

SINCERE REPENTANCE

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وَسُبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا

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SINCERE REPENTANCE

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INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah.

We praise Allah and ask for His Assistance; we ask for His Forgiveness and His Guidance. We seek refuge from the evils of ourselves and from the repercussions of our bad actions. I testify that there is no deity except Allah, who is Alone and without any partner and that Muhammed is His Messenger. Allah says:

'O you who believe! Fear Allah as He is supposed to be feared and do not die unless you are (in the state of being) Muslims.' (Surah Ale Imraan (3): 102)

'O Mankind! Fear your Lord Who created you and those before you.'

'O Mankind! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate; and then caused many men and women to spring out from them. Fear Allah in Whose Name you plead with one another and respect the wombs that bore you. Certainly Allah is watching over you.' (Surah Nisaa (4): 1)

'O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak the truth (for) Allah will reform for you your actions and forgive your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed acquired great success.' (Surah Ahzaab (33): 70)

The most truthful book is the Book of Allah and the best example is the example of Muhammed ﷺ. The worst affairs are those that are innovated and every innovation is misguidance.

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters:

You should know that repenting at once from sins and reverting back to Allah is compulsory.

Taubah (repentance) is the way of the Salikeen (travellers) to their Lord and it is the provision of believers. It is the capital investment of the successful ones of the world and the Hereafter. Whoever is delivered on the Day of Judgement will do so only through sincere repentance. It is the only way to realise the Pleasure of Allah and to stay away from His Anger. Taubah erases sins, covers faults and guides the human soul and heart.

Thus the predecessors, despite their constant actions and good deeds, slept very little and sought Allah's Forgiveness early in the morning. They knew that there was always room for improvement in their deeds. So much so that one of them said: 'Our repentance requires repentance.' And someone else said:

'Congratulations to he who has taken one correct step merely for Allah.'

This is how they were. They were followed by people who went after passions and temptations; who self-destructed in the perishable (world) and who deemed the Hereafter insignificant. They committed sins day-in and day-out and failed to realise that Allah is quite Dominating and Invincible. They will face a great loss unless they had sincerely repented to The Oft-Forgiving and the Clement.

So O servant of Allah! We return to Allah with a pure heart, devoid of jealousy, pride and flattery so that we may succeed in both worlds.

In this book, I will discuss repentance, its merits, its signs and other related issues. If I am correct, it will be from Allah. Otherwise, it will be from the devil and me. I seek refuge in Allah from every cursed devil. O Allah! Make this effort purely for your Pleasure and forgive its author for You are capable of doing everything.

Abu Maryam Majdi ibn Fathi As-Syed

Literal Meaning

The Qamoos states that the word TAUBAH means to repent (come back) from sins and is used when a servant returns to his Lord after committing a sin.

Hulaimi (rh) says: 'It is as if the servant has absconded from Allah (by committing a sin) and has now come back to his Master.'¹

¹A--Minhaj fi Sh'ubil Iman: 3/121

CHAPTER ONE

The Necessity of Taubah and its Merits

You should know that scholars from the past and present unanimously agree that immediate repentance from all types of sins, great or small is compulsory. Divine revelation confirms this:

'So repent all together O you who believe so that you may acquire success.'²

'O you who believe! Repent towards Allah with sincere repentance.'³

'...And that you ask your Lord to forgive you so that He may allow you to benefit a good benefit.'⁴

'And He is the One Who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons mistakes.'⁵

'And whosoever repents after his inequity and reforms himself, then Allah will indeed return to him.'⁶

'Why don't you return to Allah and ask Him to forgive you. Allah is very Forgiving and Merciful.'⁷

'Except those who repent, believe and do good deeds: (for) those Allah will exchange their sins for good deeds. Allah is extremely Forgiving and Merciful.'⁸

The Prophet ﷺ made many references to repentance. Here are a few Hadith in that regard:

Abu Hurairah ؓ says that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say: 'By Allah! I ask Allah forgiveness and I repent each day more than seventy times.'⁹

²Surah Noor: 31

³Surah Tahreem: 8

⁴Surah Hud: 3

⁵Surah Shura: 25

⁶Surah Maidah: 39

⁷Ibid: 74

⁸Surah Furqaan: 70

⁹Bukhari

Aghar ibn Yassar ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:
'People! Repent towards Allah and ask Him to forgive you.
For I repent a hundred times a day.'¹⁰

Abu Musa Ash'ari ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:
'Allah extends His Hand at night so that He can forgive
the sinner of the day; He extends His Hand in the day so
that He can forgive the sinner of the night. He will
continue to do this until the sun rises from the West (the
Day of Judgement).'¹¹

Abu Hurairah ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:
'Whoever repents before the sun rises from the West,
Allah will forgive him.'¹²

Ibn Abbas and Anas ibn Malik ؓ both narrate the Prophet
ﷺ as saying:

'If the son of Adam had one valley of gold, he would crave
for two: his stomach cannot be filled except with dirt (of
the grave) and Allah will forgive the one repents.'¹³

Anas ibn Malik ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:
'When a servant of Allah returns to Him and repents,
Allah is happier than a traveller who loses his mount
which has all his belongings and provisions on it and then
resorts to the shade of tree after losing all hope only to
wake up and find his mount staring in his face, and then
out of joy and happiness erroneously says: 'Allah You are
my servant and I your Lord.'¹⁴

Abdullah ibn Omar ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:
'Allah accepts the repentance of His servant as long as he
does not croak (on his death bed).'¹⁵

¹⁰Muslim

¹¹Ibid

¹²Ibid

¹³Bukhari and Muslim

¹⁴Ibid (this version is Muslim's)

¹⁵Tirmidhi

What the Predecessors said about Taubah

A man asked Abdullah ibn Masood رضي الله عنه about repenting from a sin which he wanted to commit (but did not do commit it). Abdullah turned away from the man and then turned towards him with his eyes weeping and said:

'Paradise has eight entrances all of which open and shut except the entrance of Taubah. This entrance has an angel guarding it so that it does not shut. So repent and do not despair.'

Talq ibn Habib (rh) says: 'A servant cannot give Allah His due Right. However, repent in the morning and evening.'

Saeed ibn Musaiyib (rh) says the verse: **'For Allah is very Forgiving towards those who return (to Him),'**¹⁶ refers to the person who commits a sin and then repents, then commits a sin and repents again.

Mujahid (rh) says: 'He who does not repent every morning and evening is amongst the unjust.'

Luqman عليه السلام told his son:

'My son! Do not delay repentance, for death comes all of a sudden.'

Abdullah ibn Habib (rh) says: 'You could never bear the wrath of Allah each time you sin. So repent in the morning and in the evening.'

Fudail ibn Ayadh (rh) used to tell the mujahideen before they left for jihad: 'Hold firm to Taubah for it will protect you from that which your swords will not protect you.'

Hasan (rh) used to say:

'O child of Adam! Do not procrastinate, for you are with your today and not with your tomorrow. I have met people who were more crazy about their lives than their money.'

This is how the predecessors were with regards to Taubah. They understood that if a person had a capital investment and then lost all of it without any profit, he would indeed weep. Likewise, this life is full of precious breaths which

¹⁶Surah Israa: 25

are like capital investments yielding Paradise as profit. How can anyone waste this investment without repenting? Taubah is necessary for a person in his youth and old age, in prosperity and adversity. Imam Ibn Qayyim (rh) says: 'The station of Taubah is the first, the middle and the last station of the traveller: Taubah does not leave him ever until he dies. If he moves into another station, this station (of Taubah) will move with him. So Taubah is the servant's beginning and end. Allah says:

'So repent towards Allah together O Believers so that you may succeed.'¹⁷

This verse is in a surah which was revealed in Madinah: after the Prophet ﷺ and the believers had gone through the trials of faith, migration, patience, etc. Furthermore, He made their success conditional on their repentance.¹⁸

¹⁷Surah Noor: 31

¹⁸Madarijus Salikeen: 1/198

CHAPTER TWO

SINCERE REPENTANCE AND ITS PREREQUISITES

Allah says: '**O you who believe! Repent towards Allah with a sincere repentance.**'¹⁹

Ibn Kathir (rh) says: 'This means an honest and resolute repentance such that it negates past sins, allows the repenting person to gather himself such that it prevents him from any further infractions.'²⁰

Sincere repentance, in the words of scholars, is:

'To uproot oneself from sin at present, to resolve not to repeat it in the future and to feel remorse over its occurrence in the past. Then, if someone's right has been violated, one should return his due (like money, etc.).'

Here are some quotations from various reputed predecessors regarding sincere repentance:

Ibn Masood ؓ says: 'Sincere repentance is when there is no return to the sin just as there is no return for milk into the udder.'

Saeed ibn Jubair (rh) says: 'It is the repentance which is accepted and that is with three conditions: the fear that it will not be accepted; the hope that it will be and addiction (thereafter) to obedience.'

Hasan (rh) says: 'Sincere repentance is to hate the sin that one likes and to seek forgiveness when one remembers it.'

Saeed ibn Musaiyib (rh) says: 'It is a repentance with which one counsels oneself.'

Kalbi (rh) says: 'Sincere repentance is to regret from one's heart; to seek forgiveness with one's tongue; to uproot the sin and to be sure that one will not return to it.'

¹⁹Surah Tahreem: 8

²⁰Tafseer Ibn Kathir: 4/391

Qurzi (rh) says: 'It comprises four elements: Asking for forgiveness with the tongue; to uproot from the body; to resolve not to commit it again and to leave bad company.'

Fudail (rh) says: 'It is to visualise the sin in front of the eyes as one is observing it all the time.'

Nawawi (rh) says: 'Repentance is compulsory for every sin. If it does not concern the right of any human being then it has three conditions: to give up the sin completely; to feel remorse and compunction and to resolve not to commit it again. If any of the three is missing the repentance will not be accepted.

If it concerns the right of a human being then there is an additional fourth condition: to exonerate oneself from the person's right by giving him back his due (if it is regarding money), or to ask for the person's pardon (if it pertains to slandering or backbiting).'²¹

So as you can see, O Servant of Allah! One should take advantage of life and remember the Day of Judgement:

'He is the One Who has made the night and day to follow one another for those who wish to take heed and who wish to give thanks.'²²

Hasan (rh) says about this verse: 'Whoever is not able to make amends at night, has respite during the day and whoever is not able to make amends in the day has respite at night.' He also said: 'Every day the day speaks and says: 'O People! I am a new day and I am a witness to whatever happens within me.'

Isa ﷺ says: 'The day and night are treasure stores. Be mindful of what you place in them. Act in the night according to its due and act in the day according to its due.'

This is what scholars have said about sincere repentance. Ponder over it and see how difficult it is and strive to achieve it.

²¹Riyadul Saliheen: 17

²²Surah Furqaan: 62

Repentance

Here are some accounts of people who have repented with a sincere repentance and thus have achieved the success of both worlds.

Abu Saeed Khudri ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said:

'There was a man before you who had committed 99 murders and then wanted to repent. So he enquired about the most knowledgeable person in the area and asked him if he could repent. The person said no. So the seeker murdered him as well and complete his 100. Then, he asked another wise person who informed him that he could repent and told him to leave the area in which he was living in and move to a place where people worshipped Allah. He started out on his journey. However, he died half way to his destination. So the angels of mercy and of punishment argued over him. The angels of mercy said that he had repented and had made his way to the town. The angels of punishment said that he had never performed a good deed in his life. So an angel came to them in the form of a man and told them to measure the distance between the two places. They did so and found that he was actually closer to the destination than to his home town. The angels of mercy claimed his case.'²³

In another sound narration of the same hadith there is a version which says: 'Allah ordered the earth close to his destination to come closer to him and ordered the other part of the earth to become distant. Then they measured and they found that he was closer to his destination by a span and was forgiven.'

Imran ibn Hussain ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ was approached by a woman from the tribe of Juhaina who had become pregnant through adultery and who said: 'O Messenger of Allah! I have committed a sin that obligates Hadd (Islamic punishment) on me. So punish me!' The

²³Bukhari and Muslim

Prophet ﷺ told her guardian to be kind to her and to bring her back after she had delivered the child. He did so and then the Prophet ﷺ tied her clothes and enacted the punishment on her. Then he offered funeral prayers for her.

Omar ؓ asked: 'Are you praying over her even though she has committed adultery?'

The Prophet ﷺ replied: 'She has repented so strongly that if it were distributed amongst seventy people of Madinah, it would accommodate them (that is, her repentance would be good enough for all of them). Can you find anyone better than her as she gave her self for Allah.'²⁴

3. Buraidah ibn Khusaib ؓ says that Ma'iz ibn Malik ؓ came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! I have wronged myself and I have committed adultery. I would like to be purified.' The Prophet ﷺ rejected his plea so he came back the next day and then again a third day. The Prophet ﷺ ordered a ditch to be dug for him in which he was told to stand. He did so and he was stoned to death. People formed two opinions about him: one was that he had perished and that his sin had gotten the better of him; and the other was that no repentance was more sincere and truthful than his. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'He has repented with such a repentance that if it were to be distributed amongst a whole nation, it would be enough for them.'²⁵

So see O Servant of Allah! How a sincere repentance can bring about a great reward. We should take heed and return to Allah's Mercy in the morning and in the evening. Imam Rajab (rh) says about the last two incidents:

'A repenting person despises himself more and more as he realises the seriousness of his sin. See how these people

²⁴Muslim

²⁵Muslim

despised themselves to the point that they accepted death in order to show their displeasure at themselves.²⁶

Yes! They knew that punishments compensated and erased sins so they chose to purify themselves in this world instead of waiting for the Hereafter.

Ibn Qayyim (rh) says: 'If you were to see a repenting person, you would see weary eyelids early in the morning asking for forgiveness and listening to Allah's Command:

'Repent to Allah with a sincere repentance.'

You would see that his diet is light and his grief heavy; his body weakened by fasting and his feet tired from prayers. He would be exhausted both physically and spiritually.'

²⁶Tabsirah: 1/360

CHAPTER THREE

THE BENEFITS OF SINCERE REPENTANCE

There are many benefits of sincere repentance and the predecessors have written extensively about them. Imam Raghīb Isfihānī (rh) has mentioned some useful benefits of sincere repentance:

1. It patches up faults and identifies the devil's points of entry to the human heart. This makes the repenting person more aware and evasive of evil.
2. The repenting person is embarrassed and is thus overcome with fear. He approaches the door of his Master with humbleness and apprehension.
3. The repenting person has experienced both the good and bad aspects of life and has tasted its sweet and bitter fruits. He thus becomes sympathetic towards other sinners and does not look down upon them.²⁷

Imam Ibn Qayyim (rh) also discusses certain benefits:

1. The servitude in repentance is the most noble and beloved form of servitude in the Eyes of Allah. He loves those who repent and it is because of His love for his creation that He tests them with sins so that He may shower His Blessings and Favours upon them after they repent.
2. Repentance has a status that no other form of worship has. This is why Allah is extremely happy when a servant repents just as a traveller is happy when he finds his lost mount in the desert. This Pleasure (of Allah's) has a great impact on the heart of the one repenting. So the repenting person reaches the status of being amongst the beloved through his repentance.
3. Repentance brings about humbleness and a sense of helplessness in front of the Mercy of Allah that is not easily acquired through other forms of worship.

²⁷Adh-dhari'ah: 341

4. Allah ﷻ is closest to His servants when they are broken-hearted. The repenting servant excels in his servitude because he is broken-hearted out of fear of punishment and embarrassment. Musa (عليه السلام) asked Allah where he could find Him. Allah replied that it was with those who were broken hearted because of Him. This is the reason for the acceptance of the supplications of three types of people (because they are broken-hearted for Allah's cause): the one who had been wronged; the traveller and the one is fasting.

5. Repenting from a sin can be much more beneficial for a servant than many other forms of obedience. This is what is meant by the statement of a predecessor: 'Sometimes a person commits a sin (and then humble and repents) and then enters Paradise; and sometimes someone does a good deed (and then becomes conceited) and then enters Hell.'

6. Allah's statement: **'Except those who repent; have faith and do good deeds, those Allah will change their sins for good deeds. Certainly Allah is Most Forgiving and Merciful.'**²⁸

This is the greatest glad-tiding for those who repent and combine it with faith and good deeds.

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) says that he never saw the Prophet (ﷺ) so happy as when this (the former) verse was revealed. He was also very happy when the verse: **'Certainly We have given you a clear victory...'**²⁹ was revealed.

Scholars have differed with regards to how Allah changes the sins into good deeds:

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) and his colleagues say that Allah changes immoral acts to good acts: Shirk to Iman; Adultery to Chastity; Lying to Speaking the Truth and Untrustworthiness to Trustworthiness.

Saeed ibn Musayib (rh) says that Allah will change the bad deeds of those who repent and convert them into good

²⁸Surah Furqaan: 70

²⁹Surah Fath: 1

deeds (on the Scales) on the Day of Judgement. This can be explained by the fact that repentance is itself a good deed. So the sinner changes his sin into a good deed.³⁰

Sheikh Shakhmi Rushtaqi (rh) says:

'Repentance is to turn back to Allah from every sin. Allah says: **'(He is) The Forgiver of sins and the One Who Accepts repentance.'**³¹

Then Allah returns to the servant with a great Favour:

'And I am The Oft-Returning and Merciful.' (Surah Hijr (15):49)

Repentance breeds good deeds while sinning (without repentance) can cause deprivation of obedience altogether. It has been said that committing sins regularly will darken and harden the heart. It may even lead a person (God forbid) to reject Allah completely, or lead him to commit, at least, a bigger sin. There is no recourse for a sinner except to ask Allah for forgiveness and to feel great remorse for his actions.

It has been said that if a person cannot stand up for prayers at night this is a sign that sins and mistakes have burdened that person. So repentance is to repent from the heart; to forsake choice (in committing a sin); to train the heart in obedience and to make a firm resolution never to commit the sin again.

The repenting person should remember three facts:

1. the grave repercussions of sins;
2. the painful punishment for sins and
3. the helplessness of the servant with regards to these two things.

For those who cannot bear the heat of the sun and the bite of an ant, how can they bear the heat of Hell, the thumping of the angels in Hell with iron hammers, the sting of snakes the size of camels and the bite of scorpions the size of mules? We seek refuge in Allah from His

³⁰Madarijul Salikeen: 1/333

³¹Surah Al-Mu'min: 2

Anger and punishment. Ameen. So whoever remembers these three facts will be able to repent with sincerity. Allah will make it easy with His Grace.³²

³² Manhajul Talibeen: 2/229

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TIME OF REPENTANCE

Allah ﷻ has fixed a time period for repentance. He says: **'The repentance which Allah accepts is from those who commit sins out of ignorance and then repent very quickly. They are the ones to whom Allah returns; Allah is All-Knowing and Wise.'**³³

Mujahid (rh) says that anyone who commits a sin - knowingly or unknowingly - is ignorant until he leaves the sin.

Ibn Abbas ؓ says that his sin is part of his ignorance.

Hasan Basri (rh) says that **'repent quickly'** means to before death.

Ibn Abbas ؓ says that it means before sickness.

Ibn Rajab (rh) says that the majority of scholars are of the opinion that "quickly" means before death, for death is very near and quick.

It is clear from this verse that Allah accepts repentance as long as the soul remains in the body. Abdullah ibn Omar ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah accepts the repentance of a servant as long as he does not start choking (at the time of death).'

³⁴

This is why Ibn Rajab (rh) says that there is an indication in this verse that the sinner should repent before he becomes sick so that he can compensate for that mistake with good deeds as the Quran mentions (Surah Furqaan: 71).

Further, repenting in good health resembles giving charity in good health (where it is not forced or 'an eleventh hour' plea.) Repenting at the time of death is like giving charity at the time of death when there is no hope of living. The

³³Surah Nisaa: 17

³⁴Ahmed; Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibban

two occasions (good health and the time of death) cannot be the same.

Ali ؑ says that the servant is given respite to repent as long as the angel of death does not arrive. When he arrives, then there is no more time and no repentance.

Ibn Omar ؑ says that repentance is valid until the angel of death appears.

O Servant of Allah! A person does not refrain from the sinful luxuries and pleasures of the world as long as he envies life. The devil then makes him procrastinate repentance until the time of death. When the pangs of death overtake him, he begins to regret and resent his delay and yearns to live his life again with repentance and good deeds. But all this is to no avail. Allah warns us about this phenomenon:

'And resort to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes to you and then you will not be helped. And follow the best that has been revealed to you from your Lord before the punishment comes upon you all of a sudden while you do not even realise. (All this) lest any soul says: 'O how I regret my shortcomings regarding Allah while I was among those who scoffed.' Or (lest) a soul says: 'If only Allah had guided me, I would have been among the pious.' Or (lest), one should say on observing the punishment: 'If only I could return so that I can be among those who do good deeds.'³⁵

Allah also says: 'Until when death befalls upon one of them, he says: 'O my Lord! Send me back so that I may do good deeds in those areas where I was lacking.' Never! This will be merely word which he utters.'³⁶

'And a barrier will be present between them and their desires.'³⁷

³⁵Surah Zumar: 54/58

³⁶Surah Mu'minoon: 99/100

³⁷Surah Saba: 54

Omar ibn Abdul Aziz (rh) says that at the time they seek to repent a barrier will be formed.

Hasan (rh) says: 'Fear Allah O son of Adam! Make sure that two disasters do not come to you at the same time: the pangs of death and the sorrow of losing (life).'

Ibn Sammak (rh) says: 'Fear the pangs and the sorrow before death falls upon you at a time when you are in your fantasies. No one can describe what you will meet, nor what you will see.'

Yahya ibn Muadh (rh) says: 'The world is the wine of the devil! Whoever becomes intoxicated with it, will only recover when death comes at which point he regrets along with those who are losers.'

Ibn Rajab (rh) says that the dead will regret the times they did not repent and when they did not do any good deeds. The living take their lives for granted and waste them to oblivion.

Omar ibn Abdul Aziz (rh) says: 'He who has come out of the Vast Mercy of Allah (by failing to repent) and has thus deprived himself of a Paradise whose width is as broad as the heavens and earth; and who has bought little in exchange for a great deal and the perishing for the everlasting has definitely lost.'

Ibn Jauzi (rh) says: 'Congratulations to the person who has washed his sins with repentance; and has retracted from mistakes before the return (to Allah) and who has raced to the possible before it became impossible.'³⁸

He goes on to say: 'Who have you seen anyone that has not been affected by the pitfalls of the world? And have you seen anyone that has not fallen sick? Have you seen any life has not ended with death? The world beguiles and impedes; it is happiness leading to evil: it ruins those who crave for it and it harms those who benefit from it. Its seeker who laughs it will make cry and those who rejoice with its peace it will destroy. They will regret their slips

³⁸Tabsirah: 1/26

when they strive to achieve it. They will remain hostage to its fears and apprehensions. They will wish to live just an hour longer...'

Hasan Basri (rh) says: 'O son of Adam! Leaving sins is much easier than administering repentance.'

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SIGNS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE AND NON-ACCEPTANCE OF TAUBAH (REPENTANCE)

Dear Muslim brother and sister!

Imam Ibn Qayyim (rh) has enumerated many signs for the acceptance and non-acceptance of Taubah. Here are a few of them.

Signs for the acceptance of Taubah.

1. The servant should be better after repentance than before. This means that the repenting person should see whether or not he has increased his good deeds and decreased his bad deeds.
2. Fear should accompany him all the time. He should not become complacent about Allah's anger.
3. He should remain alarmed with regret and fear.
4. He should become more humble and benefit from this state of mind by resorting to supplications of humility and servitude: 'O Allah! I ask You in the Name of Your Honour and by my humility to have mercy on me. I ask You with Your strength and my weakness; with your richness and my poverty. This erring and belying forehead is in front of You. There are many servants besides me but You are the Only Master for me. There is no refuge nor escape except in You. I ask You just as a pauper asks and I implore You just as a wretched person implores; I supplicate just as a frightened and distressed servant supplicates. I ask You in the manner of someone who has submitted to You his neck (head) and in the manner of someone who has forsaken his honour for You, and in the manner of the servant who weeps and has surrendered to You.

These are some of the signs for the acceptance of Taubah.

The signs for the non-acceptance of Taubah:

1. Weakness in the repenting person's resolve: he remembers the pleasure in the sin and becomes pre-occupied with it.
2. The repenting person's certainty of the acceptance of his repentance so much so that he behaves as if he has been given immunity.
3. The eyes do not cry, oblivion persists and the heart remains hard.
4. The repenting person does not take the initiative to increase his good deeds.³⁹

We have to remember that we will always continue to make mistakes and fall into sins. The best we can do is to resort to repentance just as someone who falls into a dirty ditch gets up and washes himself. The Prophet ﷺ said:

'If you do not commit sins, then Allah will dispose of you and replace you with people who commit sins and then ask for forgiveness so that He can forgive them.'⁴⁰

Ibn Rajab (rh) explains this hadith:

'Allah has a reason for sometimes covering His servants with oblivion: that they acknowledge their inferiority and remove the vanities of conceit. This is much more pleasing to Allah than to continue to serve Him with a sense of conceit and pride.'

Hasan Basri (rh) says: 'Sometimes a servant will commit a sin that he never not forgets. He will then remain afraid of its repercussions until he enters Paradise.'

³⁹Madarijus Salikeen: 1/206

⁴⁰Muslim

The benefits of investigating sins.

Ibn Qayyim has mentioned several benefits of investigating sins. The following are some quotations from his books Madarijul Salikeen (1/235) and Miftahu Dare Sa'adah (2/184):

1. The servant should acknowledge the Might and Destiny of Allah to understand that his sins occurred because of His Ordinance;
2. The servant should realise that only Allah is Perfect and that he is merely a creation that is weak and dependent;
3. The servant should be grateful to Allah for covering his sin and not exposing it and He does this despite His Power and despite His Observation of the sin. This is a testimony to His Grace and Magnanimity.
4. The servant should appreciate Allah's Generosity and Forbearance in accepting his repentance and excuse because He is quite capable of dealing with him and his sin with His Justice - and this would be very tragic.
5. The servant should recognise his dependency on Allah's Protection and Assistance in doing good deeds. Scholars are quite emphatic about Taufeeq (that only Allah can reconcile the intention of good deeds with the actual act). That it is for the servant to entrust all his powers to Allah and not to trust himself in anything;
6. The servant should know that Allah has completed His Proof against him: that the servant can no longer ask Allah how and why. What ever he incurred, he did so through his actions and Allah forgives most sins without even mentioning them;
7. When the servant understands all these points, he will not be quick to retaliate and take reprisals against those who are malicious towards him. He will follow the example of his Lord and forgive the mistakes of others and even be kind to them, just as Allah is Kind to him even after all his sins;
8. When the servant observes his shortcomings and His Lord's Kindness, he will see all Bounties of Allah as being

great. This benefit alone will be more than enough to treasure and

9. The servant should refrain from finding faults in other people and instead should become pre-occupied in reforming his own mistakes and sins.

Subhana Allah! If these are the benefits after committing a sin, then what can the benefits be after doing good deeds?

CHAPTER SIX

THE CATEGORIES OF THOSE WHO REPENT

There are two basic categories of those who repent: the first are those who repent with sincerity and the other category are those who do not. Everyone should consider in which category they fall.

Imam Ghazali has mentioned some different categories and divisions according to their resolve.⁴¹ Here is a summary:

The First Category

A person who remains firm on his repentance until he dies and who makes up for his sin and does not knowingly think about repeating the act except for those moments which no human has any control over. This is consistency and constancy in repentance and those who observe it are among those who race and excel in goodness. This repentance is known as sincere repentance and the person's soul is known as the tranquil soul:

'O Tranquil Soul! Return back to Your Lord while you are both pleased and (with whom Allah) is pleased. Enter into the ranks of My Servants and enter into Paradise!'⁴²

The Second Category

A repenting person who is true to this repentance in most areas of obedience and abstains from major sins. However, he falls victim to sins not because of any intention or lack of resolve but due to circumstances. Whenever he commits a sin, he always reprimands his soul and regrets the error. This is the reprimanding or critical soul because it always criticises itself for its

⁴¹Ihya (4/43) and Minhajul Qasideen (127)

⁴²Surah Fajr: 30

blunders. This category of 'repenters' have glad-tidings from Allah:

'Those who abstain from major sins and from immoral acts except for minor acts about them. Your Lord is Vast in Forgiveness.'⁴³

The majority of scholars are of the opinion that 'minor acts' are like looking at haram objects, etc.

The Third Category

The servant who repents and continues to act accordingly except that he is overcome with passion sometimes and then commits a sin. However, he does not forsake obedience in other areas of life and stays away from sins in general. He takes care of his soul by repenting all the time. This soul is responsible for his actions and will be asked accordingly:

'And there are others who acknowledge their sins and adulterate good deeds with bad.' Allah then shows them His Mercy:

'It is hoped that Allah will forgive them.'⁴⁴

There is danger that this person may die before he repents so he should be aware of this and resolve to repent sincerely.

The Fourth Category

A person who repents and then out of addiction goes back to committing sins without repenting again and without any compunction. This person is among those who persist in sin; his soul frequently commands him towards evil thus his death is prone to be one of severe consequences.

If he dies in a state of Tauheed (believing in the Oneness of Allah), then he may be delivered from Hell - albeit after a while. For some hidden reason, he may even be forgiven

⁴³Surah Najm: 32

⁴⁴Surah Taubah: 103

completely. But relying on this type of mercy is not reasonable.

For there are those who say that Allah's Mercy is Vast and then they take to the seas in search of the world. If someone tells these people that Allah is Noble and Generous so why don't you just sit at home and wait for Allah to provide for you, they will turn around with an air of ignorance and say: 'Provisions are only through earning.' It should be said in reply to their claim that, similarly, salvation is also *earned* through taqwa (fearing Allah) and not by merely relying on Allah's vast Mercy.

So O Servants of Allah! Look and see into which category you fall. Allah says:

'Then We gave the Scripture to those whom We chose among Our servants. Some of them raced towards goodness; another group was moderate, while yet others were unjust towards themselves.'⁴⁵

Imam Qurtubi (rh) favours one commentary of this verse:

'Those who are unjust are people who commit minor sins; those who are moderate are people who give both worlds their due and those who race towards goodness are ahead of everybody.'⁴⁶

So we should repent under all circumstances at night and during the day, lest we become among the unjust:

'And whoever does not repent, he is among the unjust.'⁴⁷

Mujahid (rh) says that whoever does not repent both in the morning and the evening is unjust.

The characteristics of the predecessors were such that they relied on the Pardon of Allah even though they diligently served Allah: they did not rely on their actions.

One worshipper prayed so much that his ribs had become apparent. Someone told him that Allah's Mercy is Vast.

⁴⁵Surah Fatir:32

⁴⁶Tafseer Qurtubi under the above verse

⁴⁷Surah Hujuraat: 11

'That is true,' he replied. 'If it were not for the Vastness of His Mercy, He could have destroyed us because of our service, let alone our sins.'⁴⁸

Hudhaifa ibn Qatadah (rh) says: 'If someone took an oath said to me: 'By Allah! Your actions are like the actions of a person who does not believe in the Day of Judgement.' I would tell him his oath is valid and that he should not compensate for his oath.'

The predecessors also never thought very highly of their actions no matter how much they worshipped Allah. The Prophet ﷺ used to pray all night until his feet became swollen. When he was asked why he did so after Allah had forgiven his past and future sins, he replied:

'Should I not be a grateful servant?'⁴⁹

Abdur Rahman ibn Harmaz Al-'Araj (rh) says:

'Search for all the bad characteristics you have within you. For everyone will be resurrected with his own kind. Whoever falls into all kinds of sins will be with all kinds of people.' He then criticised himself and said: 'An announcer will announce tomorrow: 'O people of such and such a sin! Stand up!' So you O 'Araj will stand with them. Then another announcement will be made: 'O people of such and such a sin! Stand up!.' So again 'Araj you will stand with them. I can see that you will be with every group of people.'

⁴⁸Akhlaqul Salaf: 27 (by Ahmed Farid)

⁴⁹Bukhari Muslim

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOME RULES OF TAUBAH

There are some important rules regarding Taubah. We will mention some of the most relevant rules.

Imam Ibn Qayyim (rh) says:

1. Procrastinating Taubah.

'Repenting at once is obligatory. If someone delays it, he will be guilty of delay. When he does repent from the sin, he will still have to repent for delaying the repentance.

2. Repenting from one sin and not another.

Repentance is not true from one sin while the person is still engaged in another sin similar to it. However, if the other sin is not related to the sin from which repentance is made, then that initial repentance will be true.

For example, if someone repents from usury but not from drinking wine, then the repentance will be true. But someone who repents from smoking hashish but continues to drink, then that repentance is not a true repentance. Just as someone who repents from committing adultery with one woman but not with another. Then in reality, there is no repentance.

3. Going back to the sin from which repentance is made.

There are some who say that a pre-requisite for the repentance to be accepted is that the person should not revert to the sin. However, most scholars are of the opinion that as long as the person removes himself from it, regrets it and resolves with sincerity not to fall into it again, then the repentance is valid and will - Inshaallah - be accepted. If he returns to it again, his previous repentance will not be invalidated although he will still have to repent again.⁵⁰

Sheikh Rustaqi (rh) says:

4. The pretence that 'I did not repent because I knew I would go back to the sin' is a deception from the devil. No

⁵⁰Madarijus Salikeen: 1/298

one knows when they will die so they could die without having repented. The servant's task is to repent and then Allah, by His Grace, may grant him the resolve to leave the sin altogether. If he falls into the sin again, then he has, at least, made the effort and has removed the impurity by repenting for his previous sin. A repenting person is always in receipt of some kind of benefit. If Allah accepts his repentance, then that means He likes him very much:

'Certainly Allah likes those who repent and those who diligently seek purity.' (Surah Baqarah (2):222)

We have a good example in our father Adam (عليه السلام) who made only one mistake in Paradise and yet repented constantly and incessantly. We commit hundreds of mistakes and sins. We should resort to Taubah and not lose hope in Allah's Mercy.'

5. After repentance

A person should be more humble and fearful after repentance. He should not become complacent and should not think that Allah will accept his repentance. This breeds another kind of conceit which is a sin in itself. Ibn Hawari (rh) says: 'A servant repents from a sin and regrets that sin so much that he enters Paradise on account of his remorse. Then the devil wishes that he had not tempted the person in the first place.'⁵¹

6. When the right of another person is violated repentance includes informing the victim.

The Hanafi, Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought say that it is necessary to inform the other party. They cite the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ: 'Whoever has wronged his brother in money or honour should ask him (the victim) to forgive him today before a day comes when the only currency of exchange will be good deeds and bad deeds.'

This sin contains two rights: one to Allah's and the other to a human being. Thus, repenting from the sin is for Allah's right and repenting and asking for forgiveness

⁵¹Minhajul Talibeen: 2/232

from the victim is the human being's right. This is why the Taubah of a murderer is not complete until the trustee of the victim is given the choice either to retaliate or forgive.

Ibn Taymiyyah (rh) says that informing the victim is not necessary and that the person can repent without doing so. This is because there is no benefit in advertising the sin. In fact there is only harm and chaos which is not sanctioned by Islam. However, if he has slandered or backbitten someone, he should redeem himself by praising the victim on another occasions.

7. Does the repenting person return to his previous level of faith?

Some people say that he does not return to his previous level because by sinning, he regresses and has to make up ground to return to his original level.

Others say that he does return because by repenting his sin is wiped out and he becomes as if he did not commit a sin at all.

Ibn Taymiyyah (rh) says that this is relative. Some may not return while others may go even further than their original station. There is a parable to explain this.

There is a traveller making his journey in peace and good pace: he runs a while and then he walks; he travels and he rests. He then finds an oasis which offers everything a traveller desires like fresh water, a good rest area and adequate shade. He camps there and is then attacked and captured by bandits who stop him travelling. He begins to fear for his life and starts to lament about not being able to complete his journey. Then, while he is asleep, his father comes to rescue him and says:

'Continue on your journey and fear this enemy for they are waiting for you in ambush. If you do so, then you will not fall prey to them. If you don't, then you will face the consequences.'

If this traveller is intelligent, he will take precautions and travel better than he did before. Ultimately, he will reach his destination more swiftly and with less harassment. However, if he does not take heed and forgets his encounter with the bandits, he will eventually face whatever is due to him.⁵²

8. Types of Taubah.

Ibn Taymiyyah (rh) says:

'There are two types of Taubah. The first is mandatory and the other is recommended. Mandatory repentance is when an obligation is missed or a prohibition is violated. Recommended repentance is when recommended acts are forsaken or when reprehensible acts are committed. Whoever suffices with the first is among the pious moderates; whoever practices both types of Taubah is among the leaders and those in proximity (to Allah). Those who fail to repent either type of Taubah are among the unjust.'⁵³

⁵²Madirujus Salikeen: 316-318

⁵³A book on Taubah: 11

CHAPTER EIGHT

ELEMENTS THAT ASSIST IN TAUBAH

1. The servant should realise that the Might and Power of His Lord that He is able to punish him at will. This will help him to repent immediately. As a predecessor said: 'Don't look at the minuteness of the sin, but rather look at Whom you have sinned against.' And Allah says:

'What is wrong with you that you do not appreciate the Greatness of Allah even though He has created you in stages.'⁵⁴

2. The servant should remember death and whatever accompanies it such as its pangs and visualise how lonely and empty his grave will be. Allah says:

'Every soul shall taste death, then you will be given your reward on the Day of Judgement.'⁵⁵ And:

'And no soul knows what he will earn tomorrow, nor does any soul know on which soil he will die.'⁵⁶

Mujahid (rh) says: 'As soon as the son of Adam is placed in the grave it announces to him: 'O Son of Adam! Woe unto you! What deceived you about me? Did you not know that I am a house of worms, a house of separation and a house of darkness? This is what I have prepared for you. What have you prepared for me?'

Ibn Omar ؓ says: 'Do not anticipate the evening in the morning, nor the morning in the evening. Take advantage of your health before sickness comes and of your life before death.'

3. The servant should know that success in both worlds is pawned by actions for the Hereafter. The world is merely a few moments that will fade away:

⁵⁴Surah Nooh: 13/14

⁵⁵Surah Ale Imraan: 185

⁵⁶Surah Luqman: 34

'O man! You strive hard towards your Lord until you will meet Him.'⁵⁷

'Coin for them an example for life of this world: (it is) like water that We send down from the sky and then it becomes mixed with the vegetation of the earth which then becomes stubble that is scattered by the wind. Allah is capable of everything.'⁵⁸

'O mankind! The Promise of Allah is true so do not let the life of this world beguile you; nor should the beguiler (Satan) deceive you about Allah.'⁵⁹

The Prophet ﷺ said: 'If the world weighed as much as the wing of a fly in - the Eyes of Allah - He would not have given a non-believer a drop of water.'⁶⁰

And: 'The world in the Hereafter will be like the drop of water that your finger picks up after you insert it in the sea.'⁶¹

Ibn Abbas ؓ says: 'On the Day of Judgement, the world will be presented in the form of an ugly, old, pale and toothless woman. She will appear in front of people who will be asked who she is. They will seek refuge in Allah from any association with her. Then, they will be told 'She is the world over which you fought and broke off family relations. She is the world over which you envied and hated each other and then deceived each other.'

She will be flung into Hell and she will say:

'O my Lord! Where are my followers? Where are my parties?' Allah will order her followers and parties to be joined with her.'

⁵⁷Surah Inshiqaaq: 6

⁵⁸Surah Kahf: 45-46

⁵⁹Surah Fatir: 5

⁶⁰Tirmidhi

⁶¹Bukhari and Muslim

4. The servant should know that punishment in the world may be expedited and that any and all difficulties are a result of his sins:

'And Allah is not unjust with them. However, they are unjust to themselves.'⁶²

Fudail (rh) says: 'If I disobey Allah, I will see it (the result) in my donkey and my servant.' (Meaning they will not obey him on that day.)

Ibn Sireen (rh) says: 'I ridiculed a poor man twenty years ago by addressing him: 'O You Poor Man!' So Allah has inflicted me with poverty ever since.'

Fudail (rh) says: 'A person misses one of his congregation prayers because of a sin which he committed.'

Ka'bul Ahbar (rh) says that the people of Hell will, out of sheer regret, eat their hands up to their shoulders without even realising it.

Yazid Ar-Ruqashi says: 'I see myself in the Fire eating its thorns and sipping its pus while being beaten with its iron hammers. I ask myself: 'What do you want?' I reply:

'That I could return to the world to do good deeds and be saved from this painful punishment.'

'Then, I visualise myself roaming around the gardens of Paradise, embracing its virgins and wearing its silks. I ask myself: 'What do you want?' I reply:

'That I return to the world so that I can do better and increase my returns in bounties here.'

'Then I tell myself: 'Alas! You are in fantasies. So work towards your desires and wishes.'

O Servants of Allah! We too are living in fantasies. Let us repent, regret and return to Allah.

⁶²Surah Nahal: 32

CHAPTER NINE

Stories From The Predecessors

If you are lured by an irresistible sin then remember this:
A man went to Ibrahim ibn Adham (rh) and said: 'O Abu Ishaq! I transgress against myself (by committing sins). Inform me of a deterrent that will deliver my heart.'

Ibrahim (rh) said: 'If you accept five practices and remain steadfast on them, nothing will harm and no (sinful) pleasure will destroy you:

1. If you want to disobey Allah, then do not eat from His provisions. How can you bite the hands that feed you?
2. If you want to disobey Allah, then do not live in a place that He owns. How can you eat and live off someone you wish to disobey?
3. And if you (are such an ingrate) and still wish to disobey Him, then find a place where you can do so inconspicuously. How can you (have the audacity to) commit a sin when He is always Present in front of you?
4. When the Angel of Death arrives, ask him to delay taking your soul for a while so that you are able to make a sincere repentance and perform some good deeds for Allah. The angel will not grant you your desire and will immediately dispatch your soul to the next world. How can you expect to escape?
5. When the angels of Hell come to escort you to Hell, don't follow them. You will not be able to resist so how do you expect to save yourself?

The man said: 'Enough, enough Ibrahim. I will make a sincere repentance right now.' The man did so and stayed with Ibrahim (rh) until death separated them.⁶³

Fudail ibn 'Ayad (rh) used to be a highway robber and was madly in love with a young woman. One night as he was scaling the walls of the young woman's house, he heard

⁶³Muwaqif Mushriqah Fi Hayatis Salaf: 15

someone reciting the following verse of Surah Hadeed (57: 16):

'Is it not time for believers to subject their hearts to the remembrance of Allah...'

Fudail was so taken in by the verse that he immediately repented and spent the night in a derelict place nearby.

Later in the night, he heard a few travellers shout:

'Beware, beware! Fudail is ahead of you. He will rob you!'

Fudail shouted: 'Fudail has repented!' He promised the travellers safe passage. Fudail ibn 'Ayad (rh) became a beacon of guidance and his sayings are still quoted today.⁶⁴

A nightmare that prompted the repentance of a great sage: Malik ibn Dinar (rh) was asked about the reason behind his repentance. He said:

I used to be a policeman and an alcoholic. I then acquired a maid who was very good to me. She bore a daughter of ours to whom I became very attached. I became even more fond of her when she started to crawl. Whenever I used to serve myself wine, she would come and drag my tumbler away from me and spill everything over my clothes. Our daughter died when she turned two and I was devastated. The 15th of Sha'ban came along that year on a Friday. I went to sleep drunk and without offering my prayers. I saw in a dream that the Day of Judgement had come about: the Trumpet was blown; graves were resurrected and people were being gathered and I was among them. I heard a hissing noise behind. I turned around and saw that I was being approached by a huge black and blue snake. I started to run away as fast as I could trembling with fear. I then encountered an old man who was well dressed and wore good perfume. I greeted him and asked him to help me. The old man cried and said that he was very weak and the snake was much stronger than he. However, he did tell me to keep on

⁶⁴Ibid: 24

running in the hope that I would find something that would save me from the snake. I continued to run and climbed on top of an elevated area. I found myself on top of a valley of fire. The horror of the fire alone made me almost fall into it. Then, I heard someone shouting: 'Get away from there. You don't belong there.' I found security in that shout and ran further with the snake still at my heels. I found the old man again and pleaded with him to help. Again, he started to cry and say that he was very weak and that the snake was far stronger than he. Then, the old man directed me towards a hill where he said I might find a deposit of mine that could help me. I looked at the hill which was circular and made of silver. In the hill were pierced windows and hanging curtains. Every window had two golden panels and each panel was adorned with silk curtains. I quickly ran towards the hill. An angel then cried: 'Raise the curtains. Open the panels and look. Perhaps this afflicted person has some sort of deposit here that can help him.' I then saw faces of small children who were like small moons peeping out from the windows. Then one of them shouted: 'What's wrong with you all. Come quickly. His enemy has almost come upon him.' So they came and looked from their windows - hundreds of them. Then, I saw the face of my daughter who had died. When she saw me, she cried and said: 'By Allah! That is my father.' She then shot out of the window like an arrow from a bow and jumped into a pool of light (noor). She then appeared in front of me and extended one of her hands to me. I grabbed and hung on to her. She put her other hand in front of the snake and drove it away. She then made me sit down and sat herself in my lap, stroked her right hand through my beard and said:

O father: 'Is it not time for believers to subject their hearts to the remembrance of Allah.' I started to cry and asked how she knew the Quran. She said they (the children) knew more than they (in the world) did. I then

asked her about the snake that ran after me. She explained that it represented my bad deeds which would drive me into Hell. I then enquired about the old man. She said he was my good deeds which had become so weak that they were unable to defend me against my bad deeds. I then asked what they were doing inside this hill. She informed me that they were the deceased children of Muslims waiting for their parents to join them. They would intercede for their parents on the Day of Judgement. Malik said: 'I woke up in fright. I smashed all my wine containers and repented. This was how I repented.'⁶⁵ The very same Malik ibn Dinar (rh) says that he was once walking through an alley of Basra when he saw a beautiful regal maid riding and being escorted by several servants. Malik called out to her and said: 'O maid! Will your master sell you?' 'How can you say that old man?' she replied. 'Will your master sell you?' Malik asked again. 'If he does, are the likes of you going to buy?' she asked. 'Yes! Even better than you.' She laughed and asked her servants to escort Malik to her quarters. On arriving at her place, the maid informed her master who also laughed and asked to see Malik. Malik was brought in and had an immediate impact on the master. 'What do you want?' the master asked him. 'Sell me your maid,' Malik said. 'Can you afford to buy her?' 'To me she is worth no more than two rotten date pits.' Everybody in the room burst into laughter. 'How can her price be that,' they all asked mockingly. 'Because she has so many defects,' Malik retorted. 'And just what might her defects be?' 'If she does not wear perfume her perspiration stinks,' said Malik. 'If she does not brush her teeth, her teeth give off

⁶⁵Ibid: 49

foul odour. If she does not groom her hair, it becomes infested with lice and dishevelled. If she lives for a few more years, she will become an old woman. She menstruates, urinates and defecates. Perhaps she only likes you for selfish reasons. She probably isn't loyal to you and if you die before her, she will find someone else just like you. I am in a position to buy - for much cheaper than what you want for your maid - a maid whose constitution is of pure camphor: if she were to mix her expectorate in salty, bitter water, it would become sweet; if she were to speak to the dead, they would respond (to the melody of her voice). If she raised her hand toward the sun, it would lose its shine; if she appeared at night, it would radiate with light and if she confronted the horizon with her dresses and jewellery, she would adorn it (the horizon). She is a maid who has been nurtured in musk and saffron; raised in gardens and suckled by the waters of Tasneem (Waters of Paradise). She will never be disloyal and her love for you will never falter. Which one of these maids is more deserving of a price?" Malik concluded.

"The one you described," the master conceded.

"Then you should know that she is very affordable and accessible."

"What is her price? May Allah have mercy on you."

"Very cheap. Spare a moment at night and offer two units of prayer with sincerity. When you place food in front of you, think of the hungry and sacrifice your craving for lavish food (and feed the hungry). Remove stones (impediments) and dirt (obstacles) from the road. Spend the remainder of your life on bare necessities. Remove your worries of this world of oblivion so that you may live in this world with the honour of an abstemious person, go tomorrow to the station of dignity in peace and dwell in Paradise for ever."

The master turned to the maid and asked: "O maid! Have you listened to what our old man has said?"

"Yes," she replied.

'Has he spoken the truth, or is he merely telling a tale?'
'No he has spoken the truth. He has been kind and offered advice.'

The master then exclaimed: 'If that is the case, then you are free for the sake of Allah. And such and such property is yours. And all you servants around me, you are all free and you may have such and such properties. This house of mine and everything in it is a charity in the path of Allah.' He then ripped a piece of rough curtain cloth and replaced his expensive clothes with the curtain cloth.

The maid remarked: 'I have no life after you, my master. She also took off her attire and replaced it with some rough clothing and set off with her master. Malik saw them off: he took one route and they took another.'⁶⁶

Sulaiman ibn Khalid says that a young maid of an old lady was mentioned to Hisham ibn Abdul Malik (the Khalifah in Damascus 105 AH). This young girl was renowned for her beauty, good manners, recitation of the Quran and prolific poetry. Hisham sent orders by post to the governor of Kufa to have the girl bought for what ever her owner (the old lady) asked for and then to have her immediately sent to him. He sent along a servant for her. When the governor received the letter, he sent for the old lady who sold the girl for 2,000 dirhams and a date orchard which would yield five hundred mithqal (a unit of weight) of dates every year. The governor dressed the girl in royal clothing and sent her to Hisham. Hisham gave her her own quarters and an escort of servants, presented her with some precious jewels and extravagant clothing.

One day while Hisham was with her on a luxurious balcony which was enhanced with cushions and perfume, she related some intriguing stories to him and composed some poems. Suddenly, there were cries for help. Hisham looked over the balcony and saw a hearse accompanied by

⁶⁶Kitabul Taibeen Minal Mulook Was Salateen: 14

people. Behind the procession was a group of mourning women. One mourner cried out aloud:

'O you who are being carried on wooden sticks; you who are being taken to the dead; you who are about to be left alone in your grave and you who are about to be made a stranger in your resting place. O you who are being transferred. If only I knew whether you are telling those who are carrying you to hurry up, or whether you are asking them where they are taking you and to take you back.'

Hisham started to weep, discarded his pleasure and started to say: 'Death is admonition enough.'

Ghadid (the girl) said: 'This mourner has broken my heart.'

Hisham said: 'It is a very serious matter' and called the servant. He came down from the balcony and left.

Ghadid remained stuck to her couch. That night she dreamt that someone came to her and said:

'You are flattered by your beauty and you lure with your charm. How will you be when the trumpet is blown (on the Day of Judgement); when people are resurrected and then confronted with their actions.' Ghadid woke frightened and drank something to pacify herself. She then called upon one of her servants and asked her to prepare a bath for her. After her bath, she got rid of her jewels and clothes and wore a woollen jalabiyah and tied a string around her waist. She took a cane with a bag over it and stormed into Hisham's room. Hisham did not recognise her. 'I am Ghadid, your girl,' she said. 'A warner came to me and his warning shook me. You have had your pleasure with me. I have come to ask you to free me from the slavery of this world.'

'There is so much difference between those who seek pleasure. You are with your pleasure, so go you are free for the sake of Allah. But where do you intend to go?'

Hisham enquired.

'I want to visit the House of Allah,' replied she.

'Go,' replied Hisham. 'No one will be in your way.' She left the capital and arrived in Makkah where she remained in fasting, during the day like a gazelle in its den. When night came she would perform tawaf of the Ka'bah and say:

'O my treasure you are my provision. Don't cut off my hope; grant me my wish; make good my return and be generous in giving me reward.' She became very famous and died worshipping. May Allah have mercy upon her.⁶⁷ Ibrahim ibn Bashshar, the protégé of Ibrahim ibn Adham (rh) says that he asked Ibrahim about the beginning of his quest to serve Allah. Ibrahim said:

'My father was a king of Balkh (Central Khurasan). We used to love hunting. I went out one day on my horse accompanied by my dog. Suddenly a rabbit or a fox jumped up and agitated my horse. Then, I heard a voice from behind me saying: "You have not been created for this; nor have you been ordered to do this (hunting for pleasure)." I looked around me left and right but I did not see anybody. I cursed the Devil and continued to ride. But then, my horse started to shake again and I heard the same voice saying the same thing. I looked around and found no one so I cursed the devil again and tried to continue. But my horse would not stop trying to shake me off. Then, I heard a voice from beneath by saddle bow calling me by my name and saying: "O Ibrahim! You have not been created for this; nor have you been ordered to do this." So I stopped and realised that a warner from the Lord of the Worlds had come to wake me up from my state of oblivion. I vowed not to disobey my Lord from this day, lest He does not protect me. Then I returned to my family. I went to see one of my father's shepherds and exchanged my clothes for his long shirt and a blanket. Then I travelled across the mountains and valleys to Iraq. I worked there for a few days but I was not satisfied with the

⁶⁷Ibid: 22

purity of my earnings. I asked a learned person about this and he told me to go to Syria. I did so and reached a town called Al-Mansoorah (or Maseesah). But even here, I was not satisfied with the purity of my earnings. Another learned person told me to go to Tarsoos where there was said to be plenty of work and good pure earnings. I went there and sat on the beach when a man came and hired me to be a warden for his orchards. I remained as a rural warden many days until one day a servant came along with many friends and shouted: "O warden!". I went over to him. He asked me to bring them the biggest and best pomegranate. I went and brought him the biggest pomegranate. He cut it and found it very sour and complained: "Warden! You have been here in our orchard for so many days eating our fruits, but yet you don't know the difference between a good pomegranate and a sour one?" I told him I had never tasted any of the fruits I guarded. The servant pointed towards his companions and said: "Did you hear what he said? He couldn't have said anything more if he were Ibrahim ibn Adham."

The servant left and discussed me in the masjid the next day. One person recognised who I was. The servant came to the orchard with a large contingent of people. I hid amongst the trees and scampered as soon as I had the chance to do so.

This was the beginning of my quest and this is how I left Tarsoos to travel the desert.⁶⁸

Abdullah ibn Faraj (rh) says that he was in need of a handyman for his house whom he could pay daily. So he went to the bazaar and found a pale young boy wearing a woollen shirt tied with a woollen belt and had a big basket and a rope in his hands. Abdullah asked him if he would be willing to work. The boy said yes and asked to be paid one dirham and one daniq (1/6th of a dirham). The boy

⁶⁸Ibid: 29

also stipulated that he would discontinue work and prepare for prayers when the adhan of Zuhr was given and likewise at the time of Asr. Abdullah agreed and took him to his house where he showed him what he had to do. The boy worked well with his hands and did not speak until the adhan for Zuhr was given. He reminded Abdullah of the condition. Abdullah told him to leave. The boy went, offered his prayers and came back to work until Asr. The boy went for Asr, came back and worked until the end of the day. The boy left when Abdullah gave him wages. After a few days, Abdullah needed some work done again. His wife told him to find the very same boy because he was good and honest. Abdullah went in search of the boy but could not find him. On enquiring, people told him that he only worked on Saturdays and that he was a loner. Abdullah waited for Saturday to come and found the boy. The boy agreed to work on the same conditions. At the end of the day's work, Abdullah offered the boy extra wages. The boy was very displeased and left. Abdullah ran after him and begged him to take at least what he had asked for. He did so and left.

Some time later, Abdullah needed to hire the boy again. He waited for Saturday to come and went to the bazaar. He did not find the boy there. Someone told him that the boy spent one daniq every day but had been taken ill. Abdullah found out where he lived and went to visit him. He was staying in the house of an old woman. He found the boy sleeping with his head resting on a brick. 'Do you need anything,' asked Abdullah. 'Yes,' replied the boy, 'if you accept. Abdullah said he would.

'When I die,' the boy continued, 'sell my rope, wash my shirt and belt and then bury me in them. Look inside the pocket of my shirt. There is a ring in it. Wait until the day Harun-al-Rashid (the Khalifah at the time) comes to town. Stand in a place where he can see you and then approach him and show him the ring. But do this after you have buried me.' Abdullah agreed to do so.

When the boy died, Abdullah did as the boy requested. When Harun-al-Rashid came to town, he went to see him, informed him that he had a trust for him and waved the ring. Harun summoned Abdullah to his quarters. When Abdullah went, Harun excused everybody from his presence and asked Abdullah who he was and where he got the ring from. Abdullah answered both questions. Harun heard the long story of the boy and wept so much that Abdullah started to feel sorry for him. 'O leader of the believers!' Abdullah addressed the Khalifa. 'Who was this boy to you?' 'He was my son!' the Khalifah exclaimed. 'How did he become like that?'

'He was born before I became entrusted with the Khilafah. He was brought up very well and was well educated in the Quran and other sciences. When I assumed the Khilafah, he left and did not care for any of my worldly belongings. He was very fond of his mother so I gave her this expensive sapphire ring to give to him. He took the ring very reluctantly. His mother since passed away and you are the only person who has informed me of him. You will take me to his grave tonight.'

Abdullah took Harun to his son's grave. Harun wept for a long time and remained there until dawn. Harun asked Abdullah to stay with him a few days so that he could visit the grave at nights. Abdullah did not know that the boy was the son of Harun until Harun himself told him.⁶⁹

This is the end of sincere repentance. Only Allah reconciles intentions with actions. It is only through His Grace that all good deeds are completed.



⁶⁹Ibid: 37

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GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

(Compiled by Maulana Mohammed Amin Kholwadia)

Allah - ta'ala: Allah - The Most High:

The name of the Supreme Creator and Lord of the worlds who exists by necessity and without any partners or offspring. The Arabic name Allah is not derived from any other source of meaning.

Ahlul - Sunnah wa-al-Jama'a:

Muslims who follow the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ - and the pious generations after him - as a community.

Alim:

A person with knowledge (and who acts upon his knowledge).

Aqeedah:

Belief or faith based on how reality is rather than how it is imagined. Thus the Islamic Aqeedah can only be derived from the Quran and Sunnah.

Ayah:

A verse of the Quran. It literally means a sign. (Plural Ayaat)

Bara:

Exonerating oneself from all that is displeasing to Allah.

Bid'ah:

Literally an innovation. Islamically, any innovative act that is carried out on the assumption that it has Islamic validity when in fact it doesn't.

Deen:

A way of life. Thus, always used to mean to Islam and the way of life it offers.

Eid ul Fitr:

Literally Eid means happiness that returns. It is the day of celebration that immediately follows the end of Ramadan.

Eid ul Adha:

The eid of sacrifice celebrated on the tenth of Dhul-Hijjah (the time of Hajj). There are three days of sacrifice for this eid.

Faqih:

Literally someone who understands. Used for learned scholars who are discrete enough to give legal opinions. (Plural Fuqaha)

Fiqh:

Literally to understand. Used for the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence.

Fisq:

To stray away from the right path (in actions). Thus used for sinners (Fasiq; plural Fasiqoon).

Hadith:

Literally something new (created as opposed to non-created like the Quran as the Speech of Allah) or an account. Islamically used for the actions, quotations, affirmations confirmations, denials and refutations of the Prophet ﷺ. Plural Ahadith.

Hadith Qudsi:

Quotations of Allah revealed to the Prophet ﷺ but were not part of the Quran.

Hajj:

Literally means to intend. In Islam it means to make a firm intention to visit the Ka'bah, the House of Allah in Makkah and engage in specific rituals. Hajj is incumbent

upon every Muslim who has the means to perform it with safe passage once during his lifetime.

Halal:

Lawful in Islam.

Haram:

Literally prohibited or sacred. Hence it is used for prohibited acts and substances and also for inviolable places like the Masjid-ul-Haram (the Mosque around the Ka'bah).

Hasan:

Literally means good. Also used for a certain category of hadith that has a reliable chain of narrators.

Hijrah:

Literally means to flee (stay away from). It is used to emigrate for the sake of Allah. The Muslim calendar begins from the year of the Hijrah of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah (AD. 622).

Ihsaan:

Literally means to do good, or to excel. It is also used for one of the highest stations of Iman (faith) mentioned in the hadith named after it (the hadith of ihsaan): to serve Allah as if one is seeing Him; and if one cannot see Him, then He definitely sees the servant.

Imam:

Literally someone who stands in front. Used for someone who leads the congregational prayers and also for eminent scholars.

Iman:

Literally to offer security. In Islam it is used to mean faith and belief in specific articles of faith that are enumerated in the Quran and Sunnah. Note these articles of faith are to be believed in totality and not in any partial or piecemeal form.

Islam:

Literally means to submit and offer peace. Technically, it means to submit to the Will of Allah according to His Dictates and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ

Isnad:

The chain of narrators in a hadith. The isnad is the basis for classification of hadith.

Jahilliyah:

Literally the era of ignorance. Used to denote the pre-Islamic era where Prophetic knowledge was non-existence and acts of ignorance were rampant.

Jihad:

Literally means to struggle. Used to mean the particular struggle in warfare for the establishment and defence of Islam and its teachings.

Jinn:

Literally means anything that is hidden. Hence, it shares the same root as the word Jannah (Paradise). It (Jinn) refers to a species created by Allah from smokeless fire (hence invisible to the human eye) and who live alongside man in the universe.

Ka'bah:

Literally means anything that is protruded (like the ankle) or cubic in shape. It is used for the cube building in

Makkah which is the focus of Muslims in their daily prayers. The Ka'bah was built by the Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ

Kafir:

Literally one who covers up, like a farmer (for which it is used in the Quran) who covers and hides seeds in the earth. It also used for an ingrate: someone who does not appreciate. In Islam, Kafir (plural Kafiroom) is a non-believer or someone who does not believe in any or all articles of faith, i.e. the antonym of a Mu'min (believer).

Kalimah:

Literally a word. Used for the declaration of Allah's Oneness and the existence of His Supreme Attributes.

Kufr:

Literally means to cover, hide or ingratitude. In Islam, it means to reject any or all articles of faith.

La ilaha illa'Allah:

The first Kalimah: There is no deity except Allah.

Makruh:

Literally means anything that is reprehensible. It is used for acts and things that are disapproved of by the Shari'ah without being forbidden.

Marfu':

A category of hadith where the narrator attributes the text to the Prophet ﷺ.

Muhammad ur Rasoolu'Allah:

The second part of the first Kalimah: Muhammed is His Messenger.

Muhsin:

Literally on who does good, or excels. It is used for those who bear the qualities of Ihsaan.

Mu'min:

One who has Iman (plural Mu'minoon).

Munafiq:

A hypocrite. See Nifaq.

Mushrik:

One who commits Shirk (plural Mushrikoon). See Shirk.

Muslim:

Literally one who submits. Used for someone who accepts and agrees to the tenants of Islam.

Nifaq:

Hypocrisy: to hide disbelief while showing belief.

Qadi:

A judge.

Qiblah:

Literally a focal point. It is used to mean the direction of prayer (the Ka'bah) from any given point on earth.

Quran:

Literally means the recitation. Technically, The Quran is the Word of Allah revealed to in Arabic to Muhammed ﷺ, the last messenger in a span of 23 years. The Quran is preserved both in text and context for ever. It is the Final Revelation.

Rak'ah:

A unit of prayer.

Ramadan:

The ninth month in the Islamic calendar when Muslims fast during the day and observe prayers at night. The Quran was first revealed in this month.

Sahaba:

Literally a companion. It is used for someone who saw the Prophet (SAW) - or whom the Prophet ﷺ saw in the state of Iman. Plural Ashaab.

Sahih:

Literally sound. Technically a hadith whose chain of narrators are authentic in belief, character and memory.

Salaf:

Literally a predecessor. It is used for those scholars and leaders of the past who left their Islamic example for others to follow. (Plural Aslaaf)

Salat:

Literally means prayer. In Islam it refers to the five daily prayers Muslims perform at various times of the day. The five prayers are: Maghrib (at sunset); 'Isha (after dusk); Fajr (after dawn before sunrise); Zuhr (afternoon) and Asr (late afternoon before sunset).

Sawm:

Fasting. A Muslim fast from dawn to sunset; he refrains from food, drink and marital relationship.

Shahadah:

Literally the testimony. It is used to mean the specific testimony of a Muslim (usually a convert) with regards to Allah's Oneness and the apostleship.

Shari'ah:

Literally a path and a water hole. It is used to mean the legal system Islam presents to Muslims.

Shaytan:

Literally one who is far. It refers to Iblis (Satan) and to anyone who follows his path.

Shirk:

Literally to associate. In Islam, it is used to mean any association of partners with Allah, either in His Divinity or His Attributes.

Seerah:

Literally conduct. It refers to the study of the life of the Prophet ﷺ.

Sunnah:

Literally a tradition or a practice. Technically, it refers to the body of traditions and practices of the Prophet ﷺ and the Sahaba which they performed or acknowledged as part and parcel of Islam. The Sunnah was then transmitted to the followers of the Sahaba and so on so forth. The Sunnah is much more restrictive than hadith for a hadith may contain acts or statements that do not necessarily conform with the general body of Islamic practices.

Tafseer:

Literally to explain and elucidate. It refers to the specific science of explaining and commentating on the verses of the Quran.

Taqwa:

Literally to fear or to protect. In the Quran and elsewhere it means the effort to protect oneself from the Wrath of Allah and to fear and respect His Presence.

Tawaf:

Literally to circumbulate. It is used for the circling of the Ka'bah seven times (followed by two rak'ats of prayer).

Tawbah:

Repentance.

Tawheed:

The Oneness of Allah.

Ulema:

Plural of 'Alim.

Ummah:

The total body of Muslims as a single community.

Wala:

Literally loyalty. Used to mean total devotion to Allah and His Commands.

Zakat:

Literally to purify or to increase. In Islam, it refers to the specific amount of charity that is incumbent on those who possess a specific amount of wealth for a whole year.

Zakat ul Fitr: The charity given at the time of Eid on behalf of every family member.