

Summary of question

What does it mean to think well and avoid suspicion about God? How can we get rid of suspicion towards God?

question

What is meant by the following hadith which is about people's thoughts and surmise about God? "I treat My servant according to his expectations of Me; if he has good expectations of Me, I will treat him well and if he has bad expectations of Me, I will behave with him badly." What should we do to have good expectations of Allah? What should we try to perceive to have good expectations of God, the Exalted? What is good expectation? Can good expectation be misperceived? How can we make sure that our good expectations are logical and reasonable?

Concise answer

There are verses in the Quran which condemns suspicion and bad expectations of God.^[1] As well, there are also narrations which, somehow, deal with the subject of good and bad expectation of God, the Exalted:

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali (AS) says: "Whoever has good expectation of God attains Paradise and who has bad expectation of the world suffers pain and hardship."^[2]

Imam Sadiq (AS): On the Day of Judgment a servant who has done himself injustice will be presented and God, the Exalted, addresses him by saying: "Did I not order you to obey Me? Did I not forbid you from disobeying Me?"

He then says, "Why not, O my Lord, but my lust overpowered me; if you punish me, it is because of my sin and You have not done me any injustice."

God orders him to be taken to Hell and the servant says: "I did not expect that of You."

"What did you expect of Me?" God asks.

"I had the best of expectations of You," he replies.

Then God orders him to be taken to Paradise and addresses him as such: "Your good expectation of Me just aided you."^[3]

Imam Reza (AS): Have good expectation of God, because God the Glorified and the Exalted says: "I am with the servant who has an expectation of Me; if his expectation is good of Me, I will treat him according to his expectation and if his expectation is bad, I will treat him according to his bad expectation."^[4]

Meaning of Good Expectation and Bad Expectation

In short, good expectation of God is to place one's hope in His mercy while bad expectation means to despair of His mercy and compassion. One must be fearful of God's punishment but he must not despair of divine mercy. He must do what is his duty, purify his intention and be afraid of his sins. Meanwhile, he must be hopeful of divine forgiveness. The Commander of the Faithful, Ali (AS) says:

"Good expectation (of God) is to purify your deeds (for His sake) and yet be hopeful that God will forgive his mistakes."^[5]

Imam Sadiq (AS): God expectation of God is to place your hope in no one other than God and to be afraid of nothing except your sin."^[6]

Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (ra) explaining good expectation and bad expectation of God says: "One who does good deeds will definitely have good expectation of God and he who commits evil deeds will also surely have bad expectation of God."^[7]

Effects of Suspicion

Suspicion or bad expectation of God and His promises has detrimental impacts on one's beliefs and faith in God. Some of the negative effects and consequences of bad expectations are enumerated as under:

1. Bad expectation amounts to disbelief: God, the Exalted, says in the Quran: "Despair not of Allah's mercy; surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people."^[8]

The Prophet of Islam (S) says: In his supplications, Dawud (AS) said, "O Lord, he who knows You but does not have good expectations of you, has in reality not believed in You."^[9]

2. Worship not accepted: To suspect God of not fulfilling His promise causes the acts of worship not to be accepted because it eliminates and wipes sincerity out. For this reason, Imam Ali (AS) says, "Suspicion spoils the worship."^[10]

3. Inability to tackle difficulties: Suspicion and bad expectations of Allah debilitates a person against difficult and complex incidents. The Battle of Ahzab is one such example in which those who had just converted to Islam became suspicious with regards to divine promises following which they ceased to stand firm and strong against the enemies, whereas, in fact, the true and unflinching believers who had good expectations of Allah stood strong and hopeful against the enemies and they finally achieved victory over their foes: "When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull, and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts of Allah."^[11]

4. Becoming deprived of divine attention: Suspicion towards Allah deprives one of divine blessings and attention, because based on the traditions mentioned above, God treats everyone on the basis of good or bad expectation of Him.

Ways to Cure Suspiciousness

A) To get rid of suspicion towards God, first it is necessary to turn to some general principles governing the treatment of moral ills. The main principle is to think of the negative effects of these ills because when one thinks of the consequences of suspicion and how it wiped out his ideological asset and ripped him of his mental peace and made him negligent of truths, he will inevitably distance himself from mean traits and moral ills just as he distances himself from poisonous foods.

B) Inquiries and researches done on the occurrences that possibly lead to suspicion towards God could be helpful

and may assist an individual to get rid of pessimistic thoughts because some of these occurrences constitute divine tribulations which exist as a reality in man's life and that one must cope up with these realities and must, therefore, have good expectations of God. That is because these tribulations are meant to test man and are key to his spiritual progress. Some other occurrences are the direct results of man's bad acts. In short, instead of being suspicious towards God, the proper course of action is to repent and seek divine forgiveness for all the sins he has committed as well as to do whatever he can to make up for all those mistakes.

C) Not paying heed and attention to suspicion towards God is yet another way of curing this spiritual illness because if one does not pay attention to the incoming thoughts and constantly distances himself heedlessly, this state of suspicion gradually dies down and gets eliminated. This method is also effective in treating suspiciousness towards one's own brothers in faith. That is why we read in a tradition as a general principle that:

«اِذَا ظَنَنْتُمْ فَلَا تَحَقُّقُوا»[12]

"When you become suspicious, then do not give heed to it."

In short, if a person is interested in having peace and in resistance as well as in drawing God's attention and sincere belief, he must have good intention of God and his promises including forgiveness, mercy and compassion which are achieved after one repents genuinely and seeks divine forgiveness.

Related links:

For further information about this topic, please refer to following indexes:

"Good expectation, the effect of worshipping God, question 59039"

"The Extent of Good Expectation", question 7611.

"Man and Suspicion", question 5311.

[1] Verses 6 and 12 of Chapter al-Fath.

[2] Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahdi b. Muhammad, *Ghurar al-Hekam wa Durar al-Kelam*, p.641, Qom, Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, second edition, 1410 A.H.

[3] Barqi, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khalid, *Mahasen*, vol.1, p.25-26, Qom, Dar al-Kotob al-Islamiyyah, second edition, 1371 A.H.

[4] Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p.72, Tehran, Dar al-Kotob al-Islamiyyah, fourth edition, 1407 A.H.

[5] Laythi Waseti, Ali, *'Uyoon al-Hekam wa al-Mawa'edh*, p.229, Qom, Dar al-Hadith, first edition, 1376 A.H.

[6] *Al-Kafi*, vol.2, p.72.

[7] Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Behar al-Anwar*, vol.67, p.366, Beirut, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, second edition, 1403 A.H.

[8] Quran 12:87

[9] Tabarsi, Ali b. Hasan, *Mishkat al-Anwar fi Ghurar al-Akhbar*, p.36, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Haydariyyah, second edition, 1385 A.H.

[10] *'Uyoon al-Hekam wa al-Mawa'edh*, p.99.

[11] *Quran* 33:10

[12] Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Abdul Hamid b. Hebatullah, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.19, p.374, Qom, Ayatollah Mar'ah Najafi Library, first edition, 1404 A.H.