118282 - The hadeeth about the woman who did not want the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to come near her

the question

I have a question about one of the hadeeths of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): When the daughter of al-Jawn was brought in to him (as a bride) and he came close to her, she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you, and he said: “You have sought refuge with One Who is great; go back to your family.” How sound is this hadeeth? Why did she seek refuge with Allah from the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when she knew that he was the Messenger of Allah? Did the Messenger of Allah divorce her only because of her seeking refuge with Allah from him, or was there some other reason?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

This story is saheeh (sound) and was narrated in several hadeeths and contexts which confirm one another:

It was narrated by al-Bukhaari (may Allah have mercy on him) in his Saheeh (5254) from Imam al-Awzaa‘i who said: I asked az-Zuhri which of the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sought refuge with Allah from him? He said: ‘Urwah told me, from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that when the daughter of al-Jawn was brought in (as a bride) to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he came close to her, she said: “I seek refuge with Allah from you.” So he said to her: “You have sought refuge with One Who is great; go back to your family.”

It was also narrated by al-Bukhaari in his Saheeh (5255) that Abu Usayd (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

We went out with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and came to a garden called ash-Shawt; we came to two walls and sat between them. The Prophet (blessings and peace

of Allah be upon him) said: “Sit here,” and he went in (to the garden). al-Jawniyyah had been brought and lodged in a house in a date-palm garden in the house of Umaymah bint an-Nu‘maan ibn Sharaaheel, and her maid was with her. When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) entered upon her, he said: “Give yourself to me (in marriage).” She said: Would a queen give herself to an ordinary man? He stretched out his hand to pat her so that she might calm down, but she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you. He said: “You have sought refuge with One who gives refuge.” Then he came out to us and said: “O Abu Usayd, give her two garments of white linen and take her to her family.”

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also narrated (no. 5256) from ‘Abbaas ibn Sahl from his father, and from Abu Usayd, that they said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married Umaymah bint Sharaaheel. When she was brought in to him, he reached out his hand towards her, and it was as if she disliked that. So he instructed Abu Usayd to give her her trousseau and give her two garments of white linen.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also narrated (no. 5637) that Sahl ibn Sa‘d (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

Mention was made to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of a woman among the Arabs, and he instructed Abu Usayd as-Saa‘idi to send for her. He sent for her and she came and stayed in the fortress of Bani Saa‘idah. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) set out and went to her, and entered upon her, and he saw a woman with her head lowered. When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) spoke to her, she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you. He said: “You are protected from me.” They said to her: Do you know who this is? She said: No. They said: This is the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who came to propose marriage to you. She said: Then I am most unfortunate. On that day, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came and sat in the pavilion of Banu Saa‘idah, along with his companions, then he said: Give us something to drink, O Sahl. So I brought this vessel out to them and gave them something to drink from it. Sahl brought that vessel out to us and we drank from it. Then after that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azeez asked him to give it to him as a gift, and he gave it to him.

It was also narrated by Muslim (2007).

Secondly:

The scholars differed as to the name of this woman, and there were seven views, but the most correct of them according to the majority of scholars is that her name was Umaymah bint an-Nu‘maan ibn Sharaaheel, as is stated clearly in the hadeeth of Abu Usayd. It was also said that her name was Asma’.

Thirdly:

Why did the Jawni woman seek refuge with Allah from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)?

This may be answered by one of the following suggestions:

~1~

That she did not recognise the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), based on the last hadeeth quoted above, in which it says: They said to her: Do you know who this is? She said: No. They said: This is the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who came to propose marriage to you. She said: Then I am most unfortunate.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Others said: It may be that she did not recognise him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so she said these words to him.

However the context of the story when all its narrations are taken into account indicates that this suggestion is not possible.

Then he said:

If the story referred to one incident, his words “Take her back to her family”, and his words in the hadeeth narrated by ‘Aa’ishah, “Go back to your family”, would not count as a divorce (talaaq). It must be that she did not know who he was.

If these reports refer to different scenarios – and there is no reason why that should not be the case – then perhaps this woman was the Kilaabi woman concerning whom there was some scholarly dispute. End quote.

Fath al-Baari (9/358).

~2~

Some of the scholars say that the reason why she sought refuge with Allah from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is that some of his wives played a trick on her, by making her think that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would like these words, so she said that wanting to endear herself to him, and she did not realise that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would give her protection from him by separating from her if he heard those words from her.

That is mentioned via three isnaads:

(i)

it was narrated by Ibn Sa'd in at-Tabaqaat (8/143-148) and al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (4/39) via Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waaqidi, who is da'eef in hadeeth.

(ii)

it was narrated by Ibn Sa'd in at-Tabaqaat with his isnaad from Sa'eed ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abza, who said: The Jawni woman sought refuge with Allah from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and it was said to her: This will endear you to him. And no woman sought refuge with Allah from him except her. But she was tricked because she was seen to be beautiful and good-looking. The Messenger of Allah was told about those who had made her say what she said to the Messenger of Allah, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "They are (like) the women who were around Yoosuf."

(iii)

It was narrated by Ibn Sa‘d, also in at-Tabaqaat (8/145). He said: Hishaam ibn Muhammad ibn as-Saa’ib told us, from his father, from Abu Saalih, from Ibn ‘Abbaas, who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married Asma’ bint an-Nu‘maan, who was one of the most beautiful and youthful-looking people of her time. When the Messenger of Allah began to marry women from different tribes, ‘Aa’ishah said: He has started to choose wives from other tribes, and soon they will make him lose interest in us. He asked her father for her hand in marriage when the delegation of Kindah came to him. When the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw her, they felt jealous of her and said to her: If you want to endear yourself to him, then seek refuge with Allah from him when he enters upon you. When he entered and let the curtain drop, he reached out to her and she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you. He said: “The one who seeks refuge with Allah will be granted safety; go back to your family.”

He also narrated another version: Hishaam ibn Muhammad told us: Ibn al-Ghaseel told me, from Hamzah ibn Abi Usayd as-Saa‘idi, from his father – who had been present at Badr – who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married Asma’ bint an-Nu‘maan al-Jawniyyah; he sent me and I brought her. Hafsah said to ‘Aa’ishah, or ‘Aa’ishah said to Hafsah: Dye her hair, and I will comb it. So they did that, then one of them said to her: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) likes it when he enters upon a woman for her to say, I seek refuge with Allah from you. So when she was brought in to him, and he closed the door and let the curtain drop, he reached out towards her and she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you. He put his sleeve on his face and he covered himself with it, and said: “You are protected from me”, three times. Abu Usayd said: Then he came out to me and said: O Abu Usayd, take her to her family and give her two garments of white linen. And she used to say: I am most unfortunate.

These isnaads support one another and when taken together prove that there is a basis for this scenario.

~3~

Other scholars say that the reason why she sought refuge with Allah was her arrogance, because she was beautiful and came from one of the kingly Arab families, and she did not want to marry anyone who was not a king. This is supported by the report mentioned above, in which it says: When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) entered upon her, he said: “Give yourself to me (in marriage).” She said: Would a queen give herself to an ordinary man? He stretched out his hand to pat her so that she might calm down, but she said: I seek refuge with Allah from you. He said: “You have sought refuge with One who gives refuge.” Then he came out to us and said: “O Abu Usayd, give her two garments of white linen and take her to her family.”

al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“ordinary man”: … Ibn al-Muneer said: This was a remnant of Jaahili attitudes that was still present in her. In their view the ordinary man was anyone who was not a king, no matter who he was. So it was as if she regarded it as unlikely that a queen would marry anyone who was not a king. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was given the option of being a king-Prophet, but he chose to be a slave-Prophet, out of humility towards his Lord. But the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not take her to task for what she said, and excused her because she had only recently left the time of Jaahiliyyah behind. End quote.

Fath al-Baari (9/358)

This is what may be said about the reasons mentioned in the reports and in the words of the scholars. All of it points to the noble attitude of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), because he did not want to marry somebody who he felt did not want him, and he refused to harm any of the Muslims either physically or financially.

And Allah knows best.