

SALVATION
through
REPENTANCE

(AN ISLAMIC VIEW)

by
Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

التوبة طريق النجاة

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE

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FOREWORD

The subject of salvation is one of particular concern to all who believe in God, because it is ultimately the goal which we all seek. All sane human beings are conscious of their numerous sins, and most of those who believe in God realize that they will be held to account for their sins. Consequently, those who are aware of God desire to be free of the consequences of sin. Correspondingly, all religious systems offer man one method or another by which he may be released from the burden of his sins. Most methods of absolution may be generally grouped under the banners of two opposing camps: those who hold that salvation is guaranteed by faith alone and those who assert that it can only be achieved by deeds.

This is a very vital topic which every individual must come to grips with within his lifetime because his ultimate well-being depends solely on his arrival at its reality. Recently after being involved in some heated discussions on this issue, I wanted to provide the opposing sides with some reading material reflecting the Islamic viewpoint, which combines both salvation by faith and salvation by deeds in a truly unique manner. However, I was surprisingly unable to find any definitive work in English on the subject. Shortly after my unsuccessful search, I stumbled upon a sixty-page booklet in Arabic on the topic called, *Repentance to Allaah*¹, by Dr. Saalih Al-Sadlaan and immediately decided to translate it in order to fill this gap. After reading it, however, I realized that its contents were directed only to Muslims, while what was needed was something more comprehensive which would touch on some of the issues of contention and which would be of common interest to people of various religi-

¹ Saalih ibn Ghaanim Al-Sadlaan, *at-Tawbah elaa Allaah*, (Riyadh: Daar Mu'aadh, 2nd ed., 1988).

ous backgrounds. Consequently, I decided to use Dr. Al-Sadlaan's work (may Allaah reward him for his effort), as a foundation from which I have attempted to present this vital topic in a somewhat comparative Islamic perspective.

In order to further serve Muslim readers, as well as enlighten non-Muslim readers, I have included a chapter dealing with most of the Islamic rulings concerning the acts of penance, and another in which I have collected some prayers of repentance from both the Qur'aan and the statements of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Throughout this work, I have quoted along with Qur'anic verses, many explanatory statements of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), all of which I have tried my utmost to authenticate according to the judgements of the current experts in the field, in order to ensure the accuracy of my presentation. However, since no human effort is perfect, I ask Allaah's (God's) pardon for any inadvertent mistakes herein, and I pray that this book be of benefit to all who read it and distribute it, as it has been for me in preparing it.

I would like to thank brother Iftekhhar Mackeen of Sri Lanka, who painstakingly typed the manuscript from my handwritten copy and prepared the **Index of Hadeeths**. Furthermore, I also ask God to accept this work and add it to our scale of good deeds, and give us the strength and courage to act on the knowledge contained in it always. And success is with Allaah, the Almighty, alone.

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,
Sha'baan 1410/Feb-March 1990

CHAPTER ONE: DEFINITION

According to modern English usage, repentance is the action or process of turning from sin and the dedication of self to the amendment of one's life. It also means to feel regret and sorrow¹ as it comes from the Latin *poenitere* ("to regret," "to be sorry").² This roughly corresponds to the Arabic equivalent *Tawbah*, derived from the verb تَابَ يَتُوبُ *Taaba Yatoobu*, which literally means "to return."³ In an Islamic context, *Tawbah* refers to the act of leaving what God has prohibited and returning to what He has commanded.⁴ The "return" is emphasized over the "turning", because of the fundamental principle in Islaam which states that man is born sinless, in a state of submission to God known as the *Fitrah*. One of the Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) companions, Abu Hurayrah, reported that he said,

*"Every child is born in a state of Fitrah, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian. It is like the way you help animals give birth. Do you find among their offspring a branded one until you brand them yourselves?"*⁵

¹ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Mass. USA: G&C Merriam Company, 1976), p. 980-1.

² W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1980), p. 490.

³ E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society Inc., 1984), vol. 1, p. 321.

⁴ Muhammad ibn 'Allaan as-Siddeeqee, *Daleel al-Faaliheen*, (Cairo: Al-Halabee Press, Final ed., 1971), vol. 7, p. 78.

⁵ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Arabic-English (Beirut: Dar Al Arabia, n.d.), vol. 8, pp. 389-90, no. 597) and Muslim (Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, *Sahih Muslim*, English Trans. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976), vol. 4, p. 1398, no. 6423.

Through sin man turns away from God, and by repentance he turns from sin and returns to the path of God. Hence, repentance is a means by which man may strive to purify himself and return to his original sinless state of the *Fitrah*.

By the Mercy and Grace of Almighty God, Allaah,¹ the act of repentance is itself an act of worship through which man may earn his own salvation. Thus, in the final book of revelation, the Qur'aan,² God commands all of the believers to repent:

وتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“And turn all of you in repentance to Allaah, Oh believers, in order that you may be successful.”³

The last messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) not only complied with this command, but he also urged his followers to turn regularly to Allaah in repentance. Al-Agharr ibn Yasaar al-Muzanee reported that on one occasion the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Oh people, turn to Allaah in repentance and seek His forgive-

¹ The Arabic word which means the one and only true God who alone should be worshipped. Most commonly written “Allah” and pronounced “Al-law”.

² The Arabic word الْقُرْآنُ *Qur'aan* (also written Qur'an and Koran) literally means “the reading or recital.” It is the name given by God to the last book of divine revelation conveyed by angel Gabriel in Arabic to the final Prophet of God, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullaah (ﷺ). It was completely recorded and memorized by the Prophet’s companions and followers during the Prophet’s (ﷺ) lifetime, and has remained unchanged over the intervening fourteen centuries until today. The Qur'aan is the direct word of God and is distinctly different from the divinely inspired statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) known as *Hadeeth*, which were also meticulously memorized and recorded.

³ Soorah an-Noor (24):31.

ness, for surely I make repentance one hundred times every day.”¹

By sincerely obeying God’s command to turn to Him in repentance, the penitent sinner embarks on an act of worship which is so great that it can totally absolve him of his sins. Abu ‘Ubaidah ibn ‘Abdullaah reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

*“One who repents from sin is like one without sin.”*²

The avenue of repentance has been opened for man in spite of his sinless original state, because it is a part of his nature to commit errors. These mistakes are a natural consequence of his God-given free-will and the finite attributes with which he was endowed. Thus, the Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by Anas ibn Maalik to have said:

*“All of Aadam’s descendents constantly err, but the best of those who constantly err are those who constantly repent.”*³

Allaah deliberately created man with an inclination to do wrong, because pardoning those who turn repentant is a channel through which Allaah’s divine attributes of Mercy and Forgiveness are made manifest. The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) informed his followers of this important fact of life in one of his statements quoted by both Abu Ayyoub and Abu Hurayrah:

“If you did not commit sins, Allaah would sweep you out of exis-

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1418, no. 6523. See also S.M. Madani Abbasi, *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 10, no. 14.

² Collected by Ibn Maajah. It is authenticated (*Hasan*) by Naasirud-Deen al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, (Riyadh: Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1st ed., 1986), vol. 2, p. 418, no. 3427.

³ Collected by Ibn Maajah, at-Tirmidhee, Aḥmad and ad-Daarimee. It is authenticated (*Hasan*) by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 418, no. 3428.

tence and replace you by another people who would commit sins, ask Allaah's forgiveness and He would forgive them.”¹

The process of falling into error, realizing the mistake and seeking God's forgiveness is also a channel for man's spiritual growth. It develops man's love for the Almighty and increases his respect and consciousness of God when he turns to Him in humility and devotion. Consequently, the first man and first Prophet of God, Aadam, along with his wife Hawaa (Eve) set the example for all mankind with regard to human failing, its solution and the magnificence (magnanimity) of God's Grace. The story of Aadam's fall into sin is mentioned in many places in the Qur'aan with varying degrees of detail in order to emphasize the different lessons to be learned from it. The very first mention of the story stresses the fallibility of man and Allaah's readiness to forgive him. It is as follows:-

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا
وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“We² said: ‘O Aadam! You and your wife may dwell in the garden and eat of the bountiful things in it as you wish, but do not come near this tree and become of those who transgress.’”

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, pp. 1436-7, nos. 6620-2).

² In the Qur'aan Allaah sometimes uses the plural pronoun “We” in reference to Himself though He has strongly affirmed His unique Unity. It is used according to Arabic grammar and syntax to indicate His majesty and honor, while the singular pronoun is used to imply intimate closeness.

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

“Then Satan caused them both to slip from it and pushed them out of the state in which they were. We said, ‘Get down as enemies among yourselves. The earth will be a place of settlement for you and provision for a while.’ ”

فَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Then Aadam learned some words from his Lord and He pardoned him. For surely He is the Oft-Forgiving and the Most Merciful.”¹

Aadam and Eve sought forgiveness from God for their error of disobedience, and by the Grace of God, they were forgiven. They were responsible for their mistake and they turned directly to Allaah in repentance using words which He mercifully taught them, and forgiveness was granted to them. Therefore, according to the final scripture to mankind, the sin of Aadam and Eve was not inherited by their children, nor by subsequent generations of their descendants. Allaah forgave them as He will forgive anyone who turns to Him repentant. When a person commits a sin by disobeying the commandments of God, he is responsible before Allaah for his sin, and, as such, he has to shoulder full responsibility for it by himself. The personal accountability for sins is a basic concept taught by all the Prophets of God, and it is restated throughout the Qur’aan in order to urge man to turn directly to his Lord.

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):35-7.

“Whoever earns a sin only earns it against himself and Allaah is all Knowing, all Wise.”¹

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

“Each soul only earns sin against itself and no bearer of burdens may shoulder the burden of (guilt) of another.”²

No man will be held responsible for the sin of another; nor can he carry the sin of others, even if he wished to. In spite of the distortions and changes which have taken place in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, there remains within them, to this day, a clear testimony to the fundamental principle of individual responsibility for sin:

“The soul that sinneth, the same shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. The justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18: 20) ³

Allaah is pleased when a sinner turns to Him in repentance, because He created man with a natural tendency to err, in order that he would repent and be forgiven from Allaah’s infinite mercy. Hence, when man turns to God in repentance, he is fulfilling God’s wish, as well as a part of the reason for his creation. Repentance then becomes an act of righteousness and worship

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):111.

² Soorah al-An'aam (6):164.

³ *Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Thomas Nelson and sons, 1st ed., 1951).

greatly pleasing to Allaah. In the Qur'aan, Allaah explicitly says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“Surely Allaah loves those who constantly turn to Him in repentance and those who keep themselves pure.”¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) also emphasized this point on several occasions, among them is one reported by Anas in which he quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying:

“Allaah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than one of you who suddenly finds his camel laden with supplies after losing it in a barren land.”²

Not only is repentance desirable and everyone urged to turn to the Creator on his or her own behalf, but there are also no barriers between the repentant sinner and God what-so-ever. Whoever turns to God in true repentance will be pardoned. The door of salvation through repentance is wide open for all who truly seek to enter. Ibn 'Abbaas and Anas both reported that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

“If one of Aadam's descendents had a valley of gold, he would wish for two valleys, for nothing will end his greed³ except the dirt (of his grave). But Allaah pardons whoever repents.”⁴

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):222.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 214, no. 321) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1434, no. 6611). See also *Riyadh-us-Saleheen* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, pp. 10-11, no. 15.

³ The Arabic literally states “nothing will fill his mouth”.

⁴ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 296-7, nos. 444 & 446), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 415, no. 3413) and from Abu Hurayrah by Ibn Maajah. Ibn Maajah's narra-

It should, however, be emphasized here that, according to the final authentic scripture, no one can absolve anyone else of their sins besides God. Only Almighty God, Allaah, alone can forgive the sins of man, for it is He alone who knows perfectly the intentions of man. It is He who granted man free-will and He alone who will judge, reward and punish man accordingly. This reality is reiterated throughout the final Scripture in order to help man avoid the satanic trap of idolatry.

وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“And who forgives sins besides Allaah?”¹

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ

“It is He who accepts repentance from His servants.”²

The Prophet (ﷺ), in turn, dutifully echoed this precept in his teachings. For example, in an informal prayer which the Prophet (ﷺ) taught Abu Bakr, one of his closest followers, the following statement can be found:

“*Allaahumma inne dHalamtu nafsee dHulman Katheeraa, wa laa yaghfirudh-dhunooba illaa ant*”

(*Oh Allaah, Truly I have wronged myself much, and none can forgive sins except You.*)³

This direct approach to repentance is consistent with the unita-

= tion is authenticated in *Shaheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 415, no. 3413. See also *Riyadh-us-Saleheen* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, pp. 27-28, no. 23.

¹ Soorah Aal 'Imraan (3):135.

² Soorah ash-Shooraa (42):25.

³ Collected by al-Bukhaaree, Muslim, at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 442, no. 796, and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, pp. 1419-20, no. 6533). See pages for the full text of this prayer.

rian concept of worship (*Tawheed al-'Ebaadah*) as taught by all of the prophets of God. The essence of their message was to worship God alone and avoid the worship of God's creation. Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا
الطَّاغُوتَ

“Verily, We have sent to every nation a messenger (saying): ‘Worship Allaah and avoid false gods.’”¹

Verse four of the first chapter of the Qur'aan, known as *al-Faatihah* (the Opening), which every Muslim is required to recite twice or more in each of the five daily obligatory prayers, reads as follows:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help.”²

A clear statement that all forms of worship should be directed to the only One who can respond, Allaah. Anyone or anything called on besides Allaah is a part of His creation, and, in fact, cannot help or protect us in any way. Allaah, Most Great and Glorious, states in the Qur'aan:

أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ

“Do you worship besides Allaah that which cannot help or harm you?”³

¹ Soorah an-Nahl (16):36.

² Soorah al-Faatihah (1):4.

³ Soorah al-Anbiyaa (21):66.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ

“Verily, those you call on besides Allaah are only slaves like yourselves.”¹

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), like the prophets before him, also confirmed the concept of unity of worship in his teachings. ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Abbaas reported that on one occasion the Prophet (ﷺ) told him:

“If you ask in prayer, ask only Allaah; and if you seek help, seek it only from Allaah.”²

The fact that some prayers to others besides Allaah appear to be answered does not mean that those called on besides Allaah are actually answering them. Some of the prayers of those who pray to stones, trees, animals, the sun and the planets also seem to be answered, otherwise those who worship them would not continue to pray to these objects. This is an aspect of Allaah’s Supreme Mercy, whereby He grants favours even to those who worship others besides Him. However, only the prayers of the true believers are all answered. But, they are answered in such a way that externally the answered prayers of the believer appear little different from those of the idolator. The last Prophet of God (ﷺ) informed his followers about this fact as follows:

“Any man who calls on Allaah in prayer will be answered. It is either granted to him in advance in this life, or stored away for

¹ Soorah al-A’raaf (7):194.

² Collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, (Beirut: Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1st. ed., 1988), vol. 2, pp. 308-9, no. 2043. See also Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies, *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English-Arabic), (Damascus, Syria: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1976), pp. 68-70, no. 19.

him for the next life; as long as he does not pray for something sinful or the breaking of family ties, and as long as he is not impatient.” When the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) asked him how is one impatient, he said: “By saying: ‘I called on my Lord and He did not answer my prayer for me.’”¹

The prayers of the believers are not all answered in this life, otherwise the test of belief in God without seeing Him would become meaningless. Idolaters would all give up their false gods if it became known, as it would, that all prayers of believers in the One true God are granted in this life. Furthermore, praying only to the true God would not be the act of faith that it is when some prayers appear not to be answered.

Some who call on others in prayer besides Allaah argue that they are actually calling on Allaah, but only through someone close to Him like a prophet, mystic saint, pir, shaykh, guru, etc. However, the verses of the Qur’aan and the statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) are very clear that only Allaah is to be called on in prayer. And, furthermore, the Prophet (ﷺ) removed any remaining shadows of doubt for those sincerely seeking the truth when he said:

“Calling in prayer (**Du‘aa**) is worship.”²

¹ Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 3, p. 188, no. 2852. See also *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 236, no. 352 and *Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1430, no. 6595 for a shortened version of the same *Hadeeth*.

² Reported by an-Nu‘maan ibn Basheer and collected by Abu Daawood (Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1984), vol. 1, p. 387, no. 1474), at-Tirmidhee, an-Nasaa’ee, Ibn Maajah and Ahmad. Authenticated by al-Albaanee in his authentication of *Mishkaatul-Maṣaabeeh*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd ed., 1979), vol. 2, p. 693, no. 2231. The other narration collected by at-

That is, to call on anyone other than Allaah in prayer is to worship them, which is the greatest sin a man may commit, *ash-Shirk al-Akbar* (Major *Shirk*). It is a sin so great that if one dies without repenting from it, he will not be forgiven and will not attain salvation. Allaah warns mankind in the verses of the Qur'aan as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“Surely Allaah does not forgive that partners be given to Him, but He forgives whom He wishes for anything less than that.”¹

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

“Verily, Allaah will make paradise forbidden for whoever gives partners to Allaah and his abode will be Hell. And the wrongdoers will have no helpers.”²

Consequently, in the Qur'aan, Allaah clarified to the Prophet (ﷺ), for the benefit of the believers, that forgiveness and pardon belongs to Him alone:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

= Tirmidhee from Abu Hurayrah in which the Prophet (ﷺ) was reported to have said:

“Calling in prayer is the essence (*Mukhkh*) of worship” is not authentic (*Da'eef*) as it has in its chain of narrators Ibn Luhay'ah who had an extremely poor memory. See al-Albaanee's *Mishkaatul-Masaabeeh*, vol. 2, p. 693, ftn. 2.

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):48 & 116.

² Soorah al-Maa'idah (5):72.

“The Decision is not yours (Oh Muhammad), whether He pardons them or punishes them, for indeed they are transgressors.”¹

And the Prophet (ﷺ) conveyed that message to his family, his followers and his people. Abu Hurayrah reported that on one occasion the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Oh tribe of ‘Abd Manaaf, Oh clan of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, secure deliverance for yourselves from Allaah. Oh mother of az-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwaam (aunt of Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ)), Oh Faatimah daughter of Muhammad! Secure deliverance for yourselves from Allaah, for I cannot avail you at all against Allaah. You can both ask me from my property whatever you wish.”²

True repentance has to be addressed directly to God alone and it must be realized that no one besides Allaah can absolve man of his sins. This is a fundamental aspect of the meaning of repentance as taught by the prophets of God. If it is not observed, repentance does not take place. Instead of repentance being an act of righteousness, when it is given to others besides Allaah, it becomes the gravest sin, the major cause for the eternal damnation of the soul.

One of the main methods employed by the satanic forces to misguide those believing in God, is to delude them into thinking that they cannot approach God directly, due to their sinful state. Under the guise of religious wisdom, they confront man with his innumerable sins and his inability to stop committing them, and thereby cause him to fall into despair and hopelessness. In this state, man either gives up religion altogether and slides com-

¹ Soorah Aal ‘Imraan (3):128.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 4, p. 479, no. 728) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 136, no. 402).

pletely into a life of sin, or he seeks another path for forgiveness through which he can feel assured of salvation regardless of his sins. If he chooses the latter option, gods or mediating saints are deceptively presented to him as guaranteed channels of salvation due to their supposed special relationship with God. He is further falsely informed that mere belief in these intermediaries and dependance on them will assure him of their intercession in the next life. And to emphasize their importance, it is lastly claimed that without the intercession of these higher spirits no ordinary man can be saved.

Such paths will appear very attractive to those ignorant of the true teachings of God, because these paths demand very little of their followers, beyond faith in them. Consequently, righteous deeds become insignificant and those who stress the need for good works are often scorned and derided as being overly ritualistic and lacking in real faith. To protect the believers from these satanic traps, Allaah has severely warned mankind about losing hope in God.

إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُّ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“No one despairs of Allaah’s mercy except those who have no faith .”¹

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ

“He said: ‘And who despairs of his Lord’s mercy except those who go astray?’ ”²

¹ Soorah Yousuf (12):87.

² Soorah al-Hijr (15):56.

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِىَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ جَمِيْعًا اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ

“Say, ‘Oh my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Do not despair of Allaah’s mercy, for Allaah forgives all sins. He is indeed, Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful.’ ”¹

The evolution of the principle of repentance in Christianity is a classical example of ignorance and despair used by evil forces to lead large masses of believers into idolatry.

Atonement in the Old Testament was an annual ceremony designed to cleanse the temple, priesthood, and people of their sins while renewing their special relationship with God. The ritual included fasting and sacrifice. The ceremony continues to be observed within Judaism, stressing confession and repentance of sins on Yom Kippur, a day set aside as the holiest day of the year.²

In order to justify the heretical belief in the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ and his apparent death on the cross, Paul in his letters to the Galatians and Romans argued that atonement by law required complete obedience for which man was incapable.³ He proposed, instead, that Christ’s death had a redeeming power, providing atonement for sinners who believed in him.⁴ The Pauline view that man’s sin prevents him from approaching God and that he can only be reconciled through Christ’s sacrifi-

¹ Soorah az-Zumar (39):53.

² *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 38.

³ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 275.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

cial death¹ was further developed by the Christian theologian Irenaeus (125-202 C.E.), Bishop of Lyon, who developed around it the first system of Catholic belief.² Another Christian theologian, Augustine of Hippo (334-430 C.E.), developed doctrines of the Fall, Original Sin and Predestination, holding that by heredity man is tainted with the sin of Adam's fall from God's Grace and that God has inexplicably chosen some persons to be saved, the rest being consigned to everlasting damnation.³ Thus, man was inherently evil and sinful, and only Christ, sacrificing himself for mankind, could (in the words of St. Anselm) completely satisfy God's just punishment for man's sins against God. St. Augustine further taught that justification (absolution from sins) occurs by means of grace originating in God but infused through sacramental channels.⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the leading Christian theologian of the Middle

¹ John R. Hinnels, *Dictionary of Religions*, (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984), p. 282.

² *Dictionary of Philosophy & Religion*, pp. 259-60.

³ *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 54.

⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 275.

It should be noted that there was resistance among some Christian scholars to these developments. For example, the British theologian, Pelagius (360-420 CE) was shocked by the moral laxness he observed in Christian Rome when he came there near the beginning of the 5th Century. In his opinion the doctrine of man's total depravity (original sin) had permitted an evasion of moral responsibility. He argued that ability limits obligation and thus, there can be no sin where the will is not free. Consequently, he upheld man's free will and rejected the doctrine of the original sin, except in the sense that Adam has provided us a bad example and influence. He also considered grace an aid, but, with or without it, the human will must take the initiative in moving toward salvation. St. Augustine declared Pelagius' views heretical and had them condemned at the Councils of Carthage in 416 and 418. By an =

Ages, upheld St Augustine's view which had by then become a basic unchallengeable doctrine.

There evolved in the church, along with these doctrines, a sacrament known as penance for the expiation of sins after baptism. In the early centuries, penance was elaborate, severe, public, and allowed only once in a lifetime¹. The act of penance consisted of three steps:

contrition: sorrow that one has sinned coupled with an intention to abstain therefrom in the future;

confession: acknowledgement of one's sin to a priest;

satisfaction: carrying out works of penance assigned by one's confessor.

Upon completion of the three steps, absolution is granted by the priest indicating the sinner's reconciliation with God. The Roman Catholic Church held that without the sacrament of penance, even perfect contrition is insufficient to reconcile the sinner with God, and that with the sacrament even imperfect contrition is sufficient.² That is, the ritual became more important than the sincere intent of the sinner to repent.

Originally the works of penance ordered by the priests were very severe; later they were commuted to simple prayers or even cash payments. During the Middle Ages when the sacrament of penance was reduced to private confessions to a priest

= imperial edict of 418, it was decreed that Pelagius and Coelestius (his most noted follower) be banned along with all who subscribed to their doctrines, and that their properties be confiscated. (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 421).

¹ *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 249.

² *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 421.

(from 1215 at least once a year for Western Christians), a new means of salvation called 'Papal indulgences' appeared. The indulgences were letters of credit supposedly drawn on the superabundant merits available in the virtues of Jesus Christ and the Saints, to compensate for inadequate merit on the part of an individual. ¹

The sales of indulgences by 'pardoners' provoked Martin Luther (1488-1540) to write his *Ninety-five Theses*, against Catholic ritual which precipitated the Reformation², a general revolt against the Papacy. His key doctrines were that the authority of the Bible is supreme over church tradition and that justification is by grace through faith alone, not by works.³ Luther also opposed free will. It was his view that man possesses some freedom in matters that do not pertain to salvation, but he has no freedom to save himself. ⁴

From this point onward the Pauline doctrine of "justification by faith" became, for the protestant branch of Christianity, its cardinal doctrine. Consequently, in both major branches of Christianity, repentance directly from God has been blocked by mediators, and those who subscribe to its teachings have tragically fallen into the worship of God's creation while sincerely and fervently believing they are actually worshipping the Creator.

¹ The Penitentiary - also called Grand Penitentiary - is a cardinal presiding over a tribunal of the Roman Curia (Papal Court) concerned with dispensations and indulgences. The penitentiary (with lower case p) is an officer in a Roman Catholic diocese vested with power from the bishop to absolve sins in cases reserved to him. (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 847).

² *Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 249-50.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 321.

Within most branches of mystic movements among Muslims, the Christian concept of God's inaccessibility to the common man due to his sins has also taken root. According to mystic teachings, the "saviour" figure, represented by the leading so called saint, occupies the fictitious office of *al-Ghawth al-A'dHam* (or *Ghaus-e-Azam* lit. the greatest source of succor). It is believed that, due to the *Ghawth's* elevated status, he is capable of shouldering a portion of the sins of the believers.¹ Thus, in times of distress or need, mystics and their followers openly call on these "saints" by their titles or names like: Muhyud-Deen or 'Abdul-Qadir, etc., believing that they can save them. This state of degeneration of faith was prophesied by the last messenger of God (ﷺ) as follows:

*"You will follow the path of those before you, inch by inch and step by step, so much so that if they entered a lizard's hole you will follow them in there also." We (the Prophet's companions) asked, "Oh messenger of Allaah. Do "those before you" refer to the Jews and the Christians?" He replied: "Who else (if not them)?"*²

This is not to say that Islaam teaches that salvation may only be attained through man's works. Such a concept is totally false, as it negates God's role in man's destiny altogether. Salvation by deeds alone is the basis of the *Karma*³ concept of Hinduism and

¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 629. See also 'Alee ibn 'Uthmaan al-Hujweeree, *Kashfal-Mahjoob*, trans. by Nicholson (London: Luzac, rep. 1976), p. 214.

² Collected by Muslim from both Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree and 'Aṭaa Ibn Yasaar (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1403, nos. 6448 and 6449).

³ Karma primarily means action, work or deed. In its secondary sense it signifies the 'effect' of an action, or the sum total of 'effects' of past actions. Thus, it is stated in the Chandogya (Veda) that those whose past deeds have been good will after death be reborn from the womb of a Brahman woman, whereas those whose deeds have been evil will be reborn from the womb of an outcaste woman (See. *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 180).

its offshoots. The religion of Allaah teaches that it is only by the Grace and Mercy of God that anyone will attain paradise. Allaah stated in the Qur'aan:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Were it not for Allaah’s Grace and Mercy on you all, none of you would have ever become purified; but Allaah purifies whom He pleases. And Allaah hears and knows all.”¹

Abu Hurayrah and ‘Aa’eshah both related that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

“Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and rejoice, for no one’s deeds will put him in paradise.” They asked, “Not even you, Oh Messenger of Allaah?” He replied, “Not even me unless Allaah bestows His pardon and mercy on me.”²

There is, however, a direct link between faith, righteous deeds and divine Grace. God’s mercy is not arbitrary in that it would cause a disbelieving evil wretch to enter paradise while causing a righteous and noble believing soul to enter Hell. Such a state of affairs would deny man’s free will and make the Day of Judgement meaningless. Allaah’s wisdom and justice work along with His grace and mercy.

There is an aspect of His infinite mercy which covers all creatures, deserving or undeserving, though the greater part is reserved as Grace for the righteous believers in the next life.

¹ Soorah an-Noor (24):21.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 315, no. 474 - see also p. 313, no. 470).

Abu Hurayrah quoted Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

*"The day when Allaah created mercy He made it in one hundred parts. Ninety-nine parts He kept with Himself and one part He sent to all His creatures."*¹

The keys to entering paradise through Allaah's mercy and grace are none other than; sincere faith in the one true God who alone deserves man's worship and devotion; and the performance of righteous deeds prescribed by God. This has been neatly summed up by Allaah in the following verses:

مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا نَفْسَ لَهُ يَمْهَدُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ الْبَجَرِيُّ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

"Those who reject faith will suffer from that rejection, while those who believe and work righteousness have prepared for themselves (places in paradise), in order that He may reward those who believe and work righteousness out of His grace. For, surely He does not love those who reject faith."²

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 316, no. 476).

² Soorah ar-Room (30):44-5.

CHAPTER TWO: CONDITIONS

Although repentance is fundamentally a personal pact between the sinner and Allaah, some basic procedural guidelines have been set by Musim scholars down through the ages. These recommended procedures are not human obstacles which intrude into the process, but are, instead, key factors gleaned from the texts of the Final Scripture and the teachings of the final Prophet (ﷺ) which have to be observed to insure real sincerity and the fulfillment of God's rights as well as those of man. The desired result is Allaah's forgiveness, His pardon and absolution from the consequences of the sin. For this to take place, the repentance must first be acceptable to God. Consequently, the guidelines actually represent the necessary conditions which must be met in order for the act of worship of God through repentance to be valid. However, although repentance has been commanded by Allaah, it should not be forgotten that, it is not **He** who needs our repentance, but **we** who need His remission. Thus, *Tawbah* has been legislated primarily for man's benefit; for his spiritual growth through rising above sin and the remembrance of God.

1. REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAAH

There is in all forms of worship training for the soul in overcoming its lower desires and abstaining from evil, but the greater goal which ensures all of that and much more is the remembrance of Allaah.

إِبْرَاطِ الصَّلَاةِ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ
أَكْبَرُ

“Verily regular prayer prevents shameful speech and unjust deeds, but the remembrance of Allaah is the greatest.”¹

Thus, the ultimate goal of worship is the remembrance of God. Because, it is in God-consciousness (*Taqwaa*) that all righteousness lies.

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“Verily, I am Allaah, there is no god besides Me, so worship Me and establish regular prayer for My remembrance.”²

And, furthermore, the greatest benefit that man may gain in this life, can only be obtained from the remembrance of Allaah; that of true peace, tranquility and contentment of the heart.

أَلَا يَذَكِّرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمِينُ الْقُلُوبِ

“Without doubt, it is in the remembrance of Allaah that the hearts find rest.”³

It follows, then, that the greatest tragedy that can happen in a man's life is that he turn away from the remembrance of God. For, when he forgets Allaah, he degenerates into a slave of his own base desires whose life becomes characterized by evil and corruption.

¹ Soorah al-'Ankaboot (29):45.

² Soorah Taa Haa (20):14.

³ Soorah ar-Ra'd (13):28.

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

“And whoever turns away from My remembrance will have a wretched life and We will raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement.”¹

Satan’s goal is to cause man to forget God in order that he will fall into sin and become one of his slaves. Allaah exposes Satan’s plot as follows:

أَسْتَحْوِذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنسَهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ أَلَا إِنَّ
حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

“Satan has got the better of them and caused them to forget the remembrance of Allaah. Those are the party of Satan. Truly the party of Satan are the real losers.”²

Consequently, the forces of evil constantly strive to block man from the awareness of God using instruments of intoxication, addiction and the crazed delight of getting something for nothing. This is the main reason for their prohibition according to the following Qur’anic verse:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ
وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

“Satan’s plan is to incite enmity and hatred among you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you

¹ Soorah Taa Haa (20):124.

² Soorah al-Mujaadalah (58):19.

from the remembrance of Allaah and regular prayer. Will you not then abstain?”¹

Allaah, in turn, commands the believers to remember Him as much as possible within a normal pattern of life, for it is something we constantly fall short of.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

“Oh believers! Remember Allaah often.”²

Hence, real repentance must be closely linked with the remembrance of Allaah. In fact, it should begin from the point at which one becomes conscious of God. Among the qualities by which Allaah describes those whose repentance is accepted is that of:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ
فَأَسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ

“Those who, having done something shameful or (having) wronged their own souls, remember Allaah and immediately ask forgiveness for their sins.”³

And, as is a condition in all acts of worship, repentance must be done strictly for the pleasure of Allaah alone, for only He can pardon the sins of man. God says:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

¹ Soorah al-Maa'idah (5):91.

² Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):41.

³ Soorah Aal 'Imraan (3):135.

“They were only commanded to worship Allaah making the religion sincere for Him alone.”¹

وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“And who forgives sins besides Allaah?”²

That is, the motivating force behind true repentance should be the love of Allaah and a wish to glorify and exalt Him. This love should be accompanied by hope for the rewards which Allaah has promised and fear of the punishments in store for those who transgress His laws. It should not be driven by a desire to curry the favor of others or earn their admiration and praise. Nor should it be to achieve some worldly goal like a job or a wife. Jundub reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Whoever informs others about his good deeds to win their praise or does them in public for acclaim, will be exposed by Allaah.”³

Repentance done for show will not be accepted by Allaah. In fact, such an act becomes a sin, for which repentance is also needed.

In remembering Allaah and turning to Him in repentance, the sinner has to acknowledge his errors. However, his confession of sins should be to the One God who alone can forgive them, and not to any human intermediary. Allaah gives hope to those who confess as follows:

وَأَخْرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَى اللَّهُ
أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

¹ Soorah al-Bayyinah (98):5.

² Soorah Aal 'Imraan (3):135.

³ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 334, no. 506).

“There are others who acknowledge their sins but have mixed a good deed with another which was evil. Perhaps Allaah will pardon them, for Allaah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.”¹

And in one of the most important prayers for repentance taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) to his companions is the following phrase: *Aboo'u laka bi ni'matika alayya aboo'u bi dhambee faghfirlee* (“I acknowledge before You Your blessings bestowed on me and I confess to You my sins, so forgive me.”)²

If Allaah has seen fit to cover a man's sins, he should keep them to himself, unless he is earnestly seeking atonement through legal punishment. Abu Hurayrah reported Allaah's Messenger as saying:

“All the people of my Ummah may be pardoned for their sins except those who publicize them.”³

The act of *Tawbah* must also be performed while maintaining full consciousness of Allaah throughout. For, acts of worship done in a purely ritualistic manner, wherein words are uttered quickly, limbs moved reflexively and mindlessly, are unacceptable to God and are of no benefit to man. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) emphatically stated this point as follows:

¹ Soorah at-Tawbah (9):102.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 212-3, no. 318) and at-Tirmidhee from Shaddaad ibn Aws, and by Abu Daawood from Buraydah (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1407, n o. 5052).

³ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1539, no. 7124).

“Call on Allaah in prayer confident that it will be answered. But know that Allaah does not answer the prayer of an unmindful, inattentive heart.”¹

When one is aware of one's actions, they become deliberate and can be directed correctly, but in an unconscious state they become meaningless. Consequently, according to divine law (*Sharee'ah*) man is not judged sinful for errors committed while in a state of sleep or unconsciousness, as a child prior to puberty, in a state of real insanity, as well as those genuinely done mistakenly or due to forgetfulness.² Though, in some cases compensation may still have to be paid to those affected.

2. IMMEDIACY

Once the believer has remembered Allaah and realized his sin, he is now obliged to turn to God in repentance immediately, without any hesitation or delayal, if he sincerely wants to repent. The postponement of *Tawbah* is the result of either a deliberate desire to prolong the illicit pleasure derived from the sin, or doubt on the part of an ignorant sinner whether or not Allaah would accept repentance from him. In the first case the sinner has compounded his sin and should seek forgiveness for

¹ Collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated (*Hasan*) by al-Albaanee in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 3, p. 164, no. 2766.

² At-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah both collected *Hadeeths* in which 'Alee reported that the Messenger of Allaah said: *“The pen is raised from (the record) of three: the sleeper until he awakes, the child until he becomes a youth and the insane until he becomes sane.”* (Authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 2, p. 64, no. 1150 and *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 1, p. 347, no. 1660). Ibn Maajah also collected a *Hadeeth* in which Abu Hurayrah reported Allaah's messenger (ﷺ) as saying: *“Verily Allaah has excused my followers from genuine mistakes, forgetfulness and what they have been forced to do.”* (Authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 1, p. 347, no. 1662).

his delayal, while in the second case he needs to be informed that no sin is too great for Allaah to forgive, if he earnestly repents. Allaah has emphasized the need for a quick response to sin in the following Qur'anic verses:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ
مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“Surely Allaah will forgive those who do sins in ignorance and soon turn in repentance. These Allaah will forgive, for Allaah is all-knowing, all-Wise”¹

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ

“Hasten in the race for forgiveness from your Lord.”²

The longer one delays the *Tawbah*, the more difficult it will become to do so, because the sin will have a greater opportunity to take root in the heart, and the desires will be given a bigger chance to rationalize the sin and overcome the conscience. In most cases, a sin may be identified immediately based on the God-given awareness of good and evil with which each soul was created. This reality has been clearly stated by Allaah in the Final Revelation:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ﴿٧﴾ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):17. See also Soorah Aal 'Imraan (3):135.

² Soorah Aal 'Imraan (3):133.

“By the soul and the One who proportioned it, then inspired it to wrong and right.”¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) further elaborated on this principle in his teachings. An-Nawwaas ibn Sam‘aan reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

“Righteousness is good character and sin is what wavers in your soul and about which you would not like people to discover.”²

On another occasion Waabiṣah ibn Ma‘bad said:

“I came to Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) and he said: ‘Have you come to ask about righteousness?’ I said: ‘Yes’. He said, ‘Consult your heart. Righteousness is what the soul and heart feel at ease with, and sin is what wavers in the soul and the heart even though people give you a ruling in favour of it, again and again.’”³

And based on this principle the Prophet (ﷺ) further advised his followers to avoid the doubtful. Al-Hasan ibn ‘Alee related that he memorized the following statement from Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ):

“Leave the doubtful for that which is not.”⁴

There is really no excuse for deferring *Tawbah* to a later date,

¹ Soorah ash-Shams (91): 7 & 8.

² Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1358, no. 6195) and at-Tirmidhee. See also *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English-Arabic), pp. 90-1, no. 27.

³ Collected by Ahmad and ad-Daarimee. It has been authenticated by al-Albaanee in his authentication of *Mishkaah al-Maṣaabeeh*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd ed., 1979), vol. 2, p. 845, no. 2774, ft. 3. See also *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English-Arabic), pp. 40-4, no. 27.

⁴ Collected by an-Nasaa‘ee and at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 2, p. 309, no. 2045. See also *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English-Arabic), pp. 52-3, no. 11.

especially considering the uncertainty of the future, which Allaah so often emphasizes in the Qur'aan:

وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ

“No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow nor does it know in what part of the earth it will die.”¹

Consequently, the believer who is sincerely seeking God's pardon will not delay in the least, but will turn to the Oft-Forgiving Creator as soon as he realizes that he has fallen into sin. The speed at which he turns back to Allaah will be a measure of his sincerity and the level of his faith.

3. CESSATION

The immediate turning in repentance has to be accompanied by an immediate abandonment of the sin for which forgiveness is sought. Sincere repentance cannot possibly take place while one willingly and knowingly continues to commit the sin. If the sinner is not prepared to cease doing wrong without delay, he is really not prepared to repent. And, any verbal expression of repentance or spoken request for forgiveness without abstinence will only be of a mindless, ritualistic type, which is invalid due to lack of sincerity. Allaah, Himself has made His granting of forgiveness dependant upon the cessation of the sinful act for which repentance is made.

وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰی مَا فَعَلُوْا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ
مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ

¹ Soorah Luqmaan (31):34.

“And for those who *do not knowingly persist* in the wrong they have done is a reward of forgiveness from their Lord.”¹

The pre-requisite for absolution can also be found mentioned in many of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). For example, Abu Hurayrah reported that on one occasion the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said:

*“When a believer commits a sin a black spot appears on his heart. If he repents, **desists**, and asks forgiveness, his heart is polished clean. But if he does more sins, the spots increase. That is the rust which Allaah mentions in His Book: ‘By no means! But rust has covered their hearts from the (sins) they do.’² ”³*

Thus, it may be said that *Tawbah* from a particular sin without immediate abstinence from that sin is not true *Tawbah*, but a poor imitation of it, which will not be acceptable to Allaah and which will not absolve the penitent of his sin. This type of repentance resembles the sacramental approach to penance found in some branches of Christianity and it gives the sin ample time to lodge itself more firmly in the heart. The abandonment of iniquity will become progressively more difficult to accomplish as time passes and the will to resist becomes weaker and weaker. This will also affect one’s attempts to repent from other sins and a pattern of falsehood with oneself is likely to develop. And, as the sinner becomes increasingly unable to desist from minor sins, it will also affect his ability to abstain from major sins. If the cycle continues, his heart becomes increasingly covered in the rust of sin which will gradually form a veil of darkness blocking

¹ Soorah Aal ‘Imraan (3):135-6.

² Collected by Ahmad and Ibn Maajah and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 417, no. 3422.

³ Soorah al-Mutaffifeen (83):14.

him from the light of truth and faith. His organs of sight and hearing will simultaneously be veiled from the truth and he will have an aversion to being around righteous people or to hearing words of righteousness. Though such a person may still claim to be a believer, criticism and slander will form the basis of his conversation when he speaks about religion and the religious, and praise and admiration will characterize his talks about the disbelievers and the world of disbelief. Allaah has amply described such individuals at the beginning of the Qur'aan in stark contrast to the true believers:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
 خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةً
 وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَ
 بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
 وَمَا يُخَادِعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

“As to those who reject faith, it is the same whether you warn them or you do not warn them; they will not believe. Allaah has set a seal on their hearts, and on their hearing and eyes is a veil. There will be for them a grave penalty. Among these people are some who say: ‘We believe in Allaah and the Last Day,’ but they do not really believe. They attempt to deceive Allaah and the believers but they only deceive themselves without realizing it.”¹

An excellent example of the principle of repentance and cessation of sin can be found in the Qur’anic treatment of the grave sin of dealing in interest (*Ribaa*).

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):6-9.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ
 الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ
 اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا
 سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ

“Allaah has permitted trade and forbidden interest. Those who *desist* after receiving direction from their Lord, will be pardoned for what took place in the past, and their case is for Allaah (to judge). But, whoever returns to it will be eternal inhabitants of the Hellfire.”¹

Those who continue to disobey God’s command fall into the clutches of Satan and deviously try to rationalize their persistent rebellion against the divine law. Allaah describes them in the Qur’aan as follows:

“Those who consume interest stand like those thrown down in a fit from the touch of Satan, because they say, ‘Trade is just like interest.’ ”²

Trade and interest do have similarities, but the harm to society in their differences is enough that Allaah has made trade allowable and interest not. In fact, all prohibited things share similarities with their counterparts among the permissible things. In the same way that beef is similar to pork and grape juice is similar to wine, but one is permitted by God for consumption and the other is not. Thus, the essence of the issue is not our individual perceptions of what is beneficial and harmful, but what Allaah, the Creator of all things, knows to be more

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):275.

² Ibid.

harmful than beneficial. Allaah then continues to exhort the believers to repent and abandon the sin totally:

يَتَّيِبُهَا لَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“O believers! Fear Allaah and give up the remaining interest if you truly believe.”¹

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ

“If you do not, war has been declared on you by Allaah and His Messenger. But if you repent, the capital of your wealth is yours. Do not be unjust and you will not be dealt with unjustly.”²

4. EXONERATION

If the sin for which repentance is sought involves the violation of the rights of other human beings, these rights must be restored for absolution to be granted. Property acquired illegally must be returned and honor restored where violated, because Allaah will not accept the prayers of one who lives off stolen property. Abu Hurayrah narrated from Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) that:

“He mentioned the case of a dishevelled and dusty man on a long journey who raises his hands up to the sky saying: Oh Lord! Oh Lord! But his food, drink and clothing are unlawful and he is

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):278.

² Ibid., (2):279.

*nourished unlawfully, so how can he be answered?"*¹

Furthermore, any unfulfilled rights will be taken from the wrongdoer's scale of good deeds on the Day of Judgement when no one can afford to spare any righteousness which is in their favour. Abu Hurayrah also reported that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said:

*"Whoever has wronged his brother with regard to his honor or anything else, should seek his pardon now before the time when neither deenars nor dirhams will be of any benefit. At that time, if he has good deeds, an amount of them equal to the wrong will be taken; but if he has none, sins from the wronged person will be put on him."*²

In this life, the violation of human rights also exposes the sinner to calamities resulting from the prayers of those who have been wronged. Ibn 'Abbaas related that when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Mu'aadh ibn Jabal to Yemen he told him:

*"Beware of the curse of one who is oppressed, for surely there is no veil between him and Allaah."*³

Consequently, sincere repentance can not take place within a context of continued oppression and violation of the rights of others. If the owner of property is unknown or unavailable, it should be given to the next of kin, if known, or donated to the poor, if neither the owner nor his relatives are known. The repentant sinner must, at all costs, clear himself of any illegally

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 486 no. 2214), at-Tirmidhee, Ahmad and ad-Daarimee. See also *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, p. 50, no. 10.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 377, no. 629).

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 376-7, no. 628.

obtained possessions or honor violations like slander, backbiting or false rumours, especially those for which he is seeking absolution.

5. SORROW

It is also essential that the penitent feel deep sorrow and regret for his transgression. Remorse is the foundation of the act of *Tawbah*. Without it, repentance becomes a meaningless ritual devoid of any sincerity and substance. The sinner who repents without self-condemnation secretly relishes the memories of his sin while outwardly pretending to give it up. As long as the violation of God's law is not given up inwardly, the sinner will soon return to the sin. *Tawbah* without remorse will also be devoid of consciousness and fear of God, and thus will likely be for some materialistic goal. For example, a position requiring that one holding it abstain from certain vices may cause those who apply for it to hypocritically eschew these vices while harboring in their hearts a secret love for them. Since such a form of repentance lacks the initial ingredient of sincerity, it will likely be transformed into a sin and held against its perpetrator.

The primary role of regret in repentance was emphasized by the Prophet (ﷺ) in such a way as to leave no doubt about it. Ibn Ma'qal said:

*"I came with my father to 'Abdullaah and heard him say: 'I heard Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: 'Remorse is repentance.' My father asked him, 'Did you actually hear the Prophet (ﷺ) say: 'Remorse is repentance?' He replied, 'Yes!' "*¹

There should also be a firm intent not to repeat the sin again for the remorse to be real. For, how can someone feel sorry about

¹ Collected by Ibn Maajah and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 418, no. 3429.

something wrong they have done while planning to do it again in the future. Sorrow, in such a case, would only be a show for the benefit of others, it could not possibly be due to a conscious recognition of sin and the fear of God. True sorrow will produce a strong and sincere desire not to repeat the cause of the sorrow. This does not mean that if someone repeats a sin, the original repentance was not sincere and was not accepted. It is possible for one to slip, in times of weakness, back into the same sin, but it would not be to the same degree nor would it take the same length of time to realize the sin, remember Allaah and abandon it. If one falls back into the same sin to the same degree or to a worse degree, the sincerity of the original repentance would then become doubtful, as it did not appear to have had any effect on the sinner's spirit.

6. RIGHTEOUS DEEDS

True *Tawbah* is not only expressed in feelings from the heart and words on the lips, but also in the penitent individual's actions. He should be driven by his desire for absolution to correct whatever wrong he has done and make amends. Allaah promises to pardon those who are so inclined.

مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ جَاهِلَةً ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ

“If any of you does evil in ignorance, then repents and makes amends, He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”¹

If the truth were sinfully concealed or lies disseminated to others, repentance must be accompanied by an open declaration of the truth for it to be valid. In reference to those who hid knowledge about Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and Islaam which

¹ Soorah al-An'aam (6):54.

was contained within the scriptures of the Old and New Testament¹, Allaah pronounces His curse on them, as well as the curse of the angels and all mankind, with the following exceptions:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوْا فَاُولَئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ

¹ In Deuteronomy 18:18 of the Old Testament, Prophet Moses spoke about a prophet to be sent by God from among the brethren of the Jews who would be like Moses. Deuteronomy 33:1-2 speaks of God (ie. God's revelation) coming from Sinai (reference to Prophet Moses), rising from Seir (near Jerusalem, reference to Prophet Jesus) and shining forth from Paran (Genesis 21:21 identifies Paran as the place where Ishmael settled ie. Makkah in Arabia, thus reference to Prophet Muhammad [ﷺ]). Isaiah 42:1-13 speaks of the beloved of God, His elect messenger who will bring down a law awaited in the isles among the descendants of Ke'dar (Genesis 25:13 identifies Ke'dar as the second son of Ishmael, the ancestor of Prophet Muhammad [ﷺ]).

In Habakkuk 3:3 mention is made of God (God's help) coming from Te'man (an Oasis North of Madeenah according to J. Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*), and the holy one coming from Paran. Under persecution, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) migrated from Makkah (Paran) to Madeenah (Te'man) where he found support. Vivid details of the migration can also be found in Isaiah 21:13-17 as well as the Battle of Badr in which the few ill-armed faithful miraculously defeated the mighty men of Ke'dar.

The New Testament Gospel of John chapters 14, 15 and 16 report Jesus speaking about the "Paraclete" (comforter) to come after his departure who would "speak not of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak" (John 16:13). Though later Christians claimed the "Paraclete" to be the Holy Spirit, history shows that many early Christians understood the *Paraclete* to be a man and not a spirit, as there were a number of occasions in which those who claimed to be the awaited *Paraclete* found followers. (See Jamal Badawi, *Muhammad in the Bible*, (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Islamic Information Foundation, n.d.), pp. 3-5).

“Except those who repent, *make amends and openly declare (the truth)*; those I will forgive, for I am the Oft-Returning, the Most Merciful.”¹

Real *Tawbah* will not only cause the wrongdoer to renounce the sin from which he is seeking absolution, but it should also motivate him to voluntarily perform additional deeds of righteousness. The spiritual change which takes place during true repentance should be translated into righteous actions as a positive replacement in the soul for the iniquity which it has abandoned. Because of the importance of good deeds to the process of repentance, Allaah has included it among the conditions for pardon and release from the consequences of sin. Allaah emphatically states in the Final Revelation that,

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا

“Whoever repents and does good has truly repented to Allaah.”²

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى

“Surely I will repeatedly forgive those who repent, believe and do righteous deeds, and then accept right guidance.”³

For example, the acceptance of Islaam is an act of repentance wherein one turns from a life of error to the clear path of God. However, the Prophet (ﷺ) explained that the declaration of faith erases all previous sins, only if it is followed up by good

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):160.

² Soorah Furqaan (25):71.

³ Soorah Taa Haa (20):82.

deeds as prescribed by Allaah, otherwise the convert is still held to account for earlier sins. ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘oud said:

“Some people asked Allaah’s Messenger: ‘Oh Messenger of Allaah! Will we be held responsible for what we did during the **Jaahileeyah** (time of ignorance before embracing Islaam)?’ He replied, ‘Whoever does good deeds in Islaam will not be held to account, but one who does evil will be accountable for the time before Islaam and after.’”¹

Furthermore, Allaah promises to reward those who repent and do righteous deeds with additional good in place of their past evil deeds, and grant them on top of that paradise as their ultimate reward. Allaah says:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ
سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“Except those who repent, believe and do righteous deeds; those are the ones whose evil deeds Allaah will replace with good, and Allaah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.”²

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ
شَيْئًا

“Except those who repent, believe and do righteous deeds; those are the ones who will enter paradise without being wronged in the least.”³

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, pp. 68-9, nos. 217 and 218).

² Soorah Furqaan (25):70.

³ Soorah Maryam (19):60.

Without such a positive transformation, the sinner's sorrow and regret may merely lead him into a state of extreme depression. In this weakened condition, he then becomes susceptible, once again, to the whisperings and proddings of the devils from within and without. And, ultimately, the forces of evil may cause him to fall into further transgression. Therefore, the sincerely repentant should deliberately seek out all possible avenues of righteousness to avail himself of Allaah's Grace, whereby He has vastly multiplied the value of good deeds. God said in the Qur'aan:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ مِثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا
مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

“Whoever does a good deed will have the reward of ten, while he who does a sin will only be recompensed likewise and they will not be wronged.”¹

Abu Hurayrah quoted Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

“Whoever intends to do good, but does not do it has one good deed recorded for him. If he intends to do good and does it, ten to seven hundred good deeds are recorded for him. While he who intends to do evil, but does not, no entry is recorded. If he does it, then it is recorded.”²

This divine favor of increase in the effect of righteous deeds gracefully helps man erase his many sins, if he acts wisely. Allaah says in the Final Revelation:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرِي لِلذَّكْرِينَ

¹ Soorah al-An'aam (6):160.

² Narrated by Ibn 'Abbaas and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Saheeh al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English) vol. 8, p. 329, no. 499) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.) vol. 1, pp. 75-6, no. 237).

“Verily good deeds erase evil deeds. This is a reminder for those who remember (their Lord)”¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) was also reported to have said,

“Fear Allaah wherever you may be, follow an evil deed with a good one and it will erase it, and treat people well.”²

By following such a path the chances of earning God’s forgiveness will be greatly improved according to the Final Scripture:

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“But whoever does wrong and substitutes good in place of evil, truly I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”³

Allaah has also seen fit to make the major righteous deeds enjoined on the believers a source of expiation for sins. Because these foundational pillars of Islaam are designed to train the believer in righteousness, when they are performed according to both the letter and the spirit of the law, they become good deeds of the highest order capable of cleansing the true believers of many of their sins.

Wudoo (Ablution)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

“When a servant (of God) washes his face, every sin he contemplated with his eyes will be washed away along with the last drop of water; when he washes his hands, every sin they commit-

¹ Soorah Hood (11):114.

² Collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 2, p. 191, no. 1618. See *An-Nawawi’s Forty Ḥadith*, (Arabic-English) pp. 66-7, no. 18.

³ Soorah an-Naml (27):11.

ted will be washed off from his hands with the last drop of water; and when he washes his feet, every sin towards which his feet have walked will be washed away with the last drop of water. So that he comes out pure from all sins.”¹

Salaah (Formal Prayer)

Humraan reported on the authority of ‘Uthmaan ibn ‘Affaan that he heard Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say:

*“The obligatory prayers of the one who properly performed **Wudoo** (ablution) as Allaah the Exalted enjoined on him, will be an expiation for sins² committed between them.”³*

Salaatul-Jumu‘ah (Friday Congregational Prayer)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

*“If anyone performs **Wudoo** well, then comes to the Friday prayer, listens and keeps silent, his sins between then and the next Jumu‘ah plus those of three extra days will be forgiven. But he who plays with pebbles has caused an interruption.”⁴”⁵*

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 155, no. 475).

² Minor sins. In another narration ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas reported that on one occasion ‘Uthmaan asked for some water to make *Wudoo* and he quotes Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: “When the time for a prescribed prayer arrives and a Muslim performs *Wudoo* well and humbly offers prayers with proper bowing, it will be an expiation for his past sins as long as they are not major sins, and that is for all times.” (Collected by Muslim *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 150, no. 441).

³ Collected by Muslim *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 151, no. 445.

⁴ The floor of the Masjid was gravel during the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time. One who plays with the stones during the Friday sermon (*Khutbah*) distracts himself and possibly others with his idle actions, or with the sound made by the clicking of the stones. The Prophet (ﷺ) equated it with idle talk which he forbade saying, “One should be quiet when the *Imaam* is speaking.” (Nar-

Laylatul-Qadr (Night of Power)

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“All the previous sins of any one who gets up for prayer during the Night of Power (Laylatul-Qadr)¹ out of faith and seeking his reward from the Lord will be forgiven.”²

Sawm (Fasting)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“All the previous sins of any one who fasts the month of Ramadaan out of faith and seeking his reward from the Lord, will be forgiven.”³

Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah)

Abu Hurayrah stated that Allaah’s Messenger said,

= rated by Salmaan and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 2, p. 27, chapter heading 34). Muslims are required to listen attentively to the Friday sermon and remain silent throughout, so much so, that even telling others to be quiet is not allowed. Abu Hurayrah reported Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, “If one of you tells his brother to be silent while the Imaam is giving the sermon, he is guilty of idle talk.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 2, pp. 27-8, *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 404, no. 1846, and *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 286-7, no. 1107).

⁵ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 407, no. 1868) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawood* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 270, no. 1045. See also p. 91, no. 343 for a longer narration also reported by Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree and authenticated (*Hasan*) by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 1, p. 70, no. 331.

¹ A night among the last ten nights of Ramadaan (the 9th month of the lunar calendar) known only to Allaah.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree, (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, pp. 69-70, no. 125).

³ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 70, no. 125.

“Whoever makes pilgrimage to this House (Ka’bah) and does not have sexual relations with his wife nor commit sins (during the Hajj) will return (sinless) the way his mother bore him.”¹

‘Umrah (Minor Pilgrimage)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said:

“The sins done between two ‘Umrahs are expiated by them.”²

7. TIME FRAME

Despite God’s infinite Grace and Mercy, His supreme justice has set certain times when repentance will not be accepted, in the same way that it set the circumstance of insincerity and seeking forgiveness from other than God as reasons for its rejection. The times of non-acceptance are those when a person has no other choice; when repentance is no longer a voluntary act of faith, but a vain attempt to escape the inevitable consequence of sin.

Death

The first of these times is that of an individual’s death . *Tawbah* may be made and absolution granted throughout a person’s life up until the instant when he realizes that death is upon him. At that point, regret and sorrow will be to no avail and all attempts at repentance will be denied. Allaah addressed this issue in crystal clear terms as follows:

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 27, nos. 45 & 46.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 1, no. 1), Muslim, an-Nasaa’ee, Ibn Maajah and Maalik (Professor M. Rahimuddin, *Muwatta Imam Malik*, (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1985), p. 158, no. 756).

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ
 أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْإِسْلَامَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ
 كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

“There is no repentance for those who continue to do evil until death comes upon one of them and he says, ‘Indeed, I have now repented’, nor for those who die in disbelief. We have prepared for them a most grievous punishment.”¹

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was reported by ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar to have said:

“Allaah, most Great and Glorious, will accept His servant’s repentance until his death rattle begins.”²

The Last Day

The second time when repentance will be to no avail is at the end of the world when the major signs of the Last Day appear beginning with the rising of the sun in the West. At that time declarations of faith by disbelievers will be futile. The souls of all the believers will be taken just prior to the western sunrise and only the faithless will remain alive in the world. The Prophet’s wife, ‘Aa’eshah related the following:

“I heard Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say, ‘The night and day will

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):18.

² Collected by at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, Ahmad and Maalik and authenticated (*Hasan*) by al-Albaanee in *Shaheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 418, no. 3430. See also *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 12, no. 18, for an English translation of this *Hadeeth*.

not cease until people have begun to worship Laat and 'Uzzaa,'¹ I said, 'Oh Messenger of Allaah! I think that when Allaah revealed this verse: **He it is Who has sent His Messenger with right guidance and true religion, to make it prevail over all religions, though the idolators dislike it,**² this means that it will take place.' He replied, 'It will happen as Allaah wishes. Then Allaah will send a sweet fragrant breeze which will take the life of everyone with even a mustard grains weight of faith, and only those who have no goodness in them will survive. Then they will revert to the religion of their forefathers.'³

Abu Hurayrah reported that on another occasion Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said,

"When three things appear, faith will not benefit one who has not previously believed or has not derived any good from his faith: the rising of the sun from its place of setting,⁴ the Antichrist,⁵ and

¹ al-Laatt (or al-Laat) the idol in the form of a rock worshipped by the *Thaqeef* tribe in Taa'if or by the Quraysh tribe at Nakhlah and al-'Uzza is the name of a gum-acaia tree idol worshipped by the Ghatafaan tribe in Baṭn Nakhlah. (*Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, pp. 2649 and 2032).

² Soorah at-Tawbah (9):33.

³ Collected by Muslim *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1506, no. 6945).

⁴ That is, rising in the West, which probably refers to a time when earth will begin to rotate in the opposite direction causing the sun to appear to rise in the West instead of the East. This is one of the major signs of the arrival of the Last Hour.

⁵ The Arabic term used is الدجال *Dajjal*, (the arch deceiver), from the verb دجل *Dajala* which means "to smear (a camel) with tar (in order to cover its faults)" or "to lie" (*Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 853). Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) prophesied the coming of one who would deceive much of the world through magical feats and the great powers he would possess.

*the beast of the earth.*¹”²

Abu Hurayrah also reported Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying,

*“Allaah will accept the repentance of anyone who seeks it before the sun rises in the west.”*³

¹ The *Daabbatul-Ard* (Beast of the Earth) is another of the major signs of the approach of the Last Day. It is referred to the Qur’aan as follows:

“When the decree is fulfilled against them, We will produce from the earth for them a beast which will speak to them...” (Soorah an-Naml (27):82).

² Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, pp. 94-5, no. 296).

³ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1418, no. 6525). See also *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, (Arabic-English), vol. 1, pp. 11-12, no. 17.

CHAPTER THREE: ACTS OF PENANCE

Making *Tawbah* for all sins is required of all believers according to the commandments of divinely revealed law. However, some or all sins committed by one who dies without making sincere repentance may be forgiven by Allaah or they may be brought against him on the Day of Judgement:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ
عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

“Oh believers, turn to Allaah in sincere repentance that perchance your Lord may grant you pardon for your sins and admit you into gardens under which rivers flow.”¹

Abu Hurayrah quoted Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

“A person (amongst the earlier nations)² who committed sins beyond measure, asked his family members to burn his body after his death and to scatter half of its ashes over the land and half in the ocean. For, (he said that) by Allaah, if Allaah catches him, He would punish him more than anyone else in the world. When he died, they did as he asked them to, but Allaah told the earth and the ocean to gather his ashes contained in them. When Allaah asked him why he had done that, he replied, ‘My Lord, it was out of fear of You that I did it and You are well aware of that.’ And Allaah granted him pardon.”³

¹ Soorah at-Tahreem (66):8.

² This explanatory phrase is from Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree’s narration of the same tradition recorded by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1439, no. 6640).

³ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1438, no. 6638).

Allaah has warned mankind, however, that there is one sin for which He will not pardon anyone who dies in its clutches without having repented from it; that of *Shirk*, the worship of other gods along with or besides Allaah.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ
بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَفْرَأَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

“Surely Allaah does not forgive that partners be given to Him, but He forgives whom He wishes for anything less than that. He who gives partners to Allaah has invented a grave sin.”¹

Hence, for those involved in the mortal sin of *Shirk*, salvation is unattainable unless they repent from it before death overtakes them. Yet, the greatest of ironies is that those worshipping gods besides Allaah have been convinced by the Satanic hosts that it is their practises of *Shirk* alone which will ensure them salvation.

Repentance and Good Deeds

In many cases, sincere repentance from a sin, abstinence from the sin and the performance of good deeds are sufficient for absolution:

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَنْوِبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا

“Whoever repents and does good has truly repented to Allaah.”²

‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘oud said:

“A man came to Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) and said, ‘Oh mes-

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):48.

² Soorah Luqmaan (25):71.

*senger of Allaah! I have fondled a woman on the outskirts of Madeenah and thereby committed an offence short of fornication. Here I am, please judge me as you see fit.' Umar said, 'Allaah has concealed your fault so you should also conceal it.' Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) remained silent. After the man stood up and walked away, Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) sent a man after him to call him, and he recited (to him) the verse: 'And observe prayer at the ends of the day and in the early hours of the night. Verily, good deeds erase evil deeds. This is a reminder for those who remember (their Lord).'*¹ *A person among the people asked, 'Oh Messenger of Allaah, does it concern this man only?' He then replied, 'No. All the people.'*”

Where sins are due to genuinely accidental factors in cases involving obligations owed to God alone, Allaah may either totally excuse them or require their replacement by another obligatory act of the same type. For example, eating or drinking during the daylight hours of the compulsory fast of the month of Ramaḍaan is a sin which breaks the fast. If any one does so by accident, they are excused and the fast is not broken.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by Abu Hurayrah to have said:

*“If one forgets and eats or drinks, he should complete his fast, for it is Allaah who has fed and served him drink.”*³

Similarly, to neglect to pray any of the five obligatory prayers

¹ Soorah Hood (11):114.

² Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1442, no. 6658). In another narration by Muslim (no. 6655) it mentioned that he kissed the woman.

³ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 85, no. 154).

during their set time periods (outside of certain exceptions) is considered a major sin. But, if one misses the prayer unintentionally, they may pray it later and no sin is held against them.

Anas ibn Maalik reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Whoever forgets a prayer should pray it when he remembers. There is no other expiation (Kaffarah) except that.” Then he recited the verse “Establish prayer for My (Allaah’s) remembrance.”¹”²

KAFFAARAH (EXPIATION)

However, in other instances, specific acts of penance have been prescribed by God to erase sins.³ Such acts are collectively called *Kaffarah*, from the verb *كَفَرَ يُكْفِرُ Kaffara Yukaf-firu*, “to cover, conceal; to annul or expiate.”⁴ . Extraordinary acts of atonement have been assigned in cases where obligations, due solely to Allaah, have been deliberately broken, and in cases where human rights have been violated, whether deliberate or accidental. The following are the main cases in which major works of penance have been divinely decreed to discourage those who would willfully and wantonly transgress the injunctions of the religion, and to safeguard man’s socio-economic rights and needs.

a. Deliberate violation of the Ramaḍaan Fast

One who has sexual intercourse with his wife during the daylight

¹ Soorah Taa Haa (20):14.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 328, no. 571), Muslim, Abu Daawood and Ahmad.

³ Muḥammad Qal’aji and Hamid Qunaibi, *Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology*, (Arabic-English), (Beirut: Dar an-Nafees, 1st ed., 1985), p. 382.

⁴ *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 2620.

hours of Ramadaan must either free a slave, fast for two consecutive months or feed sixty poor persons as atonement for that violated day.

Abu Hurayrah said,

“While we were sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ) a man came to him and said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah, I am ruined!’ Allaah’s Messenger asked, ‘What has happened to you?’ He replied, ‘I had sex with my wife while fasting.’ Allaah’s Messenger asked, ‘Can you afford to buy a slave’s freedom?’ He said, ‘No.’ Allaah’s Messenger then asked, ‘Can you fast for two successive months?’ He again replied, ‘No,’ so the Messenger of Allaah asked, ‘Can you afford to feed sixty poor people?’ When he again replied that he could not, the Prophet (ﷺ) fell silent. While we waited, a big basket full of dates was brought to the Prophet (ﷺ) and he said, ‘Where is the questioner?’ He replied, ‘Here I am.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) told him to take the basket of dates and give them in charity, and the man said, ‘Should I give it to someone poorer than me, Oh Messenger of Allaah. For, by Allaah, there is no family in Madeenah poorer than mine.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) laughed till his teeth became visible then said, ‘Feed your family with it.’”¹

b. Deliberate Hunting During Hajj

It is forbidden for a pilgrim to Makkah in the consecrated state called Ihraam, to hunt any land animals¹ or cut any twigs or trees

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 89, no. 157).

² The slaughter of domesticated animals for food by a pilgrim, even within the sacred precincts of Makkah is allowed. Harmful animals and insects have been excluded from the general prohibition. The Prophet’s wives, ‘Aa’eshah and Hafṣah both reported that he said: *“There are five vicious and harmful beasts which should be killed even in a state of Ihraam: the scorpion, rat, vul-*

within the sacred precincts of Makkah. If one does so deliberately, he is required to expiate his sin by buying and sacrificing a domestic animal equivalent to the one he hunted (e.g., a goat for an antelope), or the poor must be fed according to the value of the equivalent animal; or he must fast the number of days equal to the number of people who could be fed from the equivalent animal.¹ Allaah states in the Qur'aan:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا
فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعْمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِنْكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ
أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَلِكَ صِيًّا مَا لِيذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ عَفَا
اللَّهُ عَنْمَا سَلَفٌ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْقِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

“O believers! Do not kill game while in the state of *Ihraam*. If any of you does so intentionally, the compensation is an offering, brought to the Ka‘bah, of a domestic animal which two just men among you adjudge equivalent to the one he killed; or, as atonement (*Kaffaarah*), the feeding of needy people; or its equivalent in fasts; in order that he may taste the penalty of his deed.”²

= *ture, speckled crow, and the voracious dog.*” (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, pp. 591-2, nos. 2719 & 2725). In another narration of ‘Aa’eshah collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 591, no. 2718) the snake was included.

¹ Muḥanım̄ad al-Qurṭubee, *al-Jaami’ li Ahkaam al-Qur’aan*, (Cairo: Daar al-Kutub al-Miṣreeyah, 2nd ed., 1959), vol. 6, p. 316. Note: If there is no equivalent animal, the value of the hunted animal is determined and food is purchased with it and distributed among the poor of Makkah.

² Soorah al-Maa’idah (5):95.

c. Premature Shaving of the Head during Hajj

The rite of shaving the head takes place on the third day of Hajj and to do so prior to its time is in violation of the divinely ordained rites. If a pilgrim is obliged to do so due to an infection of the scalp, he is required to either fast, feed some poor people or offer a sacrifice as atonement for the broken rites. The basis for this expiation is found in the following Qur'anic verse:

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِذِيَّةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ
أَوْ نُسُكٍ

“And if any of you is ill or has a scalp ailment he should compensate (for shaving) by either fasting, feeding the poor or offering a sacrifice.”¹

Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah related that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said to him,

*'Are your lice troubling you?' Ka'b replied, 'Yes Oh Messenger of Allaah'. Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) then said, 'Shave your head, then either fast three days, feed six poor persons or sacrifice a sheep.'*²

d. DHihaar Separation

Islaam forbade the pre-Islamic practise of marital separation wherein a man would tell his wife the degrading words: “You are to me like my mother's back,” and he would be freed of marital responsibilities while she would remain under him like a slave, unable to remarry. For those who had done it, Allaah pre-

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):196.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, p. 24, no. 41).

scribed the freeing of a slave as the means of expiation. Allaah stated in the Qur'aan:

وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَتَمَاسَا ذَٰلِكَ كُمْ تَوْعُظُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

“Those who separate from their wives by *DHihaar* then wish to go back on what they said, must free a slave before touching each other again.¹ You are admonished with this and Allaah is well aware of what you do.”²

فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَا ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ
يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ
وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“And whoever is unable should fast for two consecutive months before touching each other. But if he is not capable, he should feed sixty poor people. This is for you to show your belief in Allaah and His Messenger. Those are the limits set by Allaah and there is a grievous penalty prepared for those who reject faith.”³

¹ This is generally understood to refer to sexual intercourse.

² Soorah al-Mujaadalah (58):3.

³ Soorah al-Mujaadalah (58):4.

e. Deliberate Violation of Oaths¹

The oath by Allaah not to approach a wife is called *al-Eelaa*. A man who takes such an oath is required to either take his wife

¹ The Islamic concept of an oath (*al-Yameen*) is the use of Allaah's name or any of His attributes for emphasis in conversation. To swear by other than Allaah or His attributes is forbidden.

Ibn 'Umar related that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) met 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab travelling in a group of camel-riders and heard him swear by his father. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Surely Allaah forbids you to swear by your fathers, so whoever has to make an oath should swear by Allaah or be silent." (Sahih al-Bukhari, (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 416-7, no. 641 and Sahih Muslim (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 875, no. 4038).

The oath may be divided into two general categories: deliberate (*Mun'aqidah*) and careless (*Laghw*) (See verse 89 of Soorah al-Maa'idah [5]). The careless oath is one which unintentionally occurs out of habit. 'Aa'eshah related that the verse "**Allaah will not hold you to account for your careless oaths (2:225)**" was revealed with regards to oaths like: 'No, by Allaah!' and 'Yes by Allaah!' (*Sahih al-Bukhari, (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 427, no. 656 and Sunan Abu Dawud (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 924, no. 3248*). There is no sin in it, and, as such no expiation. The deliberate oath, on the other hand, is one which is intended with regard to a future event which may occur (ie. saying, 'By God, I will be a monkey's uncle if you pass' is not considered a deliberate oath as it is an impossibility). It is the violation of the deliberate oath which requires atonement. A truthful oath regarding a past event which did take place cannot be violated, and thus no atonement is considered. An untruthful oath regarding a past event is called *al-Yameen al-Ghamoos* (*Ghamoos* literally means the dipping). The majority of scholars hold that it can only be expiated by sincere repentance and that no act of atonement (*Kaffaarah*) can erase it. It is among the major sins. The Prophet (ﷺ) was quoted by 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr as saying, "*The major sins are: Worshipping others along with Allaah, disrespect to parents, murder and the lying oath (al-Yameen al-Ghamoos).*" (*Sahih al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 434-5, no. 667*).

back or pronounce divorce.¹ This principle is prescribed by Allaah in the Qur'aan as follows:

لِّلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ ۚ فَإِن فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“A waiting period of four months is ordained for those who take an oath of abstention from their wives. If they return, Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”²

The general principle for violation of deliberate oaths, whether *Eelaa* or others, is that an expiation must be made of feeding or clothing ten poor people, freeing a slave, or fasting for three days if the first two are impossible. Allaah has ordained these acts of penance in the following Qur'anic verse:

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۖ فَكَفَّرْتُهُ ۖ وَإِطْعَامُ عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِّنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كَسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامٌ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ كَفْرَةٌ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ۚ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“Allaah will not hold you to account for your careless oaths, but He will call you to account for deliber-

¹ See *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 7, p. 160-1, no. 213 for the opinions of the Prophet's Companions to this effect.

² Soorah al-Baqarah (2):226.

ate oaths. For expiation feed ten poor persons the average of what you feed your own family, or clothe them, or free a slave. If one is unable, then let him fast for three days. That is the expiation for your sworn oaths, but keep to your oaths. In this way, Allaah makes His signs clear in order that you give thanks.”¹

Although this verse urges the believers to fulfill their oaths, this is particularly the case when oaths are made to do righteous deeds. If the oath is for something disliked or forbidden, it should be broken. For example, to take an oath declaring one’s wife temporarily unlawful while not intending divorce is not allowed. Such an oath should not be kept and atonement should be done for it. The Prophet’s companion, Ibn ‘Abbaas, stated that when a man declares his wife unlawful for himself, that is an oath for which atonement must be done, and he added **“There is in the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) a good example for you.”²**

¹ Soorah al-Maa‘idah (5):89.

² Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 760, no. 3494-5).

Note: An oath (*Qasam* or *Halaf*) is one in which one swears by Allaah (it is forbidden to swear by other than Allaah) about something. In the case of a vow (*Nadhar*), which should only be made to Allaah, one promises to do some act of worship if God grants a wish. Vows have been generally discouraged in Islaam, as Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: *“Do not take vows, for a vow has no effect on destiny. It is only something extracted from the miserly.”* (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, pp. 871-2, no. 4023. See also a similar narration from Ibn ‘Umar (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 448, no. 684, and in *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.) vol. 2, p. 933, no. 328.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by ‘Imraan ibn Ḥuṣain to have said:

*“No vow should be taken to do an act of disobedience to Allaah.”*¹

On another occasion Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) saw an old man walking with the support of his sons and asked:

*“What is the matter with him?” Someone said, “Oh Messenger of Allaah, they are his sons and he has a vow (to walk on foot to the Ka‘bah) to fulfill.” Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said, “Ride, old man, for Allaah is not in need of you nor your vow.”*²

The atonement for breaking vows made to God is the same as that of broken oaths. ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Aamir reported that Allaah’s Messenger said:

*“The expiation for vows is the same as that for oaths.”*³

And furthermore the Prophet (ﷺ) even recommended that oaths be broken and expiation done, if a more pious course of action becomes evident. ‘Adee ibn Ḥaatim reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

*“Whoever takes an oath, then finds something better than it, should break his oath and do that which is better.”*⁴

¹Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 3, pp. 872-3, no. 4027). Al-Bukhaaree also collected a similar narration from ‘Aa’eshah (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 449-450, no. 687).

²Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 873, no. 4020). See also *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.) vol. 2, p. 936, np. 3295 .

³Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 874, no. 4034).

⁴Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 878, no. 4057). Al-Bukhaaree and Abu Daawood also collected a similar statement =

f. Accidental Murder

The error in killing a person by accident is pardoned by God, based on the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) has stated,

“Verily Allaah has excused my followers from genuine mistakes, forgetfulness and what they have been forced to do.”¹

However, the nature of human society requires that some form of compensation be made with respect to the life which has been lost and the gravity of the crime, as well as for the economic loss suffered by the deceased’s family. Consequently, Allaah has prescribed atonement in the form of a financial payment called *الدية Deeyah*, along with the freeing of a believing slave. For those unable, which is the case for most people today since slavery has been abolished in most countries, two continuous months of fasting is required. This has been commanded by God in the Qur’aan as follows:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَاؤًا وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَاؤًا
فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ ۖ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا
فَإِنْ كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ
وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ
إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ ۖ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ
شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“Never should a believer kill a believer except by mistake. Whoever kills a believer by mistake should

= narrated by ‘Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Samurah. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 469, no. 715) and *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 930, no. 3271).

¹ Collected by Ibn Maajah and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Shaheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 1, p. 347, no. 1662.

free a believing slave and pay compensation to (the deceased's) family unless they freely remit it. Whoever finds this beyond his measure should fast for two consecutive months as repentance to Allaah, for Allaah is All-Knowing All Wise.”¹

g. Legal Punishment

If the Islamic criminal law is applied to a believer who accepts it seeking Allaah's forgiveness, he will be pardoned by God and the imposition of the punishment will serve as expiation for his sin. 'Ubaadah ibn aṣ-Ṣaamit said:

“Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) took a pledge from us as he took from the women that we would not associate anything with Allaah, nor would we steal or commit adultery nor kill our children or slander each other, (Then he said), ‘Whoever among you fulfills his pledge, his reward is with Allaah, and whoever among you receives the legal punishment, that is his expiation. But, he whose sins are covered by Allaah, his affair is with Allaah; He may punish him or forgive him as He wishes.’”²

'Imraan ibn Ḥuṣain reported that a woman from the Juhaynah tribe who had become pregnant from adultery came to Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said:

“Oh Messenger of Allaah, I have done something deserving legal punishment, so impose it on me.” Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) called her guardian and said; “Treat her well, and when she delivers, bring her to me.” He did accordingly. Then Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) pronounced judgement on her and ordered that her

¹ Soorah an-Nisaa (4):92.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. The wording here is that of Muslim. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English) vol. 8, pp. 509-10, no. 775, and p. 518, no. 793, and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 925, no. 4237.

clothes be tied around her and that she be stoned to death. When he prayed (the funeral prayer) over her 'Umar asked, "You offered prayer for her even though she has committed adultery?" He replied, "She made so great a repentance that if it were divided up among seventy men of the city of Madeenah it would have been enough for all of them. Do you know of any repentance better than this, that she gave her life for Allaah the Majestic?"¹

h. Sex During Menses

To have sexual intercourse with a woman during her period of menstruation is forbidden according to Allaah's explicit statement in the Qur'aan (Soorah al-Baqarah (2):222). If a man does so, he bears the major burden of the sin, and, as such, is required to atone for it by giving some money in charity to the poor. Ibn 'Abbaas reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said the following concerning one who had intercourse with his wife during her menses:

*"He should give a **Deenaar**² or half a **Deenaar** in charity."³*

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 917, no. 4207).

² The value of a *Deenar* of that time is approximately 4.25 gm of gold today (*Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology*, p. 212).

³ Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 66, no. 264) and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 1, p. 51, no. 237.

Note: Ibn 'Abbaas said: *If he did it in the early part of the menses it is one **Deenaar**. and if it was while it was ending then half a **Deenaar*** (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 66, no. 265. Also authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 1, p. 51, no. 238).

CHAPTER FOUR: PRAYERS OF REPENTANCE

All believers in God are required to turn to Him in sincere prayers of repentance often. They may choose any language and use any wording which best expresses their feelings, as long as the prayers do not contain any ideas contrary to the divinely revealed teachings of the Prophets. However, there is no doubt that the prayers taught directly by God in the Final Revelation, the Qur'aan, and indirectly through the teachings of the final Prophet Muhammad, (ﷺ) are superior to what any other man may devise. And, furthermore, the recitation of Allaah's words is, in itself, an act of worship for which innumerable rewards have been promised. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was reported by Ibn Mas'oud to have said:

*“Whoever reads a letter of Allaah's Book will have a good deed recorded for it, and a good deed is worth ten times its value. I am not saying that **Alif Laam Meem** is a letter but **Alif** is a letter, **Laam** is a letter and **Meem** is a letter.”¹*

It should also be noted that choosing to follow the advice and recommendations of the Prophet (ﷺ) is also an act of worship of God which will earn the believer an added reward, because it is in compliance with Allaah's guidance in the Qur'aan. For example, Allaah said:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

“Take whatever the Messenger assigns to you, and give up whatever he has forbidden to you.”²

¹ Collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 3, p. 9, no. 2327.

² Soorah al-Hashr (59):7.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“You have indeed in the Messenger of Allaah a beautiful example for anyone whose hope is in Allaah and the Last Day, and who remembers Allaah often.”¹

Consequently, the believers are encouraged to learn as much as they can about what Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ) have taught, and to give it preference over any formulas devised by other humans, regardless of their spiritual status.

The Best Prayer of Repentance

Shaddaad ibn Aws reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: *“The most superior request for forgiveness is to say:*

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ؛ أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَ أَنَا عَبْدُكَ وَ أَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ
وَ وَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَ
أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذُنُوبِي فَاعْفِرْ لِي فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ.

“Allaahumma anta rabbee laa elaaha illaa ant. Anta khalaqtanee wa ana ‘abduka wa ana ‘alaa ‘ahdika wa wa’dika mastata’t. A’oodhu bika min sharri ma sana’t. Aboo’u laka bi ni’matika alayya wa aboo’u bi dhambee. Faghfir lee. Fa innahoo laa yaghfirudh-dhunooba illaa ant.

(Oh Allaah, You are my Lord. There is no god besides You. You created me and I am Your slave, following your covenant and (my) promise as much as I can. I seek refuge in You from the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You Your blessings bestowed on me and I confess to You my sins. So forgive me, for surely no

¹Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):21.

one can forgive sins except You.”)¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) then added:

“Anyone who says it during the day, firmly believing in it, and dies before the evening; or says it in the evening, firmly believing in it, and dies before the following morning, will be among the people of paradise.”²

The following are some other prayers from the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah* (Traditions of the Prophet [ﷺ]) which may also be learned and used in our prayers of repentance.

PRAYERS FROM THE QUR’AAN

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا
إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا
طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ ۗ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا ۗ أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا
فَاَنْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

**Rabbanaa laa tu'aakhidhnaa in naseenaa aw
akhta'naa**

(Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make
a mistake.)

¹ It is preferable for non-Arab Muslims to learn and use these prayers in Arabic along with their meanings, because it brings us back to the source of revelation and allows us to understand it as it was revealed. Arabic is also the universal unifying language of Muslims used in the call to prayer (*Adhaan*) as well as in the daily prescribed prayers themselves.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 212-3, no. 318). Abu Daawood also collected it from Buraydah (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.) vol. 3, p. 1407, no. 5052) and so did at-Tirmidhee.

Rabbana wa laa tahmil ‘alaynaa isran kamaa hamaltahoo ‘alal-ladheena min qablinaa

(Our Lord, do not put a burden on us like the burdens You have put on those before us.)

Rabbanaa laa tuhammilnaa ma laa taaqata lanaa bih

(Our Lord, do not burden us with more than we can bear.)

Wa‘fu ‘annaa waghfirlanaa warhamnaa

(Excuse us our sins, grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us.)

Anta mawlaanaa fanşurnaa ‘alal-qawmil-Kaafireen

(You are our Protector, so help us against the disbelieving folk.)¹

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى
الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

Rabbanaaghfir lanaa dhunoobanaa wa israafanaa fee amrinaa

(Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs)

Wa thabbit aqdaamanaa wanşurnaa ‘alal-qawmil-kaafireen

(And steady our feet and help us against the unbelieving folk).²

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):286.

² Soorah Aal- ‘Imraan (3):147.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَءَامَنَّا
رَبَّنَا فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

**Rabbanaa innanaa sami'naa munaadiyan yunaadee
lil-eemaan**

(Our Lord, we have heard a crier calling to faith
(saying):

An aaminoo bi rabbikum fa aamannaa

('Believe in your Lord' and we have believed)

**Rabbanaa faghfir lanaa dhunoobanaa wa kaffir
'annaa sayyi'aatinaa**

(Our Lord, forgive us our sins and cover our evil
deeds)

Wa tawaffanaa ma'al-abraar

(And take our souls in the company of the righte-
ous)¹

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Rabbanaa dHalamnaa anfusanaa

(Our Lord we have wronged our souls)

Wa il-lam taghfirlanaa wa tarhamnaa

(If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us)

La nakoonanna minal-khaasireen

(We will certainly be lost)²

¹ Soorah Aal-'Imraan (3):193.

² Soorah al-A'raaf (7):23.

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

Rabbighfir war-ḥam wa anta khayru-raahimeen

(My Lord, grant forgiveness and mercy for You are the best of those who show mercy.)¹

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي

قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Rabbanaghfir lanaa wa li ikhwaaninal-ladheena sabaqoonaa bil-eemaan

(Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith)

Wa laa taj'al fee quloobinaa ghillan lilladheena aamanoo

(And do not leave in our hearts dislike for those who believe.)

Rabbanaa innaka ra'oofur-raḥeem

(Our Lord, indeed You are Full of kindness, Most Merciful.)²

رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤١﴾ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَارْحَمْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

Rabbanaa 'alayka tawakkalnaa, wa elayka anabnaa, wa elaykal-maseer

¹ Soorah al-Mu'minoon (23):118.

² Soorah al-Hashr (59):10.

(Our Lord, in You alone do we put our trust, to You alone do we turn in repentance and to You alone is our final goal)

Rabbanaa laa taj'alnaa fitnatan lilladheena Kafaroo

(Our Lord, do not make us a trial for disbelievers)

Wagh-fir lanaa rabbanaa, innaka antal-'azeezul-hakeem

(But forgive us, our Lord. Surely You are the Most Mighty and All Wise.)¹

رَبَّنَا أَتِمِّمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Rabbanaa atmim lanaa nooranaa waghfir lanaa

(Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us)

Innaka 'alaa kulli shayin qadeer

(Surely You are able to do all things.)²

PRAYERS FROM THE SUNNAH

The Prophet (ﷺ) taught his companions a variety of prayers for forgiveness to be used during and after the five daily prescribed prayers.

Abu Hurayrah related that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to keep quiet for a short period between the *Takbeer*³ and the recitation of Qur'aan so he asked him, "May my parents be sacrificed for you! What do you say in the pause between the *Takbeer* and recitation?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said: I say,

¹ Soorah al-Mumtahinah (60):4-5.

² Soorah at-Tahreem (66):8.

³ The saying of *Allaahu Akbar* (Allaah is the Greatest) at the beginning of *Salaah* (Formal prayer).

اللَّهُمَّ بَاعِدْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خَطَايَايَ كَمَا بَاعَدْتَ بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ، اللَّهُمَّ
نَقِّنِي مِنْ خَطَايَايَ كَمَا يُنْقَى الثُّوبُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلْنِي مِنْ
خَطَايَايَ بِالْمَاءِ وَالثَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ.

“Allaahumma baa'id baynee wa bayna khataayaaya kamaa baa'adta baynal-mashriqi wal-maghrib

(Oh Allaah, set me apart from my sins as You have set the East apart from the West)

Allaahumma naqqinee min khataayaaya kamaa yunaqqath-thawbul - abyadu minal-danas

(Oh Allaah clean me from sins as a white garment is cleansed of dirt.)

Allaahummagh-silnee min khataayaaya bil-maa'i wath-thalji wal-bard.

(Oh Allaah, wash off my sins with water, snow and hail.)”¹

'Aa'eshah reported that during *Rukoo'* (bowing) and *Sujood* (prostration) the Prophet (ﷺ) frequently used to say:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي

“Subhaanakal-laahumma rabbanaa wa bi hamdik. Allaahummagh-fir lee

(Glory be to you Oh Allaah, our Lord, and with Your praise. Oh Allaah, forgive me)”.²

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 398, no. 711), Muslim *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 295, no. 1245), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 200, no. 780) and an-Nasaa'ee.

² Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 434, no. 781), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 254, no. =

Abu Hurayrah narrated that during *Sujood* (prostration) the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) used to say:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذَنْبِي كُلَّهُ دِقَّةً وَجِلَّةً وَأَوْلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ عَلَانِيَةً وَسِرَّهُ.

Allaahummagh-firlee dhanbee kullahu diqqahu wa jillahu wa awwalahu wa aakhirahu 'alaaniyatahu wa sirrah."

*(Oh Allaah, forgive me all my sins, great and small, first and last, open and secret.)*¹

Ibn 'Abbaas reported that in the sitting (*Juloos*) between the two *Sujoods* the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَاهْدِنِي خَيْرًا وَعَافِنِي وَارْزُقْنِي.

"Allaahummagh-fir lee, war-hamnee, wah-dinee, wa 'aafinee war-zuqnee

*(Oh Allaah, forgive me, have mercy on me, guide me, heal me and provide for me.)*²

Abu Bakr said: 'I asked Allaah's messenger (ﷺ) to teach me a supplication to use in my prayer and he told me to say:

⁼ 981), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 224, no. 876) and an-Nasaa'ee.

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 254, no. 980) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 224, no. 877).

² Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 217, no. 849), at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah. It is authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Shaheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 1, p. 148, no. 732.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ظُلْمًا كَثِيرًا وَلَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ فَاعْفِرْ لِي مَغْفِرَةً
مِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَارْحَمْنِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ .

"Allaahumma innee dHalamtu nafsee dHulman katheeraa

(Oh Allaah, truly I have wronged myself much)

Wa laa yaghfirudh-dhunooba illaa ant

(and none can forgive sins except you,)

Faghfir lee maghfiratan min 'indika war-hamnee

(so grant me Your forgiveness and have mercy on me.)

Innaka antal-ghafoorur-raheem

(Indeed, You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.)¹

Thawbaan reported that when Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) finished his prayer, he would ask for forgiveness three times then say:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ السَّلَامُ وَمِنْكَ السَّلَامُ تَبَارَكْتَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ .

"Allaahumma antas-salaam wa minkas-salaam

(Oh Allaah, You are Peace and from You alone comes peace)

Tabaarakta yaa dhal-Jalaali wal-ikraam"

(Blessed are You, Oh Possessor of all Glory and Honour.)

One of the narrators, al-Waleed asked another, al-Awzaa'ee, "How is forgiveness sought?" and he replied, 'You should say :

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ

"Astaghfirul-laah astaghfirul-laah

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 1, p. 442, no. 796), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, pp. 1419-20, no. 6533, at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah).

*(I seek forgiveness from Allaah, I seek forgiveness from Allaah)*¹

Ibn Mas'oud reported that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
"Whoever says:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ .

Astaghfirul-laah alladhee laa elaaha illaa huwal - hayyul - qayyoom wa atoobu elayh

(I seek forgiveness from Allaah, besides whom there is no god, the eternal, the self-subsisting and I turn to Him in repentance), his sins will be forgiven even if he had fled a military advance."²

Abu Hurayrah related that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever says: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ Subhaanallaahi wa bi hamdih* (Glory be to Allaah and may He be praised) one hundred times, his sins will be removed from him even if they are like the foam on the ocean."³

Abu Maalik al-Ashja'ee narrated from his father that whenever a person embraced Islaam, Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) would teach him how to pray and instruct him to supplicate with these words:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَاهْدِنِي وَارْزُقْنِي

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 292, no. 126).

² Collected by Abu Daawood from Bilaal ibn Yasaar (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 395, no. 1512) and at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Arnaa'oot in his editing of *al-Adhkaar* by Yahyaa ibn Sharaf an-Nawawee (Riyadh: Daar al-Hudaa, 2nd ed., 1988) p. 578, fn. 1.

³ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 277, no. 414) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1415, no. 6508).

“Allaahummagh-fir lee war-ḥamnee wah-dinee war-zuqnee

(Oh Allaah, forgive me, have mercy on me, guide me, and provide for me.)”¹

Abu Moosaa al-Ash‘aree reported on the authority of his father that Allaah’s Messenger used to supplicate in these words:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي خَطِيئَتِي وَجَهْلِي وَإِسْرَافِي فِي أَمْرِي وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي -
اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي جِدِّي وَهَزْلِي وَخَطِيئِي وَعَمْدِي وَكُلَّ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي - اللَّهُمَّ
اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُ وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ
مِنِّي - أَنْتَ الْمُقَدِّمُ وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

“Allaahummagh-fir lee khatee’atee wa jahlee wa israafee fee amree wa maa anta a’alamu bihee minee

(Oh Allaah, grant me forgiveness for my faults, my ignorance, my excesses in my affairs, and for what You know better than I.)

Allaahummagh-fir lee jiddee wa hazlee wa khata’ee wa ‘amdee wa kullu dhaalika ‘indee

(Oh Allaah, grant me forgiveness for my sins committed seriously and jokingly, accidentally and deliberately, as all these failings are in me.)

Allaahummagh-fir lee maa qaddamtu wa ma akhkhartu, maa asrartu wa maa a’lant, wa maa anta a’lamu bihee minee

(Oh Allaah, grant me forgiveness for my past and future sins which I have done in secret or in public, and those You know better about than I.)

¹ Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1416, no. 6514 and 6515).

Antal-muqqadimu wa antal-mu'akhhir wa anta 'alaa kulli shay'in qadeer

(You are the Advancer and the Delayer, and You are able to do all things.)¹

Abu Barzah al-Aslamee said that whenever Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) wanted to get up from a gathering he used to say at the end:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ .

"Subhaanakal-laahummaa wa bi hamdika

(Glory be to You Oh Allaah and may You be praised.)

Ash-hadu al-laa elaaha illaa ant

(I testify that there is no god besides You.)

Astaghfiruka wa atoobu elayk

(I ask Your forgiveness and turn to You in repentance.)

A man asked, "Oh Messenger of Allaah! You are saying words now which you did not say in the past?" He replied, "It is atonement for whatever takes place in a gathering."²

¹ Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, p. 271-2, no. 407) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, pp. 1424-5, no. 6563).

² Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1355, no. 4841) and by al-Haakim from 'Aa'eshah. Both have been authenticated by al-Arnaa'oot in *al-Adhkaar*, pp. 428-9. The *Du'aa* is also collected by at-Tirmidhee from Abu Hurayrah and authenticated in *al-Adkhaar* (p.428) by al-Arnaa'oot.

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