

# NOOR-I-ISLAM

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## REPENTANCE & FORGIVENESS

**Q:** *I am a 48 years old male. I migrated from my home country to a western country at the age of 40. In addition to having a worthwhile job, I have had the benefit of having a new approach to life. I am a much better Muslim now. Previously, I did not attend regularly to my prayers and I did not keep up fasting in Ramadan and I committed other errors. I have learned more about the importance of preparing for the life to come. I offered the Pilgrimage (Hajj). I attend more regularly to my religious duties now. What worries me is what is to be done about my missed prayers and fasting. How do I offer them? How can I be forgiven for what I have missed?*

ANSWER



First of all I would like to congratulate you on your new attitude. May Allah accept your repentance for your past negligence and strengthen your determination to fulfill your religious duties as a good Muslim.

It is a great achievement for a Muslim to show consciousness of his religious duties at an early age and to offer prayers and attend to his other duties and lead a well-disciplined life. The Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah on him*, mentions seven types of persons who will be sure to have the shelter which

Allah extends only to the most virtuous and dutiful of His servants. These seven types include “a young man or woman who grows up in a life of obedience to Allah.” The fact that the Prophet, *peace on him*, singles this type of person for such a great honor suggests that it is not practically easy for young people to observe their religious duties without fail. Many do miss some prayers and some find it too difficult to resist the temptation of joining friends to some sort of activity which involves disobedience to Allah. A young man may not experience any inclination to drinking alcohol, for example, and then he finds himself with a group of friends spending an evening in entertainment. As he sees many of them drinking, he may easily be tempted. This in itself may lead to other violations of Islamic injunctions. When such a person thinks about what he has done, he is torn between enjoying his pleasures and the need to repent. If he allows the latter course, he will be able to make amends for his mistake without difficulty. A person who allows himself a repetition of such practices will find himself moving away from what Islam requires of him. He will soon slacken in offering his prayers and may stop praying altogether. Once he does so, fasting becomes too difficult for him and he finds it much easier not to fast. Eventually, his behavior will run contrary to what Islam rules.

If a person had trodden this path and went far away from what Islam requires of its followers, he can always turn back. Obviously turning back does not come by itself. There must be some development, which causes a person to wake up after having been negligent of his duty for a long while. How people may waken to the fact that they must obey Allah and do what He has bid them is immaterial. The important thing is that when the awakening does take place, the person concerned seizes this opportunity and thanks Allah for giving him the chance to repent.

According to Islam, the door to repentance and mending one’s behavior remains open all the time. The only thing needed is for the person concerned to be genuine in his repentance and to resolve not to go back to his sinful ways. When repentance is genuine and sincere Allah accepts it and forgives the person’s past errors. Our past sins do not stay with us, if we sincerely regret having done them. Every human being is liable to err in future. What is more is that we, the Muslim community, are commanded by Allah to overlook the past deeds of any person who declares that he has genuinely repented what he had done. Therefore, if someone used to drink alcoholic beverages and then he repents doing this, we treat him as one who does not drink. We never taunt him about his past drinking nor do we refer to him in our private conversations as a former drunkard. To us, he is as good as a person who never drank.

The case of this reader is typical to people who come to realize that their past was nothing to be proud of. They turn to Allah, seeking his forgiveness and resolving to exert a double effort in the future to earn good reward in the hereafter. The question is always asked: What about my missed duties?

As for prayers, it is time-relative duty. This means that when a prayer is missed and its time has lapsed, it cannot be offered again, except in one of these situations, namely, that it was missed as a result of forgetfulness or unconsciousness as in the case of sleep. Therefore, a genuine repentance of having missed all these prayers is sufficient. Allah will certainly accept your repentance and He will forgive you the prayers you have missed. But I would like to add a word of advice: It is preferable in this case to offer what you can of voluntary prayers.

As for fasting, the case is a little different. Because fasting can be done on days other than those of

Ramadan, if it is missed for a legitimate reason, then it is better to compensate for missed days of fasting by fasting now, one day for each day missed. This may be very difficult for any person who has missed fasting for 25 years or more, however, he should try fasting as often as he can. It is not required that he fasts one month at a time for each month missed. He can fast one day at a time, as long as he has every intention of compensating for missed fasting. If one dies before he has

completed what he should compensate for, then Allah will forgive him as he is aware of his intention to do the compensatory fasting. If one makes a habit of fasting one or two days a week, then he will soon find out that he is progressing well toward compensating for the missed duty. If the person in your situation cannot fast, then it is hoped that Allah will accept his repentance and forgive him what he has omitted of his religious duties.

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## WORKING WOMEN – 1500 YEARS AGO

### Women Companions of Prophet Muhammad, *Peace and Blessings of Allah on him*

#### **Al-Shifa bint Abdullah** “The Market Controller”

**Al-Shifa, *Allah be pleased with her*, was one of the early Muslim women. She belonged to the ‘Adiy’ clan of the Quraish. This means that she was from the same clan as two of the ten companions of the Prophet, *peace on him*, to whom he gave the happiest news of all, which was that their admission to heaven was assured. These two were Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Saeed ibn Zayd, *Allah be pleased with them*.**

Al-Shifa was a woman of intelligence and was highly respected for her learning and wisdom. Very few women of her time learnt to read and write. This is not surprising, as the Arabs were mostly unlettered. In the society of pre-Islamic Arabia which treated women as inferior, learning was a luxury to which women generally did not aspire. However, Al-Shifa was skilled in this, and she taught others. In fact, the Prophet, *peace on him*, asked her to teach Hafsa bint Umar, his wife, how to read and write. She did so. The Prophet, *peace on him*, also asked her to teach Hafsa how to treat a skin illness which, on the basis of its description, appears to be eczema, for she was adept in certain aspects of medical treatment. Needless to say, medicine was still an underdeveloped discipline, and Al-Shifa was skilled in what was known at the time.

This shows how apt her name was. Shifa means cure and full recovery after illness. When the woman named Al-Shifa has medical skills, then her name and skills go hand in hand. Al-Shifa used to administer her treatment to patients before Islam. When she adopted Islam, she asked the Prophet if she could continue, and he encouraged her to do so.

This also shows how the Prophet always encouraged learning, and how the new Muslims were always keen to establish whether their old ways and practices were consistent with Islam.

Al-Shifa was married to a man from her own clan known as Abu Huthmah ibn Hudhayfah, and she gave him a son called Suleiman who grew up to be very religious and a man of good reputation. Al-Shifa was among the Muslims who immigrated with the Prophet to Madinah. The Prophet, *peace on him*, was keen to take care of his women companions, particularly those who immigrated with him to Madinah. He used to visit Al-Shifa, and sometimes he would have a nap in her home. She had a special mattress and a cover for him. These remained with her family for a long time. During these visits, Al-Shifa would ask the Prophet some questions of religion. As she also attended the mosque, she became a good scholar in her own right.

As the Madinah society developed, Umar felt that it was important that supervision should be provided in the market place, where people buy and sell. He appointed Al-Shifa as the 'Market Controller' in Madinah. Her duties were to ensure that business practices should always be consistent with Islam. She would go around the market, making sure that no cheating or tricks took place and that buyer and seller conformed to Islamic values. Umar told shopkeepers that if they were in doubt about the legality of a particular transaction, then they should ask Al-Shifa. He trusted her knowledge of Islam. However, should she find difficulty with any problem, she would put the matter to him. He would either be able to sort it out himself, or he might refer to his consultative council.

The appointment of Al-Shifa was highly successful. Therefore, when Umar felt that it was advantageous to have a market controller, he appointed one in Makkah as well. What is contrary to our perceived ideas about Islamic society is that in Makkah also he appointed a woman, Samra' bint Nuhayk, as market controller. This suggests that in those early Islamic societies, there were women shoppers and women shopkeepers. Had the market place been largely a man's place, a woman would find it exceedingly difficult to discharge her duties as controller. Neither Al-Shifa nor Samra' encountered such difficulties.



**What I believe in,  
Here in this world and to which I would  
stick till I pass away from this world,  
with the grace of God, is that Our Chief  
and Master the Holy Prophet Muhammad,  
peace and blessings of Allah on him, is the  
Khatam-un-Nabiyyin (Seal of the  
Prophets) and the best of the Messengers;  
It was at his hands that the religion was perfected and the  
Bounty of Allah which can lead a man to the  
communication of Allah saw his completion.**

***{Izala-i-Auham, P-137}***

## *Are you present for your children?*

**Alva Carpenter**

### **Not just physically but mentally too!**

Our children are small and vulnerable for such a short time and yet there is often little time to enjoy them because of the fast pace of life. Staying at home taking care of the children and being a full time mother is a skill that is less valued, certainly in the West where it has almost become politically correct to have a baby and return back into the work force as quickly as possible.

Babies do not have a voice of their own to say to us, **“I don’t want to be left with anyone but you”**. Modern motherhood in the West seems to be moving toward having a baby and packing them off to a nursery or child care as soon as possible. In England I know of babies of professionals put in childcare from 8.30am until 6.30pm daily.

If, as mothers, we do not look after our own babies, how will we pass on those vital parenting skills to the next generation? Who will be the major influence on our child? It is a really hard call, as many wives need to contribute toward the family income.

The behavior of children in schools in the UK has become poor; with children misbehaving and demanding the teacher’s attention because they do not get enough attention at home and their parents expect the school to do the parenting. Children also arrive at school without good language skills

because they have not been taught adequate language skills at home. They now need to be taught speaking and listening skill by the teacher. The person responsible for teaching a child to speak is the mother and she is the best teacher for this job. This is why a child’s first language is called the mother tongue. Communication starts with eye contact and the baby picks up information from watching the mother’s face.

Many modern women are highly educated and want careers but the years when your children are small are very few and pass by so very fast. There are still so many years to pursue a career. There is no hurry. What is important to little ones is spending time with parents in familiar surroundings where they feel comfortable and safe. Giving your children your time and full attention builds their self-esteem and confidence, and makes them feel valued.

I am certainly not saying that nurseries, and nannies, do not do an excellent job, but at a very young age, your baby instinctively wants to be with their mother. If they spend more time with someone else, then you are not the primary care-giver. Nurseries can provide great activities and time for little ones to play with other little people but only for a few hours and only if the small child seems happy to go. If they appear unhappy to go to nursery or stay with a nanny over a period of time it is a sign that they do not enjoy it or that something is not right.

## **Who will influence your child's personality?**

Development of the personality starts at conception, as it is an inheritance of the parents' genes. But the personality traits we carry through our lives relate to our experiences in early childhood. In the early years, a child's personality is molded. By showing your child kindness and encouraging them to be considerate, you are physically influencing the development of their brain. The characteristics we develop in childhood are those most likely to stay with us for the rest of our lives.

If a child is shown that its needs or feelings are not important, and over a period of time this is repeated, then the child will learn to have a low opinion of them.

There are of course many women who have to work or need to work, myself included, and I have found working for me is the best solution for my family

because I can be flexible. It is important that we make the most of the time with our children by really giving them our full attention and really listening and focusing on what our children are saying.

Computers, iPads and Blackberries are wonderful but can be great time wasters and should be kept to a minimum **so that there is more time to focus on real communication, which is not on a screen. You are not really present with your child if you are talking on the phone.** In the West it is so easy these days to be defined by what you own, or what you do for a living: it takes a centered, confident, generous woman to be a full time mother. **When you give your children your time, you give them the precious gift of self-value,** everything you give your child you receive back a hundred fold. This may be the ideal but something we can all work toward.



**“The Holy Qur’an altogether excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion. It lays down in the clearest words:**

**“There is no compulsion in religion – the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error.” ---- 2:256**

**In fact, the Holy Qur’an is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person’s own concern, and that he is given the choice of adopting one way or another. If he accepts the truth, it is for his own good, and that, if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment.**

**“The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve.” --- 18:29**

*{from “Islam, Peace and Tolerance” by Dr. Zahid Aziz}*

### **Question:**

Dear Sir,

Before Islam, there was almost no system of taxation in Arabia or anywhere else in the world. Islam imposed the Zakat-Tax on the well-to-do to help the needy and for the general welfare of the people.

Since then, governments of all the states have begun levying many taxes – income tax, wealth tax, capital tax, property tax, house tax, professional tax, road tax, toll tax, sales tax, import duty, export duty, etc. The purpose of levying these taxes is to help the disabled, the aged, the orphans, the unemployed, to run the state's utility services and for the general welfare of the nation.

It is the duty of every government to provide the aid and services for which the Zakat-tax was originally imposed by Islam. What, then, is the need for Zakat-tax in the world of today?

Yours Faithfully,  
**Mrs. Salma Malik**  
Defence Housing Society  
Karachi

### **Answer:**

We are glad that Mrs. Malik has asked this question, as it agitates other minds too.

1. The first assumption that there was no system of taxation before Islam in Arabia or anywhere else in the world is not correct. For how did the kings, emperors, chiefs and other in authority then roll in wealth and splendor, build magnificent palaces and cities, pay their ministers and other officials and staff, maintain large armies and conduct wars even in distant lands? There may not have been taxes under the present-day names given in the question stated above. But there were definitely levies, exactions, tributes, and even, loot and plunder, of you please. But loot and plunder were possible only against the enemy and after waging wars. Normally, those in authority maintained themselves and their kingdoms by means of levies, exactions and tributes which were so heavy that only a few got rich at the expense of the many. There were even the so-called taxes on the heads of cattle or yields of the fields or of the gardens, Octroi duties and so on. But while such so-called taxes were few and far between, other exactions and levies were very heavy.
2. The other assumption made in the question that the purpose of levying the present-day taxes is 'to help the disabled, the aged, the orphans, the unemployed, to run the states' utility-services and for the general welfare of the nation' is again only partially correct. How much of the heavy present-day taxation is spent on

# ZAKAT

- **What is the need for Zakat in the world of today?**
- **How to Distribute?**

A Question asked  
and reply given by

**Maulana  
N. A.  
Faruqui**

**34 Years ago**

**{1978}**

the aged, the disabled, the orphans and the unemployed? Very little, if any at all, in most countries. Even in the so-called welfare states, the percentage is small. Even so, it would be for an Islamic state to adjust the expenditure on the welfare of the people against Zakat, which also has to be collected by the State in a truly Islamic system of government. But Zakat cannot be done away with in lieu of other welfare taxes. ***For it is the levy of Allah – the Supreme Ruler of the universe.*** And it is a well-known principle of taxation, that the tax imposed by a higher authority must prevail over taxes imposed by lower authorities. For instance the tax imposed by the Central Government must prevail over a similar tax imposed by the provinces or states.

3. There are two other points which must be borne in mind. First, most of the present-day taxes are on income. They may be direct as the income-tax, super tax, profession-tax etc. or indirect as the sales tax, excise duties, import and export duties etc. But they are all on one's income or money in circulation. The few on wealth or capital no doubt cover the same ground as the Zakat. But Zakat, which is only on accumulated wealth and that too after the limit prescribed {*Nisab*} is reached, can be spent only on the purposes stated in the Holy Qur'an. This is the second point to remember. These purposes are enumerated in chapter 9, verse so of the Holy Qur'an to be:

- a) **FUQARA**, the disabled. *Fuqara* is plural of *Faqir*, derived from *Faqr* which means "the breaking of the vertebrae of the back". Therefore *Faqir* is one who has his back broken or one afflicted by a calamity. This category is, therefore, apparently of people who, on account of some defect, are unable to earn their living.
- b) **MASAKIN**, plural of *Miskin* which is derived from *Sakana*, meaning "it became still or motionless". *Miskin*, therefore, signifies one caused by poverty to have little power of motion or action. It includes lack of resources, and thus means a needy person who is given a little can earn a livelihood. The training or financing of the unemployed would fall in this category.
- c) The **establishment maintained to collect Zakat or to administer** it is the third category of expenses which can be met from the proceeds of Zakat.
- d) The fourth category is of **"those whose hearts are made to incline to truth"**. It would mean, for instance, those who are deprived of the means of their subsistence because of their acceptance of Islam or any other truthful or worthy cause.
- e) **CAPTIVES**, i.e. those deprived of their liberties that are unable to regain it by their own exertion. Prisoners of war or enslaved persons would fall under this head.
- f) **Those in debt** who cannot get out of it by their own effort. Sudden illness or losses can create such situations.
- g) The next category has been described as **"in the way of Allah"**. It, therefore, means for the propagation of Islam and the Holy Qur'an.
- h) The last category is that of **travelers**, who can be stranded or visited by unforeseen expenditures or losses.

4. **If there are any other welfare purposes, they can be met from other taxes. But the proceeds of Zakat can be spent only on the purposes mentioned above.** And other taxes can be adjusted to exclude the purposes for which Zakat is collected. But Allah's Tax cannot be done away with for the sake of human taxes.

{N. A. Faruqi}

'The Light' – 24 March 1978

