50147 - The meaning of the word Anwaat

the question

In the hadeeth of Abu Waaqid al-Laythi (may Allaah be pleased with him) it says: “We went out with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to Hunayn and we were new in Islam. The mushrikeen had a tree to which they would go and spend time (to seek blessings) and they used to hang their weapons on it, it was called Dhat Anwaat…” What is the meaning of the word Anwaat?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This hadeeth was narrated by Imam Ahmad (2139) and by al-Tirmidhi (2180), who said it is hasan saheeh. It was also narrated by Ibn Abi Aasim in al-Sunnah. Al-Manaawi said: its isnaad is saheeh. And it was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Riyaadh al-Sunnah, no. 76.

These words were narrated in the hadeeth of Abu Waaqid al-Laythi (may Allaah be pleased with him): They went out from Makkah with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to Hunayn. The kuffaar had a tree to which they would go and spend time (to seek blessings) and they used to hang their weapons on it, and it was called Dhaat Anwaat. We passed by a large green tree and we said: ‘O Messenger of Allaah, make for us a dhaat anwaat.’ The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you have said the same as the people of Moosa said: make for us a god as they have gods. Verily you are a people who know not. These are ways that you will certainly follow as did those who came before you, step by step.’

According to a report narrated by Ibn Abi ‘Aasim in Kitaab al-Sunnah: And we were new in Islam (at that time).

With regard to the words Dhaat Anwaat: Anwaat is the plural of the word nawt, which refers to

anything that is hung up. Dhaat Anwaat is the tree on which these things were hung. Ibn al-Atheer said in al-Nihaayah: This is the name of a specific tree that belonged to the mushrikeen, on which they used to hang their weapons and to which they would go and spend time (to seek blessings). They asked him to make something like that for them, and he forbade them to do that.

With regard to the phrase, “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you have said the same as the people of Moosa said: make for us a god as they have gods. Verily you are a people who know not”: Here the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) likened what they had said to the words of the Children of Israel when they passed by some people who were worshipping their idols. They asked Moosa (peace be upon him) to make for them a god that they could worship as those people had a god.

With regard to the phrase “These are ways that you will certainly follow as did those who came before you”: i.e., this is the way of the nations who came before you. What is meant here is the way of the people who follow whims and desires and innovations that they introduced based on their own ideas after their Prophets were gone, and they changed their religion.

According to the hadeeth of Abu Sa’eed that was narrated by al-Bukhaari: “You will follow the ways of those who came before you, handspan by handspan, cubit by cubit, until even if they entered the hole of a lizard you will follow them.” We said: “O Messenger of Allaah, (do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?” He said: “Who else?”

Al-Nawawi said: This is a manifest miracle of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), for what he foretold indeed came to pass.

From this hadeeth we learn the following:

1-To beware of shirk (associating others with Allaah) and that a person may think that something is good and will bring him closer to Allaah, when it is as far removed as it can be from the mercy of his Lord and will bring him closer to His wrath.

2-Seeking blessings from trees and rocks and being attached to them are all acts of shirk which

have happened in this ummah. Whoever falls into these things is following the path of the Jews and Christians and forsaking the path of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

3-What counts is meanings, not words. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) likened what they said to what the Children of Israel said, even though they were not blatantly asking for a god instead of Allaah.

4-It is forbidden to imitate the people of the Jaahiliyyah and the people of the Book in things that are unique to them and in their acts of worship.

5-It shows that when a person has moved away from falsehood to which he was accustomed, there is no guarantee that something of those old traditions will not be left in his heart, because the Sahaabah who asked him for that had only been Muslims for a few days, as they became Muslim on the day of the conquest of Makkah, then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) took them out on the campaign of Hunayn. This incident took place on the way to Hunayn.

See Fath al-Majeed bi Sharh Kitaab al-Tawheed, 139-147; and al-Qawl al-Mufeed by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen.

We would remind the questioner that Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him) quoted this hadeeth in his blessed book Kitaab al-Tawheed, in the chapter on Seeking blessings from trees, rocks, etc. We advise him to read this, along with the commentary, especially the two commentaries referred to above, as he will learn a great deal from it. And Allaah is the Source of strength.