

## Islam Encourages Forgiveness

### Introduction:

Since creation, mankind was guided by various Prophets ordained by revelation, to worship Almighty God as One God and the sole Creator. Once elements within mankind came to realization of having wronged<sup>1</sup> Almighty God, then they took opportunities which existed, in seeking forgiveness directly from Almighty God<sup>2</sup>. Rather importantly, forgiveness is not limited in applications between mankind and Almighty God only: the utility value of forgiveness must be applied as the foundational cure for all wrong doings to others. Wrong doing includes family matters, such as between spouses, or relatives or even with neighbours<sup>3</sup>. Acceptance of forgiveness is the most essential prerequisite in any consideration for the reconciliation process to commence.

### Discussion on Islam Encourages Forgiveness:

- 1) Historically, the Holy Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) and written in Arabic, because Arabic was the dominant language in the Middle East countries. In Islam, the Holy Qur'an, which is the final revealed Scripture, contains words spoken of in the First Person by Almighty God as the sole Author. This would be noticed in quotations given below. Almighty God expresses His own patience and willingness to forgive different peoples who sinned, and who later regretted their wrong doings and then genuinely pleaded to Almighty God for forgiveness. The same principles must also apply to settlement of conflicts between peoples of whatsoever relationships<sup>4</sup>. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:263** *"A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing."*
- 2) In Islam, the Holy Qur'an as the final revealed scripture to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), has stated in so many places, direct invitations from Almighty God to all mankind, to seek forgiveness from Him directly. This

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<sup>1</sup> Having wronged Almighty God implies situations when people took recourse to worshipping otherwise, involving idolatry, polytheism and various forms of superstitions.

<sup>2</sup> This could be done at two opportunities. First and most importantly is seeking forgiveness directly from Almighty God during prayer five times daily. The second is by those who can afford a trip to Mecca, to plead for forgiveness during the performance of *Hajj* (pilgrimage). This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:199** *"Then hasten on from where the people hasten on, and ask the forgiveness of Allah. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."*

<sup>3</sup> Neighbours are taken to mean all persons other than a person or that person's immediate relatives, both within the country and the rest of the world.

<sup>4</sup> This includes political conflicts within a country or with any other country.

must always happen as a one-on-one direct plea from persons to Almighty God, as Almighty God is the only Forgiver of sins. Here are two quotations stated in the Holy Quran at **HQ4:110** *“And whoever does evil or wrongs his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah Forgiving, Merciful.”* **HQ5:9** *“Allah has promised to those who believe and do good deeds: For them is forgiveness and a mighty reward.”*

- 3) However, there are certain fundamental conditions attached to such pleas: The pleader to Almighty God must accept truthfully from pleader’s heart that there is only One Almighty God; and there is no conflict of any situation of acceptance and practice of any other entity or object as a god; or any material representation of Almighty God; or any person as a material agent of Almighty God. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ3:133-35** *“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for those who keep their duty: Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others). And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allah? And they do not persist knowingly in what they do.”*
- 4) Accordingly, the pleader will have to be in that genuine mind-set and the pleading must be done before that person’s death in this material world. After death, it is too late, as the dead person’s deeds and misdeeds are recorded as “locked<sup>5</sup>out.” Next phase is indefinite till the Decision on Great Day of Judgement.
- 5) One of the several avenues mentioned in seeking forgiveness for Muslims is pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam, as enshrined in the Holy Qur’an provides absolutely equal opportunities to both men and women. There is no gender bias and this is immaculately stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ33:35** *“Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the*

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<sup>5</sup> Once the soul is separated from the human body, then that body is dead. The dead body immediately begins to decompose and the separated spiritual soul is then relocated to Barzak. The Barzak is transitional location of souls into a state of timelessness in sleep. The soul is not material and does not age. All souls which have been in Barzak since Creation, will be awakened altogether, with doors opening directly into the place of Judgement, on the Great Day of Judgement, for trial before Almighty God, as the only Judge and Whose Decision shall be swift, fair and final in reckoning. All deeds and misdeeds of the dead person shall be presented and the person shall be asked to read own evidences recorded in the book as self-jury. There will not be a panel of jury as in material life in this world: **HQ17:13-14** *“And We have made every human being’s actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read your book. Your own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.”*

*patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their (own) chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.”*

- 6) Almighty God has promised two portions of mercy. The first portion is material mercy in this material life and in this world. The next portion is the spiritual mercy in the life Hereafter. Opportunities are also stated for people to plead for mercy for their parents, provided the same fundamental conditions apply, that the parents are genuinely as practitioners and believers and clear advocates of One Almighty God. All prophets, from the first prophet (Adam) to the Final Prophet (Muhammad (pbuh)) have been exemplars as practitioners and believers of only One Almighty God ; and they have also demonstrated how to seek forgiveness directly only from Almighty God.
- 7) The Holy Qur’an clearly states that the devil incites evil with misleading threats in this world and will never forgive; but Almighty God always leads people to the correct path with rewards and opportunity for forgiveness for their sins and mistakes. This warning is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ2:268-269** *“The devil threatens you with poverty and commands you to be miserly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing; He grants wisdom to whom He pleases. And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good. And none are mindful but those who have understanding.”*
- 8) Hypocrisy does not have any mercy in Islam. Almighty God has made very clear in the Holy Qur’an at several places that those people who switch their Faith from being practitioners and believers in One Almighty God to other forms of associate gods<sup>6</sup>, then revert to becoming believers in One God as the Almighty God ; and then again revert to worshipping other forms of associate gods shall never be forgiven; this refers specifically to practising of hypocrisy, when people were schematically switching Faiths to suit the circumstances to their advantage. This aspect of hypocrisy as absolute lowliness in humanity has been stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ9:79-80** *“Those who taunt the free givers of charity among the believers as well as those who cannot find anything (to give) but with their hard labour — they scoff at them. Allah will pay them back their mockery;*

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<sup>6</sup> Other forms of associate gods refers in the main to various forms of idolatry, polytheism and belief in practicing of astrology. Some people circumstantially switch from one to another, without being consistent in their beliefs in One Almighty God only.

*and for them is a painful punishment. Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them. Even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them. This is because they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people.”*

- 9) Almighty God has immaculate fairness and He has made provisions in the Holy Qur’an to grant forgiveness upon pleas from people who have genuinely made mistakes. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ2:286** *“Allah does not impose on any soul a duty beyond its ability. To its benefit is what (good) it earns, and to its detriment is what (evil) it works. Our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden as You did lay on those before us. Our Lord, do not impose on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us! And grant us protection! And have mercy on us! You are our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people.”* This last verse just quoted above, has within its compact structure three petitions from Muslims to Almighty God in their pleas for forgiveness.
- 10) The first plea in this compact is not to punish. The next plea is not to impose burden, which people cannot bear. The last plea is not impose afflictions, which people do not have the strength to bear.
- 11) Islam in its absolute magnificence, as enshrined in the Holy Qur’an, makes ample provisions for mankind to seek forgiveness from Almighty God, for mistakes made against the Holy Qur’an as the revealed Divine law for humanity. Further, Islam also makes provisions for elements within mankind to seek forgiveness from others, whom Muslims may have offended. Furthermore, Islam imposes upon Muslims to forgive others who may have offended Muslims, and reach certain amicable reconciliation and then build better relationships with the other parties.

### **Conclusions on Forgiveness:**

- a) Seeking forgiveness is not limited between peoples and Almighty God only, but the principles of seeking forgiveness also applies to those others, within humanity, who may have become aggrieved from actions of the offenders.
- b) Notwithstanding that mistakes may have been committed without intention, forgiveness must nevertheless be sought from the aggrieved parties.
- c) Forgiveness is the fundamental foundation, which must occur before any consideration for reconciliation.

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