

Why the Sphinx was not demolished when the Muslims entered Egypt

Explained by Shaykh Salih Fawzan

Question: May Allah grant you good O noble Shaykh. What was the position of the Companions during the time of Umar—may Allah be pleased with them—concerning the statues and monuments present in Egypt during this present time?

Shaykh Fawzan: Initially these objects were not worshipped, they were merely ruins, the tombs of the Pharaohs; they were not idols. These tombs of the Pharaohs were built upon their graves. Thus this was a matter of construction over the tombs, they were not worshipped.

Also removing them is very difficult. The Companions did not have the ability to remove the Sphinx, it is a mountain; they did not have the ability to do this.

Also there are those who say during the era of the Companions it was buried and covered with sand, and it was not visible.

Smashing statues is clear in the Book of Allah the Exalted. Ibrahim peace be upon him smashed the idols and the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him—when he conquered Mecca—smashed the idols which were inside the Kaabah and those outside of Mecca.

Destroying idols is obligatory upon the Muslims if they have the ability, if they are able to do this. Also this issue is not restricted to statues, it also relates to the structures over graves; the shrines which are now being worshipped instead of Allah. They come first, and they are destroyed. This is based upon the statement of the Prophet peace be upon him:

لَا تَدَعِ قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ

Do not leave any grave elevated without leveling it.

(Collected by Tirmidi 1049)

Thus do not limit it to only destroying statues, rather statues are destroyed and graves are destroyed also. Remove the structures which have lamps and writings on them and make the graves ordinary such that they do not draw attention. As for destroying the statues while the shrines remain, this is inadequate and does not meet the required objective. This does not meet the required goal.