning of the expression "Placing the Foot" in the narration in question, and how can it be interpreted in a way that is compatible with the principles of Divine Transcendence as well as linguistic and hadith considerations?

1. Research Background

The research background indicates that the explanation of the "Placing the Foot" hadith is mainly scattered throughout classical hadith, exegetical, and theological works, and no independent or comprehensive examination has been conducted regarding it.

Among Sunnis, initial analyses were provided in authoritative hadith commentaries such as *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī*'s "*Fatḥ al-Bārī*" (Ibn Ḥajar, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 13, 494) and *Nawawī*'s commentary on "*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*" (Nawawī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 3, 85). While these works point to the differences in narrations and the "*Bi lā Kayf*" approach, they lack a methodical analysis of textual evolution and the strata of narrators. In Qurʾanic exegesis, *Ṭabarī* addresses it in "*Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*" (Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 11, 59).

Qurṭubī in "*al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*" (Qurṭubī, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 17, 19) and *Ālūsī* in "*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*" (1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 145) have examined the narration within the framework of verses related to Hell and the attributes derived solely from scripture, yet a systematic analysis of the chains of transmission and the network of narrators is absent in their works. In the theological realm, *Ibn Taymīyyah* in "*Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*" (Vol. 3, p. 295) and *Bayhaqī* in "*al-Asmāʾ wa al-Ṣifāt*" (1992 AD/1413 AH: 2, 190) have considered the literal meaning of the hadith consistent with the tenets of the *Salaf* (the pious predecessors) and emphasized an affirmative approach.

In the Imami tradition, the critique of the *hadith* follows a rationalist and transcendent approach; *Sayyid Murtaḍā* in "*Tanzīh al-Anbiyāʾ*" (1988 AD/1409 AH: 102), as well as later commentators

such as the authors of the commentary on "*al-Tawhīd*" by *Ṣadūq*, *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī* in "*al-Mīzān*," and *Mullā Ṣadrā*, have either interpreted it allegorically or rejected it. The outcome of these studies shows that a comprehensive research project that simultaneously investigates the three axes, the analysis of chains of transmission, textual evolution, and resolving strategies, has not yet been conducted; therefore, the current research aims to address this scholarly gap.

2. Analysis of Sources and the Origin of Issuance and Documentation of the Hadith

The oldest extant source that has recorded this narration is the "*Musnad*" of *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d.: 2, 276, 507; 3, 229-230, 234, 279). The historical status of the "*Musnad*" of *Aḥmad* as one of the first comprehensive Sunni hadith collections gives it special significance in determining the written origin of the narration, for this work belongs to a period when the process of consolidating and compiling the hadith heritage was nearing completion, and many oral traditions prevalent in previous centuries were gathered into a compiled format for the first time. The recording of the narration at this historical juncture indicates that the *hadith* in question had already been present in the oral or narrative currents of the Sunnis, but its written form has been accessible at least since the third century AH.

A short time after *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, this narration was reflected in the most important Sunni hadith works. Its inclusion in the "*Ṣaḥīḥ*" of *Bukhārī* (Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 6, 47-48; 7, 224-225; 8, 167) and the "*Ṣaḥīḥ*" of *Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj* (Naysābūrī, n.d.: 8, 151- 61

152) solidified its place within the core body of the Sunni hadith tradition. These two sources are important because, in the Sunni epistemological system, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* possess the highest degree of authority, and the narrations contained therein have served as the basis for numerous jurisprudential, theological, and exegetical citations. Furthermore, the narration in question was also reported in the *Sunan* of *Tirmidhī* (Tirmidhī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 5, 65-66) and subsequently reflected in the fourth century AH in other works such as *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān* by *Ṭabarī* (Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 26, 217-220) and *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by *Ibn Ḥibbān* (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 501-503). The continued reporting of this narration over more than a century, across various genres of hadith compilation, including *Musnad*, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Sunan*, and narrative exegesis, demonstrates that the *hadith* in question was not a marginal or infrequent report, but rather a part of the collection of narrations related to discussions on Divine Attributes within the Sunni tradition.

At the same time, an examination of the *hadith*'s background in Shīʿī sources presents a different picture. In early Imami hadith works, which were primarily compiled in the third and fourth centuries AH, no trace of this narration can be observed, neither as an authentic nor even as a weak report. This absence in primary Shīʿī hadith sources, which encompass a vast range of theological, exegetical, and doctrinal traditions, indicates that the narration in question was not present in Imami chains of transmission and was not transmitted through Shīʿī narrators. In other words, this *hadith* lacks an independent narrative origin in the Imami hadith tradition and is not recognized among Shīʿī

scholars as a tradition transmitted from the Imams (AS).

The only known reference to this narration in early Shī'ī works is found in the book *Tanzīh al-Anbiyā'* (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 171-172). He reports the narration, not through an Imami chain of authority, but citing *Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī*, and then proceeds to analyze and critique it within the framework of Imami theological principles. The manner in which *Sayyid Murtaḍā* (d. 436 AH) engages with this narration demonstrates that he considered it part of the Sunni hadith heritage and evaluated its implications from the perspective of the principle of Divine Transcendence, rather than regarding it as an authentic hadith within the Shī'ī tradition. This mode of entry for the narration into Shī'ī theological literature confirms its external and non-native nature within this intellectual tradition.

Traces of this hadith in later periods appear in the works of scholars such as *Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī* (d. 1103 AH). He deemed the literal meaning of this narration rejected and contrary to the beliefs of the people of truth (Qummī, n.d.: 2, 516). Later, *Mullā Ṣadrā* in "*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*" (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1946 AD/1366 AH: 1, 157) and Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* in "*al-Mīzān*" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 18, 529), by referencing this *hadith* and denying its literal meaning, have sought to interpret it allegorically.

Based on this, the written origin of the narration "Our Lord will place His foot therein" has been consistently formed and continued within the Sunni hadith tradition from the third century AH onwards, whereas it has no independent path of transmission in the Shī'ī hadith tradition.

3. Analysis of Narrative Variants and the Transmission of the Hadith

An examination of the reports (Table 1) and an analysis of the relationships between them in the "Placing the Foot" *hadith* show that this narration is transmitted in three distinct formats, long, medium, and short, resulting in four overall variants. This diversity in the reports indicates that the narration underwent a degree of textual evolution during the transmission process. A comparative analysis of these three formats reveals that the longer version contains more narrative elements, whereas the shorter versions gradually eliminate these elements, settling on the core of the narration: the issue of Hell being filled by the divine "Placing of the foot." From this perspective, it can be argued that the fourfold structure of the narration is the result of natural *hadith* transmission processes, such as summarization, transmission by meaning, and, at times, editorial interventions by the narrators.

The First Variant (Long Version): Reported from *Anas ibn Mālik* and *Abū Hurayrah*, this version discusses the disputation and complaint of Paradise and Hell, God Almighty's speech to them, and the consequences and manner in which they are filled. It attributes the filling of Hell to God Almighty placing His foot within it: "Paradise and Hell disputed. Paradise said, "O! Lord, why is it that only the poor and the lowly of people enter me?" And Hell said, "Why is it that only the tyrants and the arrogant enter me?" Then He said to Hell, "You are My punishment; I afflict with you whom I wish." And He said to Paradise, "You are My mercy; I show you to whom I wish, and for each of you is your filling. As for Paradise, God brings into being for

it what He wills. And as for Hell, they are cast into it, and it says, "Is there any more?" until He places His foot into it." (Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d.: 2, 276, 507; Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 6, 47-48; Naysābūrī, n.d.: 8, 151; Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 26, 219)¹

The Second Variant: This is a shorter version of the first, focusing only on the final part of the hadith. In addition to reporting Hell's demand for more and its filling with the Lord's foot, this variant points to the continued excess capacity of Paradise. This is to such an extent that God Almighty creates a new creation to inhabit the excess of Paradise: "Hell will continue to have people cast into it, and it will

1. It is worth noting that, in addition to the texts mentioned above; there is a narration from *Ibn 'Abbās* regarding God Almighty placing His foot in Hell. This was excluded from the main analysis because it is *mawqūf* (a statement attributed to a Companion rather than a direct saying of the Prophet). The content of this narration differs slightly from the aforementioned versions and is not reported in any Sunni source other than *Ṭabarī's Jāmi' al-Bayān*.

"*Muḥammad ibn Sa'd* narrated to me: My father narrated to me, saying: My uncle narrated to me, saying: My father narrated to me, from his father, from *Ibn 'Abbās*, regarding the verse: "On the Day We will say to Hell, "Have you been filled?" and it will say, "Are there any more?" *Ibn 'Abbās* said: "God, the King, Blessed and Exalted is He, has decreed His word: "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and mankind all together." When the people were resurrected and brought forth, and the enemies of God were driven to the Fire in groups, they began to thrust into Hell, group after group. Nothing was cast into Hell except that it vanished within it, and nothing could fill it. It [Hell] said: "Have You not sworn that You would fill me with jinn and mankind all together?" So He placed His foot upon it. When He placed His foot in it, it said: "Enough! Enough! For I am filled, and I have no more room." Nothing else could fill it until it felt the touch of that which was placed upon it, and it constricted when that which was placed upon it was placed. It became filled, to the extent that there was not the space of a needle left within it." (Ṭabarī, *ibid*: 26, 217)

say, "Is there any more?" until the Lord of Glory places His foot into it. Then its parts will draw together and it will say, "Enough, enough! By Your Might and Your Generosity." And there will still remain excess in Paradise until God, the Almighty and Majestic, creates for it a creation and settles them in the excess of Paradise." (Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d.: 3, 234; Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 8, 167; Naysābūrī, n.d.: 8, 152; Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 26, 219)

The Third Variant, which is the shortest form of reporting this hadith, only refers to the fact that Hell is not filled except by the Almighty's foot being placed within it: "People will be cast into the Fire, and it will say, "Is there any more?" until He places His foot or His leg upon it, and it will say, "Enough, enough!" (Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d.: 3, 229-230)

The Fourth Variant differs in its implication from the previous three. In this narrative content, the term the "Compeller" has replaced the "Lord" and "God": "Hell will continue to say, "Have you been filled? And it says, Is there any more?" until the Compeller, Blessed and Exalted is He, places His foot into it, and it will say, "Enough, enough!" (Bazzaz, 1988: 13, 427; Ibn Khuzaymah, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 207) This narrative content has been reported in all three forms, short, medium, and long (Tha'labī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 9, 104; Ibn Fūrak, 1985: 125; Khaṭīb Baghdādī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 5, 335).¹ At first glance, one might assume this substitution makes no

1. The transmission of the hadith using the term the "Compeller" has been frequently attributed in later sources to the *Musnad* of *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, even though none of these sources contain this specific version. The traces of this *ḥadīth* in extant early sources up to the 5th century AH are found only in the references already cited in the body of this research.

difference in meaning, but this very difference has become a pretext for scholars to offer a different interpretation of this hadith, which will be explained in the remainder of the article.

The long version of the *hadith* (the report from *Anas ibn Mālik* and *Abū Hurayrah*) differs in its wording; even the various reports narrated from each of them have undergone transmission by meaning. While this transmission by meaning has not significantly affected the conveyance of the hadith's core message, its result is the manifestation of textual instability within this report. Some versions are accompanied by additions, omissions of words, or textual corruption (such as *Mutakabbirūn* vs. *Munkirūn*, *Yazwī* vs. *Yanzwī*, *Qaṭṭu Qaṭṭu* vs. *Qad Qad*, etc.). In some reports, the phrases of the hadith have been transposed, creating an inverted version of the similar hadith. Damages of this kind can also be observed in other reports, and by comparing the three types of reports, it is clearly evident that the second version is a summary of the first, and the third is a summary of the two previous versions, representing the common denominator of the other reports. Although, in the view of some, the shared part of the hadith is the original core and the other parts are storytelling fabricated by the narrators, by considering the occurrence of the phenomenon of summarization by narrators,¹ the opposite view is also possible: that the long version is the original, and the other versions are summaries thereof.

1. This perspective has been put forward by Orientalists (cf. Kariminiya, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 59).

Table 1

No.	Source	Chain of Transmission (<i>Isnād</i>)	Origin	Text of the Narration
1.	Musnad Aḥmad (d. 241)	Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Qawārīrī, from Ḥaramī ibn 'Umārah, from Shu'bah, from Qatādah, from Anas	Prophet	"...is cast into Hell, and it says: "Are there any more?" until He places His foot or leg upon it, and it says: "Enough, enough!"
		'Abd Allāh, from his father, from 'Abd al-Wahhāb, from Sa'īd, from Qatādah, from Anas ibn Mālik		"Hell will continue to have [people] cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of Might places His foot in it; then it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might and Generosity!" There will still be space in Paradise until God creates for it a creation and settles them in the remainder of Paradise."
		'Abd Allāh, from his father, from Anas ibn Mālik		"Hell will continue to say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of Might places His foot in it, then it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might," and it will constrict."
		'Abd Allāh, from his father, from Yazīd, from Hishām, from Muḥammad, from Abū Hurayrah		[Paradise and Hell dispute... for Hell, he says:] "...they will be cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until our Lord places His foot in it; then it will be filled, and it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"
		'Abd Allāh, from his father, from 'Abd al-Razzāq, from Ma'mar, from Ayyūb, from Ibn Sīrīn, from Abū Hurayrah		[Paradise and Hell dispute... for Hell, he says:] "...they will be cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until He places His foot in it."

No.	Source	Chain of Transmission (<i>Isnād</i>)	Origin	Text of the Narration
2.	Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī (d. 256)	ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī al-Aswad, from Ḥaramī ibn ʿUmārah, from Shuʿbah, from Qatādah, from Anas		"...is cast into Hell, and it says: "Are there any more?" until He places His foot [in it], and it says: "Enough, enough!"
		Ādam, from Shaybān, from Qatādah, from Anas ibn Mālik		"Hell will continue to say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of Might places His foot in it, and it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might," and it will constrict."
		Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Qaṭṭān, from Abū Sufyān al-Ḥimyarī (Saʿīd ibn Yaḥyā ibn Maḥdī), from ʿAwf, from Muḥammad, from Abū Hurayrah (marfūʿ)		"Hell will be asked: "Are you filled?" and it will say: "Are there any more?" Then the Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He, will place His foot upon it, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"
		Khalīfah, from Yazīd ibn Zurayʿ, from Saʿīd, from Qatādah, from Anas (and from Muʿtamar, from his father, from Qatādah, from Anas)		"It will continue to be cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of the Worlds places His foot in it, then it will constrict, then it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might and Generosity!" There will still be space in Paradise until God creates for it a creation..."
		ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, from Maʿmar, from Hammām, from Abū Hurayrah		[Paradise and Hell dispute...] "...Hell will not be filled until God, Blessed and Exalted is He, places His leg/foot in it, and it will say: "Enough, enough, enough!" Then it will be filled, and it will constrict..."
3.	Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (d. 261)	Muḥammad ibn Rāfiʿ, from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, from Maʿmar, from Hammām ibn Munabbih, from Abū Hurayrah		[See above for meaning.]

No.	Source	Chain of Transmission (<i>Isnād</i>)	Origin	Text of the Narration
		‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd, from Yūnus ibn Muḥammad, from Sa‘īd, from Qatādah, from Anas ibn Mālīk		"Hell will continue to have [people] cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of Might places His foot in it; then it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might and Generosity!"
		‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd, from Yūnus ibn Muḥammad, from Shaybān, from Qatādah, from Anas ibn Mālīk		"Hell will continue to say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of Might, Blessed and Exalted is He, places His foot in it, and it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might," and it will constrict."
	4. Sunan al-Tirmidhī (d. 279)			
5.	Jāmi‘ al-Bayān (Ṭabarī) (d. 310)	Ibn ‘Abd al-A‘lā, from Ibn Thawr, from Ma‘mar, from Thawr, from Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, from Abū Hurayrah		[Paradise and Hell dispute...] "...as for Hell, they will be cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until He places His foot in it; then it will be filled, and it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"
		Ziyād ibn Ayyūb, from ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn ‘Aṭā‘ al-Khaffāf, from Sa‘īd, from Qatādah, from Anas		
		Ibn al-Muthannā, from ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, from Abān al-‘Aṭṭār, from Qatādah, from Anas ¹		"Hell will continue to say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of the Worlds places His foot in it; then it

1. In the transmission of Anas, the phrase "As for Paradise, God, Mighty and Exalted is He, will create for it whatever He wills" is not included.

No.	Source	Chain of Transmission (<i>Isnād</i>)	Origin	Text of the Narration
		Bishr, from Yazīd, from Sa'īd, from Qatādah, from Anas ¹		will constrict, and it will say: "By Your Might, enough, enough!" ..."
		Aḥmad ibn al-Miqdām al-ʿIjlī, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭufāwī, from Ayyūb, from Muḥammad, from Abū Hurayrah		"...He will cast into Hell, it will say: "Are there any more?" until He places His foot upon it; then it will be filled, and it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"
6.	Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354)	Al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān, from al-Qawārīrī, from Ḥaramī ibn ʿUmārah, from Shuʿbah, from Qatādah, from Anas ibn Mālīk		"...is cast into Hell, and it says: "Are there any more?" until the Lord, Majestic and Exalted is He, places His foot in it; then it says: "Enough, enough!"
-	Musnad al-Bazzāz	Muḥammad ibn Maʿmar, from Ashʿath ibn ʿAbd Allāh, from Shuʿbah, from Qatādah, from Anas		"Hell will continue to say: "Are there any more?" until the Compeller (<i>al-Jabbār</i>), Blessed and Exalted is He, places His foot in it; then it will say: "Enough, enough!"
-	Al-Tawḥīd (Ibn Khuzaymah) (d. 311)	Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, from ʿUthmān ibn al-Haytham ibn Jahm, from ʿAwf, from Muḥammad, from Abū Hurayrah		"...they will be cast into it, and it will say: 'Are there any more?' until the Compeller (<i>al-Jabbār</i>) places His foot in it; then it will be filled, and it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"
-	Mushkil al-Ḥadīth (Ibn Fūrak) (d. 406)	Qatādah from Anas, and Ibn Sīrīn from Abū Hurayrah		"Hell will not be filled until the Compeller (<i>al-Jabbār</i>) places His foot in it; then it will say: "Enough, enough!"

- Two chains of transmission narrate the text with slight variations, which likely points to a textual error occurring due to the similarity of the final narrators: "Hell will continue to have [people] cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until the Lord of the Worlds places His foot [in it], then it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough, by Your Might and Generosity!" There will still be space in Paradise until God creates for it a creation and settles them in the remainder of Paradise."

No.	Source	Chain of Transmission (<i>Isnād</i>)	Origin	Text of the Narration
-	Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān (Tha'labī) (d. 427)	Al-Awzā'ī from Ḥassān ibn 'Aṭīyyah		[Note: Describes the narration of the Compeller, then refers to the view of Wahb ibn Munabbih regarding a creation called the "Foot" (<i>al-Qadam</i>), and defines the "Foot" (<i>al-rijl</i>) as a large group of people.]
-	Tārīkh Baghdād (Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī) (d. 463)	Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, from Abū Sahl Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, from Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl, from Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ṣaffār, from Muḥammad ibn Sawā', from Sa'īd, from Qatādah, from Anas		"Hell will continue to have [people] cast into it, and it will say: "Are there any more?" until the Compeller (<i>al-Jabbār</i>) places His foot in it; then it will constrict, and it will say: "Enough, enough, enough!"

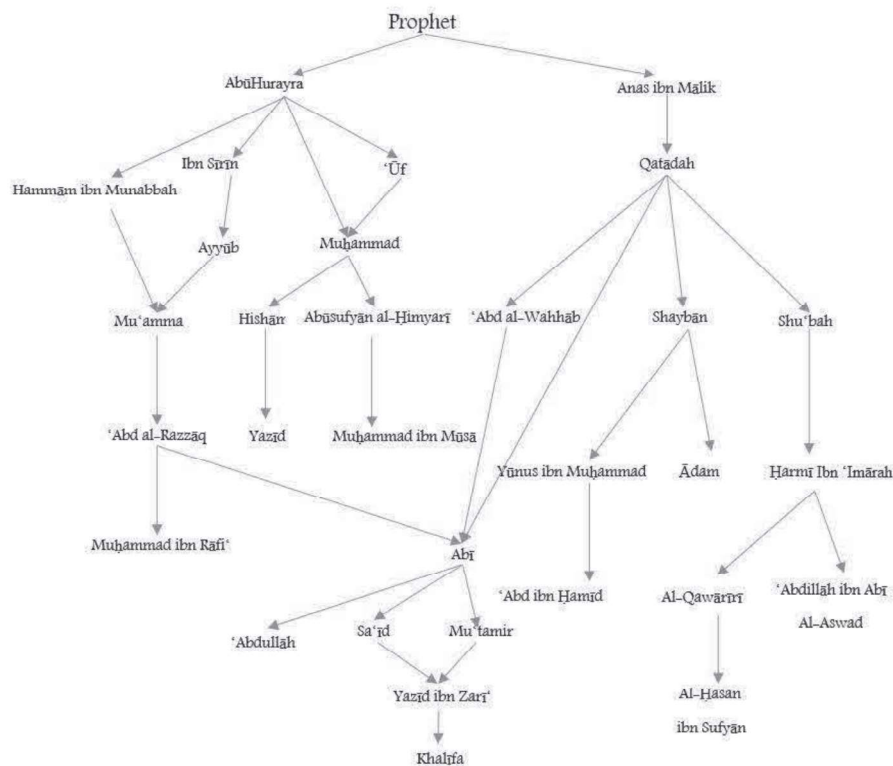
Along with the textual analysis, another approach is to examine the *hadith* by mapping its network of chains of transmission (Diagram 1). In fact, it is not the intention of this study to examine the individuals in each chain separately; rather, the criterion for evaluation is a collective view and the determination of the transmission status in terms of the number of narrators in each generation.

Studying the chain of narrators shows that this report has at least two narrators in various generations, and in this respect, it falls under the category of what is termed in hadith studies as *'Azīz* (Shahīd Thānī, n.d.: 63). This status indicates that the report has been transmitted through more than one path in each generation and does not rely on a single line of transmission. However, a closer examination of the chains shows that some narrators have played a pivotal role in transmitting the report.

In this regard, *Abū Hurayrah* is recognized as the "Primary Common Link" in the generation of the Companions, as a significant portion of the

paths of this *hadith* trace back to him. After him, in the generation of the Successors, *Qatādah* plays the role of the "Secondary Common Link," and the report spreads through his students. In the subsequent generations, narrators such as *Muḥammad*, *Shaybān*, *Ḥaramī ibn 'Imārah*, *'Abd al-Razzāq*, and finally *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* have acted as "Secondary Common Links of Other Generations," playing a role in the transmission and stabilization of the report in hadith sources. Such a pattern in the chain network demonstrates that the report has passed through several main nodes during its transmission, and this fact has been influential in the formation and spread of its various versions.

Chart 1



4. Analysis of Scholarly Approaches to Resolution

In total, two main approaches have been adopted regarding this narration: the interpretive (allegorical) and the rejectionist (denial). The former is primarily promoted within Sunni circles, while the latter is more acceptable within the Shī'ī perspective. Of course, among Shī'ī scholars, only *Faḍl ibn Shādhān* and *Sayyid Murtaḍā* have cited this narration and explicitly rejected it, while also addressing its interpretive possibilities with a high degree of skepticism.

4-1. The Interpretive Approach

This narration has been interpreted through two different lenses. Some have focused on interpreting the word "Foot," which covers all versions of the narration (e.g., until the Lord places... / until God places...). Another group has taken the version "Until the Compeller places His foot..." as the primary text and attempted to solve the problem by interpreting the word "Compeller," a solution that does not effectively address the difficulties in the other versions.

A) Interpretation of "Foot"

1) Metaphor for "Position" and Allegory of Proximity

A number of Sunni hadith scholars have interpreted the "Placing of the Foot" as the "Position." Citing the usage of the word *Qadam* in Arabic to mean "Position," this group considers these examples as a way to approximate the meaning for the human mind, an allegory for proximity, rather than a statement of literal appearance (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 503). In this view, God Almighty places a

"Position" of the disbelievers into the Fire to fill it, just as in the noble verse "That they have a firm footing with their Lord," (Yūnus: 2) where the intent of "The foot of truth" is "The position of truth" (Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 11, 59; Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 501; Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 327; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 17; Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 185; Khalīfāt, n.d.: 100; Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 10, 19).

2) Metaphor for the People of Hell and Paradise

Ibn Athīr, observing the context of other versions of the narration that use the word "Lord" instead of the "Compeller," argues that one cannot interpret the meaning of *al-Jabbār* as anything other than God Almighty. Instead, he posits that the intent of God's "Foot" regarding Hell refers to the people of the Fire, who are counted among the most wicked of creations in God's knowledge, and regarding Paradise, the intent refers to the believers who are the people of Paradise in God's knowledge (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 235; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 4, 113).

3) Metaphor for "Group" or "Multitude":

Ibn Ḥazm interprets the "Foot of God Almighty" as the creatures whom God will create after the Resurrection and cast into Paradise or Hell. In his view, both foot and leg have been used in the Arabic language to mean "A Group."

Therefore, the hadith is meant to convey that God Almighty will place the group that He knows will fill Hell into it (Ibn Ḥazm Andalusī, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 2, 5).

However, this view has been rejected by some other Sunni scholars, who argue that in the Arabic language, *Qadam* and *Rijl* are not used to mean "A Group" (Ibn Qayyim Jawziyyah, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 43).

B) Interpretation of the "Compeller" (*al-Jabbār*)

1) Metaphor for Mediators or Keepers of Hell

Some identify the intent behind the mention of God Almighty as [His instrument], the Keeper of Hell (Ījī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 3, 153-156). This interpretation has been criticized because it does not align with other reports, including the narration of Anas (...and as for the Fire, it will not be filled until God places His leg into it), which uses "God" rather than the "Compeller." (Ījī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 3, 153-156).

2) Metaphor for the Rebellious

Some have identified the "Compeller" in this narration as the rebellious, the obstinate, and those who refuse to comply with their obligations (Ījī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 3, 153-156). In support of their view, they cite the narration: "The Fire said: I have been entrusted with three: whoever sets up another god with God, every obstinate tyrant, and the image-makers." (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 235; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 4, 113) This argument is subject to the same objection as the previous one.

3) Manifestation of God's Majesty and Omnipotence (*Jabarūt*)

Regarding the phrase "Until the Compeller places His foot into it,"

76 *Mullā Ṣadrā* states that the purpose of the narration is that when God's

wrath and command reach their completion in Hell, and the Fire reaches the extent God intended, it says, "Enough, enough!" He interprets "Foot" as a sign of the completion of the Divine decree in Hell. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī also states that the apparent meaning of the hadith is the establishment of God's omnipotence over Hell; in his allegorical interpretation, he attributes the "Foot" to those who are destined for the Fire. That is, with the entry of the people of the Fire, Hell ceases its cry of "Is there any more?" Thus, in both of their views, "Placing the foot" signifies the full manifestation of God's wrath and will in Hell, not a physical foot, a moment when Hell reaches its ultimate limit and becomes still.

4) The Rejectionist Approach

Faḍl ibn Shādhān and Ayatollah *Khu'ī* consider this category of *traditions* to be fabricated lies, mostly derived from Jewish sources (Ibn Shādhān, 1971 AD/1351 SH: 16; Hāshimī Khu'ī, 1980 AD/1360 SH: 17, 244).

Sayyid Murtaḍā considers the apparent meaning of the hadith to be pure anthropomorphism that contradicts rational evidence and is in conflict with the definitive verses of the Qur'ān and authentic traditions. Therefore, it should be rejected unless it is interpreted metaphorically and allegorically, similar to the concept in the noble verse: "And your Lord comes, and the angels, rank upon rank." (Sayyid Murtaḍā, *ibid*: 1945 AD/1325 SH: 171-172)

However, the rejectionist aspect of the *hadith* is so much more prominent in his view that, contrary to his usual practice of suggesting multiple ways to interpret a hadith, he offers no interpretive angle that

would make the hadith acceptable. Instead, he only mentions some of the views held by Sunni scholars (such as it being a metaphor for the people of Hell, or the Keepers of the Fire, etc.) by attributing them to their proponents and using language that indicates distance, which primarily suggests their unacceptability¹ (Qazwīnī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 145). In reality, *Sayyid Murtaḍā*'s approach is a combination of interpretation and rejection.

Among Sunni scholars, *Ibn Jawzī* also strongly denounced the use of such anthropomorphic descriptions regarding God, considering them reprehensible and ugly (Ibn Jawzī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 120-121).

Conclusion

The main findings of this research can be summarized in the following axes:

Although this narration has been recorded in reliable early Sunni sources from the 3rd century AH onward and is classified as an "Aziz" hadith in terms of its chain of transmission, it lacks an independent transmission path in the Imami tradition. It has only appeared in later

1. "The literal meaning of the ḥadīth of the "Foot" implies pure anthropomorphism, so how can it be acceptable?" (Sayyid Murtaḍā, *ibid*: 171-172). Weaker criticisms of this narration are also found in the views of contemporary scholars, though they are of less significance. One group, by pointing to the complete version of the narration as transmitted by *Abū Hurayrah* (Paradise and Hell disputed; the Fire said: "I have been favored with the arrogant and the tyrannical," and Paradise said: "Why is it that only the weak among the people and the lowly enter me?" As for the Fire, it will not be filled until He places His foot into it, and it will say: "Enough, enough!"), argues that accepting this ḥadīth necessitates the belief that, God forbid, the Prophets, the Messengers, the Truthful, the martyrs, the righteous, and everyone who belongs to Paradise must be from the lowest strata of society. The invalidity of such a statement is self-evident (Qazwīnī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 145).

works with a critical, non-native (imported) approach.

An analysis of the four types of narration (long, medium, short, and the variant replacing "Lord" with the "Compeller") reveals that the presence of textual instability, summarization, textual corruption, transposition of phrases, and changes in core terminology have cast serious doubt on the validity of the literal meaning of the narration, particularly the physical and sensory meaning of "Foot," making interpretation inevitable.

In addressing the conflict between the apparent meaning of the narration and the definitive principle of Divine Transcendence, two general strategies can be identified: "First, the interpretive approach, which seeks to apply the word "Foot" to metaphorical meanings such as position, a group, the people of Hell, or the manifestation of Divine wrath; this has been primarily pursued by Sunni scholars and some Shī'ī thinkers (such as *Mullā Ṣadrā* and Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*). Second, the rejectionist approach, which emphasizes the fabricated nature of the narration or its insoluble conflict with rational and transmitted definitive texts, manifests most notably in the work of Sayyid *Murtaḍā* and *Faḍl ibn Shādhān*."

The outcome of this analysis is that a literal, physical understanding of "Placing the foot" is incompatible with the definitive foundations of Divine Transcendence, rational necessity, and the *Muḥkam* verses of the Qur'ān. Assuming the attribution of the narration to an impeccable is accepted, only an allegorical or metaphorical reading can be justified. Therefore, the interpretive view (carrying "Foot" over to metaphorical meanings such as position,

group, or the manifestation of Divine wrath) is preferred over the rejectionist view, provided that the interpretation is based on valid rational and textual evidence and adheres to the rules of *Fiqh al-Hadith* (the science of understanding hadith). Thus, this *hadith* is not evidence for a physical attribute, but rather an example of a "Problematic Text" in the realm of "News-based Attributes," whose correct understanding requires the simultaneous application of the rules of *Fiqh al-Hadith*, principles of *Dirāyah*, and the theological foundations of transcendence.

The present study, while emphasizing the necessity of avoiding literalism when encountering texts concerning Divine attributes, suggests that future research should focus on a comparative study of interpretive methods in various intellectual traditions (Ash'arism, Maturidism, Salafism, and Imamism), as well as an analysis of the relationship between "Transmission-related Evidence" and "Semantic Rules" in resolving the conflict of problematic narrations. Furthermore, a critical re-reading of the principles of the authority of literal meanings in descriptive narrations, in light of a transcendental rationalism, is considered a necessary step in the methodology of understanding religious texts.

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