14627 - Meaning of maa’ilaat mumeelaat

the question

What is the meaning of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in the hadeeth, “maa’ilaat mumeelaat”?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This is a saheeh hadeeth which was narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: “There are two types of the people of Hell whom I have not seen: men in whose hands are whips like the tails of cattle, with which they beat the people, and women who are clothed yet naked, maa’ilaat mumeelaat, with their heads like the humps of camels, tilted to one side. They will not enter Paradise nor even smell its fragrance.” This is a stern warning to beware of the things referred to.

The men in whose hands are whips like the tails of cattle are those who beat the people unjustly, like police and others, whether that is done by order of the state or otherwise. The state is only to be obeyed with regard to matters that are right and proper. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Obedience is only with regard to what is right and proper.” And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience towards the Creator.”

With regard to the phrase “women who are clothed yet naked, maa’ilaat mumeelaat”, the scholars interpreted this as follows:

“kaasiyat ‘aariyaat (translated above as “clothed yet naked” may have another meaning, which is that they are enjoying the blessings of Allaah, but they do not give thanks for them and they do not obey the commands of Allaah or heed His prohibitions, even though Allaah has bestowed upon them wealth and other blessings.

The hadeeth is also explained in a different manner, which is that they wear clothes that do not cover them, because they are too thin or too short, so they do not serve the purpose of clothes, hence they are described as naked, and because the clothes they wear do not cover their ‘awrah.

Maa’ilaat (literally “deviant”) means they turn away from chastity and righteousness, i.e., they commit sins and evil deeds like those who do immoral actions, or they fall short in doing the obligatory duties, prayer etc.

Mumeelaat means they turn others away, i.e., they call people to evil and corruption, so by their words and actions they lead others into immorality and sin, and they commit immoral actions because of their lack of faith or the weakness of their faith. The point of this saheeh hadeeth is to warn against oppression and all kinds of corruption from men and women.

With regard to the phrase, “their heads are like the heads of camels, tilted to one side,” some of the scholars said that this means they make their heads look big because of the hairstyles they adopt and so on, so that it looks like the hump of a bakht camel. The bakht is a type of camel that has two humps between which there is a dip, so that one hump leans one way and the other leans the other way. When these woman make their heads look big in this way, they look like these humps.

With regard to the phrase, “They will not enter Paradise nor even smell its fragrance,” this is a stern warning; it does not necessarily mean that they are kaafirs or that they will abide in Hell forever, like other sinners who die as Muslims; rather what is meant is that they and other sinners are threatened with Hell for their sins, but they are subject to the will of Allaah. If He wills He will forgive them and if He will He will punish them. This is like the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, Allaah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills”

[al-Nisa’ 4:48]

If a sinner (who is Muslim) enters Hell, he will not abide therein forever like the kuffaar, and those who will abide therein like murderers, adulterers and suicides will not abide therein forever like the kuffaar; rather it is an eternity which will have an end according to Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah – in contrast to the Khawaarij and Mu'tazilah and the innovators who follow their path, because the saheeh mutawaatir ahaadeeth narrated from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) indicate that he will intercede for the sinners among his ummah and that Allaah will accept that intercession from him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) a number of times; each time He will specify a number who are to be brought forth from Hell. Similarly the rest of the Messengers, the believers and the angels will all intercede by Allaah's leave, and He will accept their intercession for whomsoever He will among the believers in Tawheed who have entered Hell because of their sins but are Muslims. Then there will remain in Hell those sinners who are not included in the intercession of the intercessors, but Allaah will bring them forth by His Mercy and Kindness, and there will be none left in Hell but the kuffaar who will abide therein forever and ever. Allaah says concerning the kuffaar (interpretation of the meaning):

"whenever it abates, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire"

[al-Isra' 17:97]

"So taste you (the results of your evil actions). No increase shall We give you, except in torment"

[al-Naba' 78:30]

And He says concerning the kuffaar who worshipped idols (interpretation of the meaning):

"Thus Allaah will show them their deeds as regrets for them. And they will never get out of the Fire"

[al-Baqarah 2:167]

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, those who disbelieve, if they had all that is in the earth, and as much again therewith to ransom themselves thereby from the torment on the Day of Resurrection, it would never be accepted of them, and theirs would be a painful torment.

They will long to get out of the Fire, but never will they get out therefrom; and theirs will be a lasting torment”

[al-Maa'idah 5:36-37]

We ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound from being like them.