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Repentance Is Lifesaving

Lesson 24: Repentance



The Features of Repentance in the Holy Qur'an

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

Save him who repents, and believes, and does a righteous deed; those- they shall enter Paradise, and they shall not be wronged anything (Maryam 19:60).

Generally, the Holy Qur'an follows Ayahs regarding punishment with words such as "Save him who repents" or "Except those who repent", indicating that: the path to reconciliation is never closed to anyone.

1. Repentance is an obligation upon us; because Allahﷻ states that we should collectively seek repentance to Allahﷻ:

{وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ}

And turn all together to God (An Nur 24:31).

2. The acceptance of the authentic and genuine repentance is a certainty, it is impossible for us to obey His command to seek repentance but for Him to reject it.

{وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ}

It is He who accepts repentance from His servants. (Ash Shurra 42:25).

{هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ}

He is All-forgiving and All-merciful. (Al Baqarah 2:37).

3. Allahﷻ not only accepts true repentance but also loves those who repent much

{إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ}

Truly, God loves those who repent (constantly). (Al Baqarah 2:222).

Repentance must be accompanied by pure action and sins be resituated

{ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ}

And thereafter repents and makes amends. (Al Anaam 6:54).

4. Repentance Is the secret to redemption

{وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ... لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ...}

And turn all together to God... haply so you will prosper. (An Nur 24:31).

5. Repentance is the means to which sinful deeds are transformed into good deeds.

{إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ}

Save him who repents, and believes, and does righteous work -- those, God will change their evil deeds into good deeds. (Al Furqan 25:70).

6. Repentance is the cause for rain to come down and for blessings from the skies

{تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ}

Then repent to Him, and He will loose heaven in torrents upon you. (Hud 11:52).

7. Repentance is the cause of pure sustenance

{تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا}

Repent to Him, and He will give you fair enjoyment. (Hud 11:13).

8. Repentance committed when the effects of death are upon us or during times of punishment is not accepted.

{حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ}

When one of them is visited by death, he says, 'Indeed now I repent,' (An Nissa 4: 18).

9. Allahﷻ, accepts repentance, as well as showing Mercy upon his servants. Alongside Ayahs of repentance the attributes of Mercy, Gentleness and Compassion are indicated.

{هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ}

He is All-forgiving and All-merciful. (Al Baqarrah 2:37).

{ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ}

then He turned towards them; surely He is Gentle to them, and All-compassionate. (Al Tawba 9:117).

{ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ}

God forgave them because of His Compassion and Mercy. (Al Tawba 9: 117).

{ثُمَّ تَوَبُّوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ}

And turn to Him in repentance. My Lord is certainly All-merciful and Loving. (Hud 11:90).

10. The Holy Qur'an views the abandonment of repentance as oppression and self-annihilation

{وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُوبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ}

And whoso repents not, those -- they are the evildoers (Al Hujjarat 49: 11).

{ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ جَهَنَّمَ}

and then have not repented, there awaits them the chastisement of Hell (Burooj 85: 10).

Conditions of The Acceptance of Repentance

Ayah 17 of Surah an Nissa gives us one aspect of the conditions of acceptance of Repentance:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ

اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

God shall turn only towards those who do evil in ignorance, then shortly repent; God will return towards those; God is All-knowing, All-wise. (An Nissa 4: 17)

A) The sins for which repentance are accepted are those committed out of ignorance unintentionally, not those committed out of stubbornness and disobedience.

B) Repent quickly, before the sin besieges the sinner, or it becomes a characteristic of the individual, or the wrath and divine punishment be sent down.

Imam Sadiq (pbuh) states: Every sin that one commits, even if committed while aware, is in fact committed ignorantly, for they have put themselves in the path of Divine Wrath.

Of course, one who committed sin and repents is similar to one who has not committed sin and like a new born child that has just been born, pure, pure.

Repentance Is Lifesaving

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمُ يُونُسَ

لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

Why was there never a city that believed, and its belief profited it? Except the people of Jonah; when they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of degradation in this present life, and We gave unto them enjoyment for a time. (Yunus 10:98).

In the exegesis, we see that Prophet Yunus preached worship to his people for many years, but amongst the many people he preached to, only two people believed as a result, one who was a worshipper and the other a wise scholar. Prophet Yunus (pbuh) by the suggestion of the worshipper, took to cursing the people and left them behind. Little did he know that this will be the cause of difficulties sent his way from Allahﷻ.

Prophet Yunus (pbuh) boarded a ship destined to another place. During the voyage, a large whale rammed the boat and it was not going to be long before everyone on board would drown at sea. The people on board decided to throw a man overboard so that the rest can escape the whale. In order to choose who to sacrifice, they decided to draw lots, in which Prophet Yunus' (pbuh) was picked, and subsequently was thrown overboard. The whale swallowed him up without hesitation, but by Divine order, was not chewed or digested.

Prophet Yunus (pbuh), in the darkness with in the whale and in the depths of the waters, acknowledged the oppression he committed upon himself, the misplaced curse he sent upon the people and his departure from them. Allahﷻ accepted his supplication and granted him salvation from the situation he was in. Since then, Prophet Yunus (pbuh) was given the name "ذو النون" (Dhul Al Noon), a name given to him as a result of this incident, and which is mentioned in the Ayahs of 87 and 88 of Surah Al Anbiyaa (21:87–88).

Sometime later, he returned to the people he left behind and found that they had not been destroyed. Upon inquiry, it was explained to him that the wise scholar, upon witnessing the curse and the signs of punishment coming down, rose and called to the people to be warned and cautioned. The people were affected and were guided by the wise scholar to leave their city and separate themselves from their children, they cried and supplicated to their Lord, and their Lord accepted their repentance and saved them from their certain punishment.

Yes, man can not only avert certain punishment and torment with faith, repentance and invocation, even when overbalancing on the cusp of the proverbial cliff, but also reach success.

The story of the repentance of the people of Prophet Yunus (pbuh) was in the middle of the Ayah and was hinted at, but the Surah was named Surah Yunus (pbuh), perhaps because of the sensitivity and importance of the actions of the people of Yunus, that at the last moment they repented and their repentance was accepted.

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