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Evil omen

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Fatwa no. 6335

Q: Dear Shaykh, kindly confirm the degree of authenticity or weakness of the Hadith reported from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) which states, (Run away from the leper as you would run away from a lion.)

A: This is a part of a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) which reads, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: (There is no 'Adwa (contagion, disease transmission naturally by itself not by the Decree of Allah), nor is there any Tiyarah (evil omen), nor is there any Hamah (pre-Islamic superstitious belief that the bones of a dead person turn into an owl), nor is there Safar (the month of Safar was believed to bring bad luck during Jahiliyyah), and run away from the leper as you would run away from a lion.") Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (authentic) Book of Hadith, Kitab Al-Tibb (Book of Medicine), under the chapter of "Leprosy".

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It was also related by Ibn Hibban with the additional phrase "nor is there Naw' (i.e., a promising star bringing rain)." It was also related by Abu Nu'aym , Book of Medicine, in the Hadith of Al-A'raj, from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) with the following wording: (Keep away from the leper as one keeps away from a lion.) It was also related by Ibn Khuzaymah in Kitab Al-Tawakkul (Putting Trust in Allah), from `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) with the following wording: (There is no 'Adwa (contagion, disease transmission naturally by itself not by the Decree of Allah), and if you see a leper, run away from them as you would run away from a lion.) Muslim also related the same meaning in his Sahih Book of Hadith, under the last chapters of medicine, in the Hadith of `Amr ibn Al-Sharid from his father that he said, (There was in the delegation of Thaqif a leper, so the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent to him saying, "We have accepted your allegiance, so you may return.")

The best of what has been said in explanation of what is meant by the Prophet's words, "There is no 'Adwa (contagion)" is the statement of Al-Bayhaqy, followed by that of Ibn Al-Salah, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Rajab, Ibn Muflih and others, which explains that contagiousness is not to be understood as the people of Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic time of ignorance) used to believe, i.e., attributing the effect to the thing itself rather than to Allah Who causes it to happen and that disease is transmitted naturally by

itself (not by the Will and Decree of Allah). However, Allah, by His Will, may make contact with the sick one of the causes of disease transmission; therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, (Run away from the leper as you would run away from a lion.) He also stated, (The sick should not be brought to the healthy (i.e., the owner of sick camels should not bring them near the healthy camels of another owner).) He informed us about plagues, (Whoever hears that it (plague) has spread in a land should not go there.) as all this happens by the Decree and Predestination of Allah, the Exalted.

May Allah grant us success. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.

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