Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Unique Qur'anic Jewel

While narrating the story of Yousuf (Joseph) and his brothers, the Qur'ān states that after the latter having come to Egypt and asked Yousuf to provide them with provisions and rations, the Qur'ān states the following:

"At length, once he had furnished them with provisions (suitable) for them, he put the drinking cup in his brother's saddle-bag. Then a crier shouted out, 'O you (in) the caravan! Behold! You are thieves, without doubt!'" (Qur'ān, 12:70).

One of the men of knowledge says, "It is not right to think that Yousuf accused his brother of theft so he would take him and keep him in his company because if Yousuf's purpose was to keep his brother with him, he did not have to accuse him in this ugly way, embarrassing him and letting him fall in the public's esteem as a thief although he is the son of the prophet of Allāh. Rather, he could have found another excuse to do that without scratching his dignity.

If he had to, he could have done so secretly, say, in a confidential personal meeting rather than before the public, so much so that a crier had to cry out to the caravan, charging it of theft. So, what prompted this announcement to the caravan which contained Canaanites who would return to the land of Canaan and the robbery committed by a prophet of Allāh would be the core of the talk in all meeting places and gatherings? Men will talk about it and so will the women, and the reputation of a house about which people know nothing but honor and spirituality will be ruined. There has to be something hidden in this matter."

The man of knowledge goes on to say, "The hidden matter is that reaching truly divine dignity is not easy except through public humiliation. We tie dignity to the truth because posts and stations among the public are not truly dignifying. True dignity is in reaching nearness to Allāh. In other words, it is neighborliness of Allāh, the company of the Lord of the Worlds, a station of the truth near an Able King. The company of Allāh's servants is the company of Allāh. Whoever loves you loves Allāh, and whoever hates you hates Allāh. Whoever Allāh chooses, He starts with you. Whoever visits his brother in Allāh, the Almighty says, 'You have visited Me'.

This dignity does not become available except when conditions are met the greatest of which is humiliation by the people. If you wish, you can say that the greatest obstacle in the path towards Allah and towards reaching Allah's courtyard is love for prominence and eminence among the people. So long as the heart remains attached to such love, the owner of this heart cannot reach his destination as this narrative tells us: Two ferocious wolves, one of which attacks a herd of cattle from its beginning and the other from its end, are as detrimental to one's creed as loving distinction and a high station.

Therefore, the worldly mastership is rejected in the eyes of Allah's friends who hate it as the Master of the Pious has said, 'By the One Who split the seed and created the breeze, had it not been for the presence of what is present…, you would have found this world of yours less important in my esteem than a goat's sneeze.' One who treads this path must take this love out of his heart, even if it means dropping his esteem from public eyes if he does not feel secure regarding the ills and detriments of his own *nafs*, just as severing a part of the body is permissible, even obligatory, when there is concern about the health of the rest of the bodily parts.

Therefore, the virtuous al-Naraqi has narrated in his book *Mi'raj al-Sa'da* about a scholar reciting the Qur'an in front of their students and sincere ones deliberately in a way about which they claim he has no knowledge and that he is illiterate. Committing a small harm in order to attain a great deal of goodness is rational and according to the Shara`a permissible. This concept has many testimonials from those who tread the path towards Allah, and many refer to it in their poems.

One of the men of knowledge says, "I saw once in a vision someone whom I did not know. He handed me a piece of paper and ordered me to sign it. I signed it without knowing what is written in it or be familiar with its contents. Once I have signed it, the person who gave it to me said, 'Our narrative is quite hard; it is not tolerated except by an angel who is near to Allah, or a sent prophet, or a servant whose heart Allah tested with conviction.'

He read this tradition and said, 'I undoubtedly choose humiliation.' So, I woke up from my sleep and came to know that I had signed the document of my humiliation among the people so I may win through such humiliation the ability to bear the difficult traditions and the secrets of Ahl al-Bayt, peace be with them." This topic has a lengthy continuation, so we shall leave it for its place and people.

Generally, the impurities of hidden pretension are numerous, countless. As much as one realizes on his own about how a human being or an animal becomes acquainted with his adoration, he still has a branch of pretension. Since he has no hope set on animals and infants being thus acquainted with his adoration, he does not care whether they are present [when he is involved in an act of adoration] or if they are absent, whether they notice his adoration or not.

If one is sincere, having no desire about anyone [with regard to his acts of adoration], he will think very lowly of their knowledge of his acts of adoration because he knows that they, too, are like children: They cannot bring him sustenance, nor can they bear any impact on his destiny, nor increase his rewards.

Rather, they cannot bring their own selves any good, or any harm, or death, or life, or resurrection…, etc.

At this point, in order to explain what we are driving at, we have to submit a question because the matter is very important: We see most people feeling glad when their good deeds are recognized; so, is such feeling of happiness lauded by the Shar`a, or is it held as contemptible?

The answer is that it is not lauded at all, nor is it held as contemptible either. Instead, it is praised in some cases and held with contempt in others. Here are the details:

The lauded one falls into four categories:

The **first** is that one's intention is to hide the acts of obedience and sincerity to All‌h, but when people noticed what he was doing, he has to remember that All‌h, the most Praised One, by virtue of His Attribute expressed in this supplication: "O One Who manifests what is beautiful!" has manifested something beautiful, so he is led to think that All‌h has fared well with him: The perfection of His munificence is that He hides obedience and disobedience. But All‌h, due to the beauty of His care, hides the man's acts disobedience while manifesting those of his obedience. This is a great act of kindness from the part of All‌h Almighty in his regard, hence the man is very happy on account of All‌h having done such a nice thing for him, not because people praise what he has done or the status in their hearts which he now occupies. It is as though he sees through it that All‌h, due to His favor and mercy, has accepted his deed, so he is happy about it.

"Say: 'In the bounty of All‌h, and in His mercy, let them rejoice!'" (***Qur'‌n, 10:58***).

The **second** is that his happiness stems from [his conviction that] since All‌h Almighty manifests what is beautiful in him while covering up what is ugly in this life, He will do likewise in the Hereafter as well, for All‌h is the Lord of the Hereafter and of this life. Actually, His mercy in the Hereafter is broader than it is in the life of this world as referred to in the traditions.

It is as though he is repeating what Im‌m Zayn al-`‌bidin (ع) has said in one of his supplications thus: "Lord! Just as You have covered up sins that I have committed in this life, I have a greater need that You will veil them in the Hereafter." His elation in the first case is due to accepting what is in the present time without considering the future, while in the second his mind is set about the future. One tradition states the following: "When All‌h covers up the sin of one of His servants in the life of this world, He covers it up for him in the Hereafter as well."

The **third** is that his elation stems from his belief that hopefully those who see his act of adoration will emulate him, hence he will have an increase in the rewards. Even if he undertakes the action publicly with this same intention, he will not be violating the spirit of sincerity: He will have the reward, due to his intention, as though he undertook that deed privately firstly, and secondly due to All‌h Almighty manifesting his deed and letting others emulate his act of obedience to Him, and one who thus feels elated is quite justified. The manifestation of indications of benefit is sweet and undoubtedly prompts one

to be happy bout it.

The **fourth** is this: When he sees how those who noticed his act of adoration praise him for being obedient to his Lord, he will feel happy and glad that they, too, obey Allah and love to see people obeying Him as well; their hearts incline towards the good deeds.

There are some people who see obedient people and hold them in contempt, or feel envious, or speak ill of them, or ridicule them, or charge them with pretension rather than praise them for their act of adoration. This elation is due to seeing how good the belief of Allah's servants is, how good their souls are. The sign of sincerity in this type is that one feels happy when people praise someone else just as he feels happy when they praise him, perhaps even more so, as it is quite obvious.

As regarding what is contemptible, it is when one feels happy for having earned a status in the hearts of people, so people may now praise and magnify him: This is hated and is contemptible, and surely Allah knows best.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/pretension-and-conceit-sayyid-ahmad-al-fahri/unique-quranic-jewel#comment-0