13563 - What is the meaning of the word muhsanaat in the Qur’aan?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Al-Shanqeeti said:

The word muhsanaat is used in three senses in the Qur’aan:

(1)Muhsanaat meaning chaste women. For example, Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“they (the above said slave-girls) should be chaste [muhsanaat], not committing illegal sex, nor taking boyfriends”

[al-Nisaa’ 4:25]

i.e., they should be chaste, not committing zina (fornication or adultery).

(2)muhsanaat meaning free. For example, Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“if they commit illegal sexual intercourse, their punishment is half of that for free[muhsanaat] (unmarried) women”

[al-Nisaa’ 4:25]

(3)the word ihsaan (from which the word muhsanaat is derived) may also mean marriage. For example the aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“And after they have been taken in wedlock [uhsinna], if they commit illegal sexual

intercourse…”[al-Nisaa’ 4:25]

meaning ,when they have gotten married. The view of some scholars, that the meaning of ihsaan in the phrase “uhsinna” is Islam goes against the apparent meaning of the context of the aayah, because the context of the aayah is speaking about believing girls, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whoever of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women…”[al-Nisaa’ 4:25]

Ibn Katheer said in his commentary on this aayah:

The most apparent meaning – and Allaah knows best – is that what is meant by ihsaan here is marriage, because the context of the aayah indicates that, when Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whoever of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those (slaves) whom your right hands possess…”[al-Nisaa’ 4:25]

The context of the aayah speaks of believing (slave) girls. Therefore the meaning of the phrase “uhsinna” means marriage, as it was interpreted by Ibn ‘Abbaas and others.