

Examining Opposing Claims

Some Muslim sects have denied the permissibility of shedding tears for Imam al-Husayn (as). In their denials, they have cited and held fast to a number of proofs which we will now discuss and examine:

1. Hadiths which prohibit crying for the dead

Muslim and other historians have recounted that 'Abd Allah said, "Hafsah cried for 'Umar." 'Umar said to her, "Keep quiet, my little daughter. Don't you know that the Prophet of Allah said,

«.إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ يَعْذَّبُ بِبِكَاءِ أَهْلِهِ عَلَيْهِ»

'The crying of the family tortures the dead person'." [1](#)

It has also been narrated that when 'Umar was hit by a spear, he fainted. They started yelling and crying for him. When he became conscious again, he said, "Don't you know that the Prophet of Allah said,

«.إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ لَيُعَذَّبُ بِبِكَاءِ الْحَيِّ»

'Verily, the dead get tortured by the crying of the living'." [2](#)

Response

Firstly, these traditions contradict all the previously related traditions which prove that crying is not only permissible but also preferred. Secondly, it can be shown by citing other traditions that 'Umar made a mistake in applying the Prophet's tradition, because Suhayb says, "After hearing this tradition from 'Umar, I went to see 'A'ishah and told her what I had heard from 'Umar. 'A'ishah said, 'No, I swear upon Allah! The Prophet of Allah never said that the crying of a person tortures the dead. On the contrary, he said,

انّ الكافر يزيده الله بكاء اهله عذاباً، وانّ الله لهو اضحك وأبكي، ولا تزر وازرة وزر اخري

‘Verily Allah increases the torture and pain of an unbeliever [*kafir*] when his family cries for him. Verily it is Allah that makes people laugh and cry. No one bears the burden of another.’”³

Hisham ibn ‘Urwah narrates from his father that the saying (words) of Aba ‘Abd al–Rahman ibn ‘Umar were repeated to ‘A’ishah, that the dead get tortured by the crying of his family. ‘A’ishah said, “May Allah have mercy on Aba ‘Abd al–Rahman. He heard something but did not commit it to his memory. One day the corpse of a Jew was passed near the Prophet of Allah while his family was crying. The Holy Prophet said,

انتم تبكون وانّه ليعذب

‘You are crying while he is getting tortured’.”⁴

Thirdly, as previously mentioned ‘Umar forbade women from crying in the presence of the Holy Prophet (S). The Noble Prophet (S) said to him,

دعهنّ يا عمر! فانّ العين دامعة والقلب مصاب والعهد قريب

“O ‘Umar! Leave them alone, because tearful eyes, grieving hearts and the promise are near.”

Fourthly, this tradition is not compatible with the apparent meanings of many verses of the Holy Qur’an because Allah says,

﴿ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ﴾

“*A burdened soul shall not bear the burden of another.*”⁵

2. ‘Umar made a prohibition against crying for the dead

Some people say that ‘Umar ibn Khattab forbade crying for the dead. They say that ‘Umar’s verdict is proof that it is not permissible to cry for the dead.

Response

Firstly, ‘Umar’s prohibition is opposed to explicit tenets or statements that prove not only the permissibility, but the preference for crying.

Secondly, ‘Umar’s way of life is not credible when it is opposed to the words and actions [*sunnah*] of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S).

Thirdly, he was opposed by the Holy Prophet (S) when he disallowed crying, as has already been mentioned.

Fourthly, how is it possible that ‘Umar made crying for the dead unlawful when he himself cried for Nu‘man ibn Muqrān,⁶ Zayd ibn Khattab⁷ and Khalid ibn Walid⁸. He even ordered other people to cry for Khalid ibn Walid.⁹

[The Torah forbade crying for the dead](#)

If one ponders the Tawrat (Torah or the Old Testament), he understands that the prohibition for crying for the dead has roots in this book. ‘Umar was known to have good relations with the People of the Book [*ahl al-kitab*], especially the Jews, and he read their books. Therefore, it can be surmised that he may have applied this Jewish law in Islam.

In the Jewish books, we read, “O child! I will get the desire of your two eyes with one stroke. Therefore, do not weep and cry, and do not shed your tears. Keep cool and quiet, and do not weep or wail for the dead.”¹⁰

¹. Muslim, Al-Sahih, vol. 2, p. 639; Kitab al-Jana’iz, Bab al-Mayyit Yu’adhhabu bi-Buka’i Ahlihi ‘Alayh.

². Ibid.

³. Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al-Jana’iz, vol. 1, p. 155; Muslim, Al-Sahih, Kitab al-Jana’iz, section [bab] 9, hadith 22–23.

⁴. Muslim, Al-Sahih, Kitab al-Jana’iz, section [bab] 9, hadith 25; Sahih Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 156.

⁵. Surat Fatir 35:18.

⁶. Al-Musannaf, vol. 3, p. 344.

⁷. Al-‘Aqd al-Farid, vol. 3, p. 191.

⁸. Kanz al-‘Ummal, vol. 15, p. 731.

⁹. Al-Musannaf, vol. 7, p. 175.

¹⁰. Sifar Hazqiyal, ishah 24, faqarah 16–18.

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