

1053 - Does the Sunnah govern people's worldly affairs?

the question

There is a sect which is no less dangerous than the sect which rejects the Sunnah altogether; they say, "We accept the Sunnah as a source of legislation for matters of worship, but when it comes to legislation or conduct in the matters of this world, we are not obliged to follow any part of the Sunnah in this regard," and they cling to weak evidence, such as the incident of the pollination of the date-palm trees. How should we respond to them?

Detailed answer

The story of the pollination of the date-palm trees describes how, when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) migrated to Madeenah, he saw the people there pollinating the date-palm trees by hand, and he said to them, "If you do not do this, it should still be fine." So they did not do it, and the crop failed, producing only bad dates. He passed by them and said, "What is wrong with your date-palms?" They said, "You told us such-and-such." He said, "You know best about the affairs of your world."

(Reported by Muslim, 4358).

This report, if it indicates anything, indicates that with regard to worldly matters that have nothing to do with halaal and haraam or right and wrong, but are matters of trial and error, do not come under the mission of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) as the conveyor of the Message from His Lord. This hadeeth indicates that these matters are subject to trial and error. The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) set us a practical example to encourage us, in worldly matters that have nothing to do with legislation, to do our utmost to find out which way of dealing with them is best, to research and explore these matters, to analyze

our findings and observations, and to do other things that would help us to develop and make progress in the fields of agriculture, industry, construction and so on. In matters on which sharee'ah is silent and did not give any specific ruling, we are permitted to act within the general guidelines of Islam, such as the principle of not causing or reciprocating harm, and so on.

There is a big difference between this incident and its implications, and the reports in which the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stated that things were halaal or haraam, or that something would lead to punishment or not, or that certain transactions are valid or not, and other worldly or religious matters, because these formed the main part of his mission, and Allaah has commanded us to obey the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in everything that he has conveyed from his Lord.

(al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 1/45).

Those who try to confine Islam only to rituals of worship, such as prayer, fasting and Hajj, and want to separate religion from other aspects of life such as the social, economic and political spheres, and say that these are human affairs in which people can do whatever they want and can legislate and govern however they wish - these people are kaafirs and wrongdoers who do not want to make the sharee'ah of Allaah prevail in people's lives or to allow Islam to guide the people's affairs, even though Allaah has revealed it to govern and control and regulate, and life cannot be properly run and people cannot be happy without it. Without Islamic rule, people are lost and confused in the darkness, as we see today in all those societies that are not ruled by the sharee'ah of Allaah. We ask Allaah to guide us and to open our eyes and help us to accept and follow Islam. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.