

ANSWER

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ

O those who believe, no men should ever mock at other men, since it is possible that the latter are better than the former, nor (should) women (ever mock) at other women, since it is possible that the latter women are better than the former ones.

[49:11]

COMMENTARY

Prohibition of Ridiculing One Another

The current verse mentions the rights and etiquettes to be observed between individuals. The verse prohibits three social evils: [1] ridiculing one another [*the focus of today's commentary*]

According to Qurtubī mocking or scoffing does not only connote mocking with the tongue, but it also implies mimicking someone, making pointed references to him, laughing at his words, his works, his appearance, his dress or calling people's attention to some of his defects, so that they may laugh at him. Mocking includes all of this. By the clear text of the Qur'ān, poking fun at someone or ridiculing him is absolutely forbidden.

Stylistically, the Qur'ān has, on this occasion, addressed men and women separately. Men are referred to *qawm*, word that is specifically reserved for male members of the human society, though by extension the word most often includes the female members of the human society as well. The Qur'ān, however, generally employs the word *qawm* for both men and women, but here it is specifically used for men in contradistinction to the word *nisa'* which specifically refers to women. Here both men and women are reminded that mocking one another is a disdainful and evil act. They must refrain from it, because it is very likely that the man who is mocked at may be better than the mocking person and the woman who is mocked at may be better than the mocker. Here the Qur'ān prohibits men from mocking other men, and women from mocking other women. This, however, does not mean that it is permitted for men to mock at women or for women to mock at men. The actual reason for making separate mention of the two sexes is that Islam does not allow free intermingling of the two sexes. Ridiculing each other generally occurs where there is such an intermingling. Therefore, in a Muslim society it is inconceivable that men would mock a woman or women would mock a man in an intermingling situation.

In short: no one dare make mockery of a person whose body, face, shape and stature are defective, imperfect, impaired or deformed, because he does not know that the other person, in the sight of Allah, might be better than him on account of his sincerity and purity of heart. When the righteous predecessors heard this verse, they adopted a conducive attitude: For example, Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn

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Shurahbil *radi'allāhu 'anhu* said that he would not laugh at a person when he sees him drink milk direct from the udders of a goat, lest he should become one like him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd *radi'allāhu 'anhu* said: *"I would not like to scoff at a dog, lest I be metamorphosed into a dog (Qurtubī)."*

It is recorded in Sahīh of Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah *radi'allāhu 'anhu* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *"Allah does not look at your faces and your wealth; He looks at your hearts and your works."* Qurtubī

Qurtubī derives a legal maxim from this tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that in any matter it is not proper to pass a categorical judgment on the basis of overt evidence or circumstances, because it is possible that a person's overt actions might seem to be good but in the sight of Allah, on account of the insincerity and impurity of his heart, they could be bad, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's hearts. On the contrary, a person's overt actions might seem to us bad, but in the sight of Allah, on account of the sincerity and purity of his heart, they could serve as an expiation of the bad actions, as He is fully aware of the inner state of people's heart.

End.

