



The first, second, and third questions of Fatwa no. 2229

Q 1: What is the Tafsir (exegesis of the meanings of the Qur'an) of the Ayah (Qur'anic verse) in which Allah (Exalted be He) says: ﴿And do not marry Al-Mushrikât (idolatresses, etc.) till they believe (worship Allâh Alone).﴾ ?

A: The Tafsir of the Ayah: ﴿And do not marry Al-Mushrikât (idolatresses, etc.) till they believe (worship Allâh Alone).﴾ Is that Allah (Exalted be He) is forbidding His Believing Servants from marrying women who are Mushriks (those who associate others with Allah in worship), with the exception of the women of the People of the Book; the Jews and Christians. This is supported by the Ayah in which Allah (Exalted be He) says: ﴿Made lawful to you this day are At-Tayyibât [all kinds of Halâl (lawful) foods, which Allâh has made lawful (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables and fruits)]. The food (slaughtered cattle, eatable animals) of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them. (Lawful to you in marriage) are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) before your time when you have given their due Mahr (bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage), desiring chastity (i.e. taking them in legal wedlock) not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as girl-friends.﴾

(Part No. 1; Page No. 751)

In this Ayah from Surah Al-Ma'idah, Allah makes it lawful to marry free chaste Jewish or Christian women. This shows that they are not included in the Mushriks mentioned in the Ayah from Surah Al-Baqarah and that the People of the Book are not included in the Mushriks in the Ayah: ﴿Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikûn, were not going to leave (their disbelief) until there came to them clear evidence.﴾ Nor in the Ayah: ﴿Verily, those who believe (in Allâh and in His Messenger Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the Majûs, and those who worship others besides Allâh, truly, Allâh will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection.﴾ It is also correct to say that women of the People of the Book are included in the general prohibition of marrying Mushrik women, in Surah Al-Baqarah, but that the Ayah in Surah Al-Ma'idah excludes them from this general prohibition.

There is no contradiction between the two Ayahs if explained either way. The Ayah of prohibition is confined to a specific category of Kafirs (disbelievers) while the Ayah of permission is confined to another category of them. This is the view of the majority of the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with them), although there is not an Ijma` (consensus) on this point. Ibn Jarir stated in his Tafsir that there was Ijma` among the Sahabah that this was permissible, and he judged the narration about `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him)

(Part No. 1; Page No. 752)

reprimanding Talhah ibn `Ubaydullah for marrying a Jewish women and Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman for marrying a Christian woman to be Da`if (weak) and refuted. He did so according to the Sanad (chain

of transmission) and because they conflicted with other reports that were stronger. Ibn Jarir also mentioned the aversion of `Umar and his son `Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with them both) to this practice, because they feared that Muslims would be excessive in marrying women from the People of the Book, following the examples of Hudhayfah, Talhah, and `Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them). They also feared that Muslims would turn away from marrying Muslim women, and in doing so, would violate the Prophet's advice to marry religious Muslim women. Undoubtedly, a Muslim woman is better than a woman from the People of the Book in terms of religion.

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

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