

Right n. 5: The Right of the Sight

حق البصر

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ بَصْرِكَ فَغَضُّهُ عَمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَتَرْكُ ابْتِدَالِهِ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعٍ عِبْرَةٍ تَسْتَقْبَلُ بِهَا بَصْرًا أَوْ تَسْتَفِيدُ بِهَا عِلْمًا، فَإِنَّ
الْبَصَرَ بَابُ الْإِعْتِبَارِ.

And the right of your sight is that you lower it before everything which is unlawful to you. And that you abandon using it except in situations in which you can take heed in such a way that you gain insight or acquire knowledge by it. Indeed the sight is the gateway to reflection.

Both vision and the eyes are considered here. For example, consider the following verse:

وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ

“And the Decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:77]

Also, consider the following verse:

وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks (to God).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:78]

It also covers the concept of insight. For example, consider the following verse:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Say thou: "This is my way: I do invite unto God, – on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, – I and whoever follows me. Glory to God! And never will I join gods with God!" [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12: 108]

The Vision System: A Multidisciplinary One

The vision system is so important in our understanding that it is given special consideration in psychology. It is so important in physics because it is related to light and optics. It is given especial consideration by philosophers because it is important in discovering mysterious things. It is of especial consideration in biology because it is an important part of the human body. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that it is the subject of study of several fields of science.

Proper Use of the Eyes

God the Almighty advised us about the importance of the eyes in the Holy Qur'an:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ

“Have We not made for him a pair of eyes?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Balad 90:8]

The eyes are man's most important means of communicating with the outside world. The eyes are so amazing that they force us to be humble to our Creator. However, some people do not make proper use of them:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

“Many are the Jinns and men we have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, – nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7: 179]

There is a tradition from the Prophet of God regarding the above verse [al-Balad 90:8] which reads:

“God told the children of Adam:

يا بَنَ آدَمَ! إِنَّ نَازِعَكَ لِلسَّانِكِ فِي مَا حَرَّمْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَقَدْ أَعْنَتَكَ عَلَيْهِ بِطَبَقَتَيْنِ فَأَطِيقْ. وَإِنَّ نَازِعَكَ بِصُرْكَ إِلَى بَعْضِ مَا حَرَّمْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَقَدْ أَعْنَتَكَ عَلَيْهِ بِطَبَقَتَيْنِ فَأَطِيقْ.

“O Children of Adam! I have given you two lips. If your tongue tries to make you commit a forbidden act, close your lips. I have given you eyelids. If your eyes try to make you commit a forbidden act, close your eyelids.”¹

The eyes must be closed to what is forbidden by God. We read the following about the unbelievers in the Holy Qur’an:

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا

“(Unbelievers) whose eyes had been under a veil from remembrance of Me, and who had been unable even to hear.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18: 101]

In this verse, we read that the unbelievers did not close their eyes to what is forbidden to look at. Rather they closed their eyes from what reminds man of God. They did not hear even though they had the hearing faculty. In fact, the unbelievers disabled their most useful faculty to seek the truth and realize the realities. It is interesting to note that God says that their eyes had been under a veil from His remembrance. Thus, they could not see God’s signs. They went astray due to not seeing the truth. We cannot see God’s remembrance with our eyes. Rather we see His signs that remind us of him.

Looking at One’s Creation

One proper use of the eyes is in cases that the Qur’an has pointed out. The Qur’an invites us to look at our own creation in the following verse:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

“Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tariq 86:5-7]

Thus, the Qur’an directs man to consider how he is created from sperm to realize what we are.

Looking at Food

The second instance that the Qur'an invites man to look to is to consider what he eats. The Qur'an says:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

“Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it)” [The Holy Qur'an, 'Abasa 80:24]

The closest thing to man that exists outside our body but becomes a part of us when eaten is food. If we do not eat, we will die soon. That is why the Qur'an stresses food items, especially those derived from plants and trees. There are various interpretations of this verse. Some consider this looking to be considering whether what we have obtained for eating is from legitimate means or not. Others consider food for the mind, too. Imam Baqir said:

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِي يَأْخُذُهُ، عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ

“Look and see from whom you get your knowledge.”²

There are many occasions in the Qur'an where we are instructed to look such as:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ

For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve God, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom God guided and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So, travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth). [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na^ol 16:36]

We also read:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say: Travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation; so will God produce a later creation: for God has power over all things.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-'Ankabut 29:20]

It is Forbidden to Look at Unfamiliar Women

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain Bliss.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:30-31]

In these verses, we are advised to look down when we encounter an unfamiliar woman.³ We cannot close our eyes since then we cannot walk or we might fall down on the ground. However, by limiting our view we can reduce the amount that we see. Thus, we restrict our looking at the forbidden. As said before God has admonished men and women against looking at each other. There are many traditions that have expressed the ill effects of such looks.

Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yahya on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad on the authority of Ibn Fazzil on the authority of Ali ibn Aqabeh on the authority of his father that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

النَّظْرَةُ سَهْمٌ مِنْ سِهَامِ إبْلِيسَ مَسْمُومٌ، وَكَمْ مِنْ نَظْرَةٍ أَوْرَثَتْ حَسْرَةً طَوِيلَةً

“A look is like a poisonous dart from the darts of Satan. How many a look has caused long-lasting regret.”⁴

The similitude between a look and a dart is because a dart will pierce through when it hits the target. A dirty look will also tear down the veils of modesty and chastity. Some dirty looks might lead to a long-lasting sorrow. There are many people whose life is ruined due to a dirty look. Then they cannot compensate for this all lifelong. They will be sorry but it will be of no use. Ibn Abi Umayr quoted on the authority of Al-Kaheli on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

النَّظْرَةُ بَعْدَ النَّظْرَةِ تَزْرَعُ فِي الْقَلْبِ الشَّهْوَةَ وَكَفَى بِهَا لِصَاحِبِهَا فِتْنَةً.

*“One look after another will sow the seeds of desire in the heart, and it is sufficient temptation for the person.”*⁵

Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ فَرَفَعَ بَصَرَهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ لَمْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْهِ بَصَرُهُ حَتَّى يُزَوِّجَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ.

*“If one sees a woman but turns away his eyes and looks at the sky, he will be rewarded with a ‘Hoori’*⁶ *in Heaven.”*⁷

However, there are exceptions that are discussed below.

Exceptions

We learned from the verses of the Holy Qur’an and the sayings of Imam Sajjad that it is not permitted to look at divinely forbidden sights. Now we will point out exceptions to this rule in Islam. One such case is looking at a woman with whom you want to marry. There is a chapter in Wasa’il al-Shāh on this subject. The first tradition in this chapter is as follows.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub quoted on the authority of Ali ibn Ibrahim, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Ibn Abi Amir, on the authority of Ayoub ibn Khazar, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim who asked Imam Baqir :

“Can a man who intends to marry a woman look at her?” Imam Baqir said: “Yes, since he wants to buy the most expensive thing.”⁸ This tradition only discusses the permission to look. There are other traditions that clarify things more.

Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of his father on the authority of Hisham ibn Salim, Himad ibn Isa and Hafs ibn Bakhtari on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

لَا بَأْسَ بَأَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى وَجْهِهَا وَمَعَاصِمِهَا إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَزَوَّجَهَا.

“When one intends to marry a woman, it is fine for him to look at her face and her wrists.”⁹

In another tradition from Abi Al-Ash`ari on the authority of Hasan ibn al-Sani, Imam Sadiq was asked: “How is it if a man who intends to marry a woman looks at her carefully. He looks at her face and the back of her head.” Imam Sadiq replied: “When he intends to marry her it is fine for him to look at her face and the back of her head.”¹⁰ There are also other traditions in this respect that permit looking without lustful intentions.

The Look of a Male Doctor at a Female Patient

Another exception to this rule applies to a female patient whom no one but a male doctor can treat. This is expressed in Chapter 130 of Wasa`il al-Sh`ah. The first tradition in this chapter reads: “Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Isa, on the authority of Ali ibn al-Hikam, on the authority of Abi Hamzah al-Thumali that Imam Baqir was asked:

سَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ الْمَرْأَةِ الْمُسْلِمَةِ يُصِيبُهَا الْبَلَاءُ فِي جَسَدِهَا إِمَّا كَسْرٌ وَإِمَّا جُرْحٌ فِي مَكَانٍ لَا يَصْلُحُ النَّظْرُ إِلَيْهِ يَكُونُ الرَّجُلُ
أَرْفَقَ بِعِلَاجِهِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ، أَيُصْلِحُ لَهُ النَّظْرُ إِلَيْهَا؟ قَالَ: إِذَا اضْطُرَّتْ إِلَيْهِ فَلْيُعَالَجْهَا إِنْ شَاءَتْ

“Consider when a Muslim woman is ill, injured or a part of her body is broken in a place that cannot be looked at. If the male doctor is more expert in treating her than women, can he look at her body?” The Imam said: “If she is compelled to do it, then let him treat her if she wishes.”¹¹

Looking at Bedouin Women and Women under the Protection of Islam

Another exception is looking at Bedouin women and those who live under the protection of Islam. There are two traditions on this issue in Chapter 112 of Wasa`il al-Sh`ah. Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of Ali ibn Ibrahim on the authority of his father on the authority of al-Nawfeli on the authority of al-Sak`ooni on the authority of Imam Sadiq that God’s Prophet said:

لَا حُرْمَةَ لِنِسَاءِ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ أَنْ يُنْظَرَ إِلَى شُعُورِهِنَّ وَأَيْدِيهِنَّ

“It is not forbidden to look at the hair or the hands of women who live under the protection of Islam.”¹²

Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of some of the companions, on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, on the authority of Ibn Mahboob, on the authority of Ibad ibn Sohayb, on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

لَا بَأْسَ بِالنَّظَرِ إِلَى رُؤُوسِ أَهْلِ تِهَامَةَ وَالْأَعْرَابِ وَأَهْلِ السَّوَادِ وَالْعُلُوجِ لَأَنَّهُمْ إِذَا نُهُوا لَا يَنْتَهُونَ. (قال) وَالْمَجْنُونَةُ وَالْمَغْلُوبَةُ عَلَى عَقْلِهَا لَا بَأْسَ بِالنَّظَرِ إِلَى شَعْرِهَا وَجَسَدِهَا مَا لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدَ ذَلِكَ.

“There is no harm in looking at the head and the hair of the people of Tihamah, Bedouin women, (women from) the people of the lowlands (of Iraq) and infidels, since such women will not abstain (from displaying themselves) when they are forbidden.” (He said); “And there is no harm in looking at the hair and body of the possessed or mentally disturbed women as long as there are no bad intentions.”¹³

An Educational Look

Imam Sajjad said: “Indeed sight is the gateway to learning.” Educational looks can help us learn and gain benefits. Haroun wrote to Imam Kazim :

“Please advise me tersely.” The Imam replied:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ تَرَاهُ عَيْنُكَ إِلَّا وَفِيهِ مَوْعِظَةٌ.

“There is nothing on which you look in which there is no advice for you.”¹⁴

Imam Ali said:

مَا أَكْثَرَ الْعِبَرَ وَأَقَلَّ الْمُعْتَبِرَ.

“How many lessons are there to learn, and how few those who learn them!”¹⁵

He also said:

مَنْ اعْتَبَرَ أَبْصَرَ وَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَهَمَّ وَمَنْ فَهَمَّ عَلِمَ.

“Whoever looks in order to learn will gain insight. Whoever gains insight will understand. Whoever understands will attain ranks of having knowledge.”¹⁶

There is a tradition that is about the time Imam Ali passed by the Mada’in palace and saw the ruins of the palace of Khosrow about to collapse. One of his companions remembered the poem by Ibn Ya’fur as follows: “Winds started blowing in their ruins as if they all had a meeting place to which they rush.” Then Imam Ali said: “Why did you not recite the following verses of the Holy Qur’an:

كَمْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ جَنَاتٍ وَعَيْوُنٍ وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ وَنَعْمَةً كَانُوا فِيهَا فَآكِهِينَ كَذَلِكَ ۚ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخِرِينَ فَمَا بَكَتْ

عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ

“How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, and corn-fields and noble buildings, and wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)! And neither Heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite (again).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Dukhan 44:25-29]

These verses are related to Pharaoh and his tribe. They committed many atrocities but were finally destroyed. Their land and rule fell into the hands of the Israelites, they themselves sank at sea, and nothing could save them. Such events should be looked upon with an educational look, and we should learn from them.

Imam Ali al-Naqi and Al-Mutawakkil

Masoudi has recorded that when the agents of Mutawakkil forced their way into Imam Ali al-Naqi’s house to search and did not find anything they let Mutawakkil know that. He was drunk in his palace and ordered them to bring the Imam there. When the Imam was brought in, he respected him, had him sit next to himself and offered him a drink of wine.

The Imam said: “Excuse me. Wine has never entered into my blood and body.” Mutawakkil said: “Then tell me some poems.” The Imam said: “I am not acquainted with poetry.” Mutawakkil insisted. Then the Imam said some beautiful poems in Arabic as follows:

باتوا على قُللِ الأَجْيَالِ تَحْرِسُهُمْ غُلْبُ الرِّجَالِ فَلَمْ تَنْفَعُهُمُ الْقُللِ

وَ اسْتَنْزَلُوا بَعْدَ عِزِّ عَن مَعَاqِلِهِمْ وَ أُسْكِنُوا حُفْرًا يَا بئسَ مَا نَزَلُوا

ناداهم صَارِخٌ مِّن بَعْدِ دَفْنِهِمْ أَيْنَ الأَسَاوِرُ وَ التِّيْجَانُ وَ الحُللُ

أَيْنَ الوُجُوهُ الَّتِي كَانَتْ مُنْعَمَةً مِّن دُونِهَا تُضْرَبُ الأَسْتَارُ وَ الكِللُ

فَأَفْصَحَ القَبْرِ عَنْهُمْ حِينَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ تِلْكَ الوُجُوهُ عَلَيْهَا الدُّودُ تَنْتَقِلُ

قَدْ طَالَمَا أَكَلُوا دَهْرًا وَ قَدْ شَرَبُوا فَأَصْبَحُوا اليَوْمَ بَعْدَ الأَكْلِ قَدْ أَكَلُوا

*“They lived at the highest points of their palaces for a while;
they were guarded there and protected by their especial guards;*

*however, these high points were of no use for them;
they fell down from their strong castles in which they lived with honor;
and became residents of the ditches of their graves;*

*How bad a place to which they descended;
after they were buried there, a call came;
as to what had happened to all those jewels, bracelets and crowns?;*

*What had happened to all those wealthy and happy faces?
They were forgotten and lost.*

*A call came from the grave responding;
that the faces have become homes for worms;
they were busy eating for a long time;
but their dawn came and they became eaten themselves.”¹⁷*

When Mutawakkil heard these poems, he cried so hard that tears rained down on his face. Some even say that he put down his cup of wine. Yes, this is the outlook that can be educational. However, Mutawakkil did not gain any benefits from this lesson! The story of Orwe Salm has been quoted by Mohaddith Qumi on the authority of Imam Sadiq as follows:

“The Prophet David left his house while he was reading the Psalms, and birds and beasts were singing along with him. He went to a mountain where the worshipper called Ezekiel lived. He asked Ezekiel if he would let him in. However, Ezekiel did not grant him permission to enter. David cried. Then God revealed to Ezekiel not to hurt David .

Thus, he let David enter. David asked him: “Have you ever decided to commit any sins?” He said: “No.” Then David asked: “Have you ever become proud of your deeds?” He said: “No.” David asked: “Have you ever become inclined to this world?” He said: “Yes.” Then David asked: “How then do you get rid of the love for this world?” He said: “I go to the valley.”

Then Ezekiel took David to the valley where there was a metal couch on which there was a skull. There was a tableau beside the couch on which it was written: “This is the skull of Orwe Salm. He ruled for one thousand years. He built one thousand towns. He married one thousand young women. He finally reached this point where the dirt is his bed and worms are his companions. Whoever sees this should not be fooled by this world.”¹⁸ This is a lesson to take heed of.

Eye Anatomy and Physiology

How the Eye Sees

The eye is a complex organ composed of many small parts, each vital to normal vision. The ability to see clearly depends on how well these parts work together. Light rays bounce off all objects. If a person is looking at a particular object such as a tree, light is reflected off the tree to the person's eye and enters the eye through the **cornea**. Next, light rays pass through an opening in the **iris**, called the **pupil**. The iris controls the amount of light entering the eye by dilating or constricting the pupil. In bright light, for example, the pupils shrink to the size of a pinhead to prevent too much light from entering. In dim light, the pupil enlarges to allow more light to enter the eye.

Light then reaches the **crystalline lens**. The lens focuses light rays onto the retina by bending (refracting) them. The cornea does most of the refraction and the crystalline lens fine-tunes the focus. In a healthy eye, the lens can change its shape (accommodate) to provide clear vision at various distances. If an object is close, the **ciliary muscles** of the eye contract and the lens becomes rounder. To see a distant object, the same muscles relax and the lens flattens.

Behind the lens and in front of the retina is a chamber called the **vitreous body**, which contains a clear, gelatinous fluid called **vitreous humor**. Light rays pass through the vitreous before reaching the retina. The **retina** lines the back two-thirds of the eye and is responsible for the wide field of vision that most people experience. For clear vision, light rays must focus directly on the retina. When light focuses in front of or behind the retina, the result is blurry vision.

The retina contains millions of specialized photoreceptor cells called **rods** and **cones** that convert light rays into electrical signals that are transmitted to the brain through the optic nerve. Rods and cones provide the ability to see in dim light and to see in color, respectively.

The **macula**, located in the center of the retina, is where most of the cone cells are located. The **fovea**, a small depression in the center of the macula, has the highest concentration of cone cells. The macula is responsible for central vision, seeing color, and distinguishing fine detail. The outer portion (peripheral retina) is the primary location of rod cells and allows for night vision and seeing movement and objects to the side (i.e., peripheral vision).

The **optic nerve**, located behind the retina, transmits signals from the photoreceptor cells to the brain. Each eye transmits signals of a slightly different image, and the images are inverted. Once they reach the brain, they are corrected and combined into one image. This complex process of analyzing data transmitted through the optic nerve is called **visual processing**.

Eye Movement

Extraocular muscles

The stabilization of eye movement is accomplished by six extraocular muscles that are attached to each eyeball and perform their horizontal and vertical movements and rotation. These muscles are controlled by impulses from the cranial nerves that tell the muscles to contract or to relax. When certain muscles contract and others relax, the eye moves. The six muscles and their function are listed here:

- 1) Lateral rectus — moves the eye outward, away from the nose
- 2) Medial rectus — moves the eye inward, toward the nose
- 3) Superior rectus — moves the eye upward and slightly outward
- 4) Inferior rectus — moves the eye downward and slightly inward
- 5) Superior oblique — moves the eye inward and downward
- 6) Inferior oblique — moves the eye outward and upward

There are five different types of eye movements:

- 1) Saccades — looking from object A to object B
- 2) Pursuit — smoothly following a moving object
- 3) Convergence/divergence — both eyes turning inward/outward simultaneously
- 4) Vestibular — eyes sensing and adjusting to head movement via connections with nerves in the inner ear
- 5) Fixation maintenance — minute eye movements during fixation

Eyelids, Eyelashes, Conjunctiva

The eyelids are moveable folds of skin that protect the front surface of the eyes. They close the eyes and blink, which moistens the surface of the eyes and removes debris. The eyelashes (also called cilia) are hairs that grow at the edge of the eyelids and remove minute particles of debris away from the surface of the eyes. The conjunctiva is the thin, transparent, mucous membrane that lines the eyelids and covers the front surface of the eyeballs. The section that lines the eyelids appears red in color because it contains many blood vessels. The section that covers the cornea appears white because of the sclera behind it.

Tear Production and Elimination

Tears perform vitally important functions:

- 1) Carry bacteria-fighting compounds to the eye
- 2) Carry nutrients to and waste products away from the eye
- 3) Keep the eye moist

- 4) Provide a smooth refracting surface
- 5) Remove debris from the eye

Tear components are produced by the **lacrimal gland**, several other small glands, and cells within the eyelid. As the eyelid closes, tears are swept downward, toward the nose, and enter the **puncta**.¹⁹ As the eyes blink, tears are forced through narrow channels into the **lacrimal sac**. Once the muscles relax and the eye opens, the tears move from the sac to the **nasolacrimal duct** and into the nose. This accounts for stuffy, runny noses when crying.

Aqueous Humor Production and Elimination

Aqueous humor is nutritive watery fluid produced by the ciliary body through the **ciliary body processes** and secreted into the posterior chamber (i.e., space between the iris and the lens). It maintains pressure and provides nutrients to the lens and cornea. Aqueous humor diffuses through the pupil into the anterior chamber (between the lens and cornea) and is reabsorbed into the venous system by two routes:

- 1) Through the trabecular meshwork²⁰ into the canal of Schlemm, which carries it into the venous system: Responsible for 80–90% of aqueous drainage.
- 2) Through the anterior ciliary body directly into larger blood vessels:²¹ Responsible for 10–20% of aqueous drainage.

The Jurisprudents' Views on the Worth of the Eyes

Imam Khomeini said: “The compensation for two eyes is the same as the full compensation. There is half of full compensation for each eye. The compensation for one whose vision is blurry, is cross-eyed, sees double images, has small eyes, can see better at night than in the daytime, cannot see at night, or has another eye disease is the same as one whose eyes are perfect.

If there is a white spot in the black of the eye in such a way that his sight is not affected, then there is full compensation for damaging this eye. However, if the white spot in the black of the eye has limited the person's sight, there is partial compensation relative to the amount of vision for damaging the eye. This is so if it can be properly detected. If not, the compensation is somewhat in between.”²²

We also read the following regarding the compensation for the eye: “The compensation for both eyes is equal to that of the whole person.”²³ Then it is written in the same source that there are no differences among the companions on this issue. The following tradition from Abdullah ibn San'an on the authority of Imam Sadiq also supports this: “The compensation for each organ of which man has a pair is half of both.”

Thus the compensation for each eye is half of full compensation and there is no difference between a perfect eye and a defective one in this respect.”²⁴ When the great Ayatollah Golpayegani was asked

about the compensation for blinding one eye of a girl, he said: “The compensation for one eye of a female is half of the full compensation for a woman.” This implies that the worth of the eyes is equal to that of life.

- [1.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.5, p.581.
- [2.](#) Tafsir al-Safi, v.2, p.789.
- [3.](#) Here the word ‘unfamiliar’ is used for one who is not ‘Mahram’. In this sense, for women, all men except those mentioned in the above verse are unfamiliar.
- [4.](#) Al-Kafi, v.5, p.559.
- [5.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah.
- [6.](#) Hoori is used the Holy Qur’an to refer to the believers’ companions in Heaven. “So, and We shall join them to Companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes” (Sura Dukhan, 44:54). We can read in the footnotes of verses 52:20 and 44:54 of Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Holy Qur’an: “Hur implies the following ideas: (1) Purity, possibly the word ‘Hawariyun’ as applied to the disciples of Jesus, is connected with this root; (2) Beauty, especially of the eyes, where the intense white of the eyeballs stands out against the intense black of the pupils, thus giving the appearance of luster, and intense feeling, as opposed to dullness or want of expression; and (3) Truth and goodwill.”
- [7.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah.
- [8.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v. 14, p.59.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Ibid.
- [11.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v. 14, p. 172.
- [12.](#) Ibid. p. 149.
- [13.](#) Ibid. p. 150.
- [14.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, ‘Ibr, v.2, p. 146.
- [15.](#) Safinah al-Bihar.
- [16.](#) Ibid.
- [17.](#) Muntaha al-Amal, v.2, p.400.
- [18.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, ‘Ibr, p. 146.
- [19.](#) The openings in the upper and lower lids, close to the nose.
- [20.](#) The collagen cords that form a spongelike, three-dimensional net.
- [21.](#) Called uveal-scleral outflow pathway.
- [22.](#) Tahrir al-Wasilah, v.2, p.572.
- [23.](#) Mabani Takmilat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.272.
- [24.](#) Majma’ al- Masa’il, v.3, p.255.

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