

## Shameful Daughters

In fact, the difference between the Biblical and the Qur'anic attitude towards the female sex starts as soon as a female is born. For example, the Bible states that the period of the mother's ritual impurity is twice as long if a girl is born than if a boy is:

*"Tell the Israelites: When a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period. On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy's foreskin shall be circumcised, and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood". (Lev. 12:2-5).*

The Catholic Bible states explicitly that:

*"The birth of a daughter is a loss." (Ecclesiasticus 22:3)*

In contrast to this shocking statement, boys receive special praise:

*"A man who educates his son will be the envy of his enemy." (Ecclesiasticus 30:3)*

Jewish Rabbis made it an obligation on Jewish men to produce offspring in order to propagate the race. At the same time, they did not hide their clear preference for male children:

"It is well for those whose children are male but ill for those whose are female", "At the birth of a boy, all are joyful...at the birth of a girl all are sorrowful", and "When a boy comes into the world, peace comes into the world... When a girl comes, nothing comes."

A daughter is considered a painful burden, a potential source of shame to her father:

*"Your daughter is headstrong? Keep a sharp look-out that she does not make you the laughing stock of your enemies, the talk of the town, the object of common gossip, and put you to public shame"*

(Ecclesiasticus 42:11)

*"Keep a headstrong daughter under firm control, or she will abuse any indulgence she receives. Keep a strict watch on her shameless eye, do not be surprised if she disgraces you."* (Ecclesiasticus 26:10–11)

It was this very same idea of treating daughters as sources of shame that led the pagan Arabs, before the advent of Islam, to practice female infanticide. The Qur'an severely condemned this heinous practice:

***"When news is brought to one of them of the birth of a female child, his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief. With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain her on contempt or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil they decide on?" (16:58–59).***

It has to be mentioned that this sinister crime would have never stopped in Arabia were it not for the power of the scathing terms the Qur'an used to condemn this practice:

***"He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that which is announced to him. Shall he keep it with disgrace or bury it (alive) in the dust? Now surely evil is what they judge". (16:59)***

***"And when one of them is given news of that of which he sets up as a likeness for the Beneficent Allah, his face becomes black and he is full of rage" (43:17)***

***"And when the female infant buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed." (81:8–9)***

The Qur'an, moreover, makes no distinction between boys and girls. In contrast to the Bible, the Qur'an considers the birth of a female as a gift and a blessing from God, the same as the birth of a male. The Qur'an even mentions the gift of the female birth first:

***"To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows female children to whomever He wills and bestows male children to whomever He wills." (42:49)***

In order to wipe out all the traces of female infanticide in the nascent Muslim society, Prophet Muhammad (S) promised those who were blessed with daughters of a great reward if they would bring them up kindly:

*"He who is involved in bringing up daughters, and accords benevolent treatment towards them, they will be protection for him against Hell-Fire"* (Bukhari and Muslim).

*"Whoever maintains two girls till they attain maturity, he and I will come on the Resurrection Day like this; and he joined his fingers."* (Muslim)

*"One who brings up three daughters or sisters and is patient in earning for their maintenance till the*

*time they will be married (...) He and I will be in Paradise like this.*” (Saying this, the Prophet (S) showed his index and middle fingers joined)

And people asked him: “O Messenger of Allah, what if he brings up two of them {daughters/sisters}?”

He (S) replied: “*even if two.*”

“What if a man brings up only one daughter?” people persisted.

“*Even if he brings up only one daughter or sister.*” replied the Messenger of Allah (S).” (Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 104, p.99)

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