Do Not Be Deceived by Crowds

Billions of people live on Earth; cities, streets, homes, buildings, shopping centers and public transportation vehicles in hundreds of countries are overflowing with people. From the early hours of the morning, people join the rush of daily life, work, eat, travel and enjoy themselves, benefit from worldly means and continue their generations. Yet within this crowd, people's spiritual, conscientious and moral qualities differ considerably from one another. There is no direct relationship between the large number of people and the prevalence in society of virtues such as honesty, compassion, self-sacrifice, altruism and justice. Indeed, a significant portion of people live their lives in accordance with their own worldly interests, physical needs and personal desires.

It is precisely at this point that a person may unknowingly fall into a dangerous misconception. This misconception is to live as the majority do, to follow the path everyone follows and to accept without question the norms adopted by the crowds as right. The human mind is highly inclined to regard the behavior of the people around it as legitimate and to accept the preferences of the majority as the measure of what is right. However, this tendency may distance a person from his own conscientious evaluations and moral responsibilities. In one verse, God reveals the error of taking the preferences of the majority as a measure by falling under the influence of crowds, and that truth cannot be determined by numerical majority:

"If you obeyed most of those on Earth, they would misguide you from God's Way. They follow nothing but conjecture. They are only guessing." (Surat al-An`am, 116)

The habits adopted by societies, widespread tendencies and mass behavior do not make an action moral or right merely because it is adopted by the majority. Unquestioningly adopting the behavior toward which crowds incline may cause a person to disregard his own conscientious responsibility and the account he will give to God. Therefore, a person must act not according to the general tendencies of society, but according to the measures revealed by God, and must evaluate his own behavior accordingly.



Hundreds of people passing by a person in need of help on the street without showing any concern and remaining locked in their own worlds is an example that clearly reveals the insensitivity of crowds. The size of that crowd can never justify the insensitivity and lack of conscience displayed. Often, the number of conscientious people in that crowd who rush to help may not exceed the fingers of one hand. Therefore, a person's true worth is revealed not by the size of the masses among whom he finds himself, but by the moral stance and sincere compassion he displays by standing apart from those masses.

As in this example, there are many behaviors that are frequently displayed by society in daily life even though they are not right. If we consider another example, as is known, societies may display a tendency to accuse, judge or lynch an individual. When a person makes a mistake, crowds may suddenly and thoughtlessly turn against that person, condemn him with a label and ostracize him from society. Yet every person can make mistakes. According to the Qur'an, what must be done in such a situation is for a person to sincerely open his heart to God, call his lower self to account, face his mistake and turn away from the wrong by repenting. Neither the majority's wholesale condemnation of a person nor its silence through becoming accustomed to the wrong has any value in the Sight of God. A person is obliged to act not according to the reactions of the crowds, but according to the measures revealed by God. In the Qur'an, God reveals as follows that after making a mistake, a person can turn back to what is right through sincere repentance:

“Those who, when they act indecently or wrong themselves, remember God and ask forgiveness for their bad actions (and who can forgive bad actions except GOd?) and do not knowingly persist in what they were doing.” (Surah Ali `Imran, 135)

What society must do is encourage the person who has made a mistake to sincerely turn to God and ask for forgiveness. Setting oneself up as a mechanism of judgment, lynching the person and ostracizing him from society are in no way compatible with the understanding set forth by the Qur'an.

It is possible to multiply examples from daily life. In order to know the truths revealed by God and to act in accordance with the command of the Qur'an in situations encountered in daily life, one must have a complete command of the Qur'an. Knowing God's beautiful attributes, knowing Him, being close to Him and comprehending the spirit of the Qur'an enable a person to display a right and Qur'anic attitude in the face of sudden events.



The prosperity, technological comfort and worldly means that dazzle some people constitute another dimension of this misconception. Buildings rising into the sky in cities, people living in luxury, opportunities for consumption and the race to travel from land to land are not indications of

moral superiority or of value in the Sight of God. Indeed, the verse **“Do not be deceived by the fact that those who are unbelievers move freely about the Earth.” (Surah Ali `Imran, 196)** reveals that people's lives amid worldly means should not deceive a person.

That is because man's existence in this world does not merely consist of completing his life by consuming worldly means. God's statement in verse 56 of Surat adh-Dhariyat, **“I only created jinn and man to worship Me.”** clearly sets forth the purpose of man's existence. A person who devotes his life solely to the temporary satisfactions of his lower self and body, having failed to realize or having disregarded the true nature of the world, will have squandered the high potential in his creation and the true purpose. God says as follows in another verse:

"The life of the world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The abode of the Hereafter-that is truly Life if they only knew." (Surat al-`Ankabut, 64)

Even if a person lives in a colorful city filled with crowds, he must not forget that the life of this world will pass swiftly like a dream and that when his life here comes to an end, he will give account alone in the Hereafter. God says as follows in the verse:

"Did you suppose that We created you for amusement and that you would not return to Us?" (Surat al-Mu`minun, 115)

A person must think by keeping this truth in mind and must always listen to the voice of his conscience. There may be people who abandon honesty when their interests are harmed, conceal justice when a situation is against them, and whose compassion and self-sacrifice remain only in words. However, their attitude must not deceive a person. It is easy to become lost among the crowds and surrender to the current. What is valuable in the Sight of God, however, is to preserve awareness of one's responsibility toward God and good morals by listening to the voice of one's conscience.

What determines a person's value in the Sight of God is not the crowds to which he belongs, the worldly titles he possesses or social popularity, but only piety, in other words, fear of God and a profound awareness of responsibility toward God. A person who holds fast to the Qur'an, acts according to the measures of the Qur'an in every event he encounters and acts according to God's Word rather than according to the crowds will always uphold justice and truth, even if it is

against himself. He will then experience the peace of leading a life with which God is pleased and will bear the hope of earning its reward in the Hereafter. Thus, instead of following the crowds, he will proceed on the right path revealed by God and attain the true gain.

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