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Crying from the Viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an and Traditions

By studying the Holy Qur'an and traditions [hadiths], realities of weeping and shedding tears become known and various secrets about crying are clarified. We now refer to some of the Qu'ranic verses and traditions which discuss this issue:

A. Qur'anic verses

1. Crying as a sign of perceiving realities

Allah, the Exalted, says,

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: Our Lord! We believe, so write us down with the witnesses of the truth.”¹

This Qur'anic verse is an account of the reaction of the Ethiopian King, Najjashi, who had received and welcomed the Muslims that had migrated from Mecca to Ethiopia at the beginning of the Prophet's mission to seek safety.

2. Crying for repentance

Allah, the Exalted, says in the Qur'an,

﴿ فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلاً وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيراً جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾

*“Therefore they shall laugh little and weep much as a recompense for what they earned.”*²

This verse of the Qur'an is an account of the hypocrites [*munafiqin*] at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S) who used to avoid fighting in battles against the enemies of Islam and also encouraged others to do so, on the pretext that the weather was too hot or too cold.

3. Shedding tears of belief is a sign of wisdom

Allah, the Exalted, states,

﴿ وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولاً * وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأُنْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ
وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعاً ﴾

*“And they say: Glory be to our Lord! Most surely the promise of our Lord was to be fulfilled. And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility.”*³

4. Prophets shed tears for Allah

Allah, the Exalted, says,

﴿ إِذَا تُلِّيَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّداً وَبُكِيّاً ﴾

*“When the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them [the prophets], they fell down making obeisance and weeping.”*⁴

5. Tears of regret are a remedy for those who have gone astray

Allah, the Exalted, says,

﴿أَزْفَتِ الْإِزْفَةُ * لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ * أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ *
وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ﴾

“The near event draws nigh. There shall be none besides Allah to remove it. Do you then wonder at this announcement? And will you laugh and not weep?”⁵

B. Islamic traditions [hadiths] regarding crying

Crying and shedding tears have been given special value in Islamic traditions.

1. Tears are a sign of Allah’s mercy

Amir al-Mu’minin, Imam ‘Ali (as), has said,

«بكاء العيون وخشية القلوب من رحمة الله.»

“The tears of the eyes and the fear of the heart (for the sake of Allah) are among the blessings and mercies of Allah.”⁶

2. Tears: Allah’s gift to mankind

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said,

«إنما هي رحمة يجعلها في قلوب عباده.»

“Verily, tears are a mercy that Allah has placed in the essence of his servants (the human beings).”⁷

3. Tears illuminate the heart

Amir al-Mu’minin, Imam ‘Ali (as), has said,

«البكاء من خشية الله ينير القلب ويعصم من معاودة الذنب.»

“Crying out of fear of Allah illuminates the heart and prevents a person from returning to past sins.”⁸

4. Tears soften the heart and bring prosperity

In his last will and testament to Imam 'Ali (as), the Prophet of Allah (S) said,

«يا علي! اربع خصال من الشقاء: جمود العين وقساوة القلب وبُعد الامل
وحبّ البقاء.»

“O 'Ali! There are four notable signs of misfortune and wretchedness: lack of tears, hardness of the heart, unrealistically drawn out hopes, and desire to live forever.”⁹

5. Tears bring deliverance from Allah's punishment

Imam al-Husayn (as) said,

«البكاء من خشية الله نجاة من النار.»

“Crying due to fear of Allah brings deliverance from hell.”¹⁰

6. Tears bring about a great reward from Allah

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said,

«ما من عمل الا وله وزن وثواب الا الدمعة، فانها تطفي غضب الرب.»

“Every action and every good deed has a fixed heavenly reward, except tears. Verily, tears extinguish the fire of Allah's wrath.”¹¹

7. Tears have the value of the blood of martyrs

The Prophet of Allah (S) said,

«... وما من قطرة احبّ الى الله من قطرتين: قطرة دم في سبيل الله، وقطرة
دمع في سواد الليل من خشية الله.»

“... There are no drops more beloved by Allah than two: a drop of blood that has been shed due to sacrifice in the way of Allah, and a tear that flows from the eyes in the dark of the night due to fear of Allah.”¹²

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1. Surat al-Ma'idah 5:83.
 2. Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) 9:82.
 3. Surat Bani Isra'il (al-Isra') 17: 108–109.
 4. Surat Maryam 19:58.
 5. Surat al-Najm 53:57–60.
 6. Tabarsi, Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 317, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 90, p. 336.
 7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 79, p. 91, hadith 43.
 8. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 11, p. 245, hadith 36.
 9. Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih, vol. 4, p. 360; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 164, hadith 21.
 10. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 11, p. 245, hadith 35.
 11. Ibid., p. 240.
 12. Shaykh Mufid, Amali, p. 11, hadith 8.

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