39678 - The story of the hairdresser of Pharaoh’s daughter

the question

This is a question about the Prophet’s (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Night Journey. I would like to know whether the following story is true. During Mi’raj the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) smelt a pleasant smell like that of musk and when he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) questioned about it Jibreel (upon him be peace) answered that it is the smell coming from the beautician who worked in the Pharaoh’s palace (during Musa (upon him be peace) time). She was a secret convert but one day her faith was revealed when the comb fell from her hand and she said “Bismillah”. When Pharaoh heard of this he burnt her and her children . It is said that her infant son spoke to her at that moment and asked her to remain calm and steady in her faith. Due to her great eemaan Allah had elevated her position. Is this story true? Or are there any similar stories? Is this based on a Christian or Jewish source?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The story of the hairdresser of the daughter of Pharaoh is narrated as follows:

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “On the night on which I was taken on the Night Journey (Isra’), a beautiful fragrance came to me. I said: O Jibreel, what is this beautiful fragrance? He said: This is the fragrance of the hairdresser of Pharaoh’s daughter and her children. I said: What is their story? He said: Whilst she was combing the hair of Pharaoh’s daughter one day, the iron comb fell from her hand and she said, ‘Bismillaah (in the name of Allaah).’ The daughter of Pharaoh said: ‘My father?’ She said: ‘No. My Lord and the Lord of your father is Allaah.’ She said: ‘I will tell him about that.’ She said: ‘Yes.’ So she told him and he summoned her and said: ‘O So and so, do you have a Lord other than me?’ She said: ‘Yes, my Lord and your Lord is Allaah.’ He ordered that a baqarah (lit. “cow”) made of copper be heated up, then he ordered that she and

her children be thrown into it. She said: ‘I have a request to make of you.’ He said: ‘What is your request?’ She said: ‘I would like my bones and my children’s bones to be gathered together in one cloth and buried.’ He said: ‘This will be done for you.’ He ordered that her children be thrown into it in front of her, one by one, until they came to the last one who was an infant boy who was still being breastfed. It was as if she wavered because of him, but he said: ‘O mother, go ahead, for the punishment of this world is easier to bear than the punishment of the hereafter.’ So she went ahead.” Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: Four infants spoke: ‘Eesa ibn Maryam (peace be upon him), the companion of Jurayj, the witness of Yoosuf and the son of the hairdresser of Pharaoh’s daughter.

Narrated by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad (1/309), al-Tabaraani (12280), Ibn Hibbaan (2903) and al-Haakim (2/496).

Al-Dhahabi said in al-‘Aluw (84): This hadeeth has a hasan isnaad. Ibn Katheer said in al-Tafseer (3/15): There is nothing wrong with its isnaad. Its isnaad was classed as saheeh by the scholar Ahmad Shaakir in his commentary on al-Musnad (4/295). Al-Arna’oot said in Takhreej al-Musnad (5/30-31, no. 2821): Its isnaad is hasan.

Thus it is clear that this story is saheeh and is proven from our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and it is not taken from Jewish or Christian sources.

With regard to the phrase “He ordered that a baqarah (lit. “cow”) made of copper be heated up”, Ibn al-Atheer said in al-Nihaayah (1/145): Al-Haafiz Abu Moosa said: It seems to me that this does not refer to something that was made in the shape of a cow, rather it may have been a vast pot or kettle, which they called a baqarah, taken from the word tabaqqur which means vastness, or it may have been something that could have held a whole cow because of its large size, so it was called thus.

And Allaah knows best.