

## **Islam Recommends Repentance**

### **Introduction:**

Sometimes, some people are confused with the two interrelated words of repentance and forgiveness, especially if they have wronged some other people. This happens most widely in matters of religion and culture. What links the two interrelated words, especially so in such matters, is guilt. The first factor in such a situation is perception followed by emotion. Perception comes about only after the offending person's own self-assessment, that what the offending person had done, has made that person guilty of certain misdeed against the other aggrieved person. This has to be followed by emotion growing out of that change of perception. Consequently, the offending person needs to change perception to repentance, then advance to the other aggrieved person, seeking forgiveness for the harm already done. This is explained below with quotations.

### **Discussion on Repentance:**

- 1) The relevance of both repentance and forgiveness are not limited in applications only to matters between a remorseful sinning person and Almighty God. Repentance and forgiveness are also fittingly applicable between two parties of the offender and the aggrieved. These matters occur every day and in every walk of life. Their relevance may also be extended between any two entities, regardless of their variable descriptions. There are two fundamental points: Repentance originates with the offender. Forgiveness comes from the merciful aggrieved.
- 2) Sometimes, some people out of shame, attempt to quickly bridge that gap of guilt between repentance and forgiveness with very simple expression of "I'm sorry." That is abruptly avoiding the issue.
- 3) Repentance and forgiveness are not the reserved domain within Christendom only, as some people have been led to believe. Islam, through the numerous stipulations embedded in the Holy Qur'an, also facilitates opportunities for Muslims to practise repentance and forgiveness, regardless whether or not both parties are Muslims<sup>1</sup>.
- 4) Often overlooked in almost all communities is the necessary part of genuine repentance by the wrongdoer. It must come from the wrongdoer's heart and mind. In the main, Muslims must practise repentance and forgiveness between themselves and Almighty God. This must happen within the boundaries of compliance opportunities

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<sup>1</sup> The offender and the aggrieved person do not necessarily have to be both Muslims. Neither may be a Muslim.

stipulated in the Holy Qur'an, to the full extent that on the Great Day of Judgement, Muslims are free of all residues of sin and misdeeds.

- 5) There are rare occasions, however, when both the offender and the aggrieved person distance themselves, and do not want to enter into repentance and forgiveness. This is a dangerous situation, as it may develop into protraction and permanent animosity between themselves. Almighty God does not impose upon people that they must repent and seek forgiveness but He is the invisible Facilitator of the system of repentance and forgiveness. The opportunity to enter into repentance and forgiveness resides within all peoples.
- 6) In Islam, repentance is called *taubah*, forgiveness is called *maghfirah* and salvation is called *khalas'n*. Words such as to repent and repentance occur 29 times; and to forgive and forgiveness occur 106 times respectively in the Holy Qur'an. Such high frequency of occurrences of repentance and forgiveness reflect the absolute descriptions of Almighty God as the Beneficent and the Merciful.
- 7) It is indeed prudent that repentance gets explored first and forgiveness subsequently. Repentance and forgiveness are precursors to qualify for salvation. People must fear Almighty God and aim to earn salvation, commencing firstly with essential repentance, followed by forgiveness.
- 8) Repentance, followed by forgiveness are compulsively essential to every person for salvation, whilst still materially alive on Earth, before death overcomes each person.
- 9) It must be noted that Almighty God pardons all in repentance and forgiveness, but will not forgive those who have set up partners<sup>2</sup> with Him and this is stressfully stipulated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ4:48** *"Surely Allah does not forgive that a partner should be set up with Him, and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up a partner with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin."*
- 10) It must also be noted: There is no provision for repentance after a person's death, after the soul has been separated from the material body and that soul has transited to Barzak<sup>3</sup>. This is stated in two verses in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ39:53-54** *"And surely I am Forgiving toward him who repents and believes and does good, then walks aright. And turn to your*

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<sup>2</sup> Partners is taken to mean idolatry, polytheism, religious cults, human worship, astrology, planetary worship, superstition, etc. which imply optional opportunities to worship other than to Almighty God.

<sup>3</sup> Barzak is a timeless storage of souls after their material human bodies had died. Indeed Barzak is a barrier between material (physical) world and spiritual life. All persons from Prophet Adam to all persons in current cycle who have died are stored in Barzak. Souls are spiritual and not material and accordingly there will not be shortage of space for storage of souls, when all those souls will be resurrected and then judged for their deeds and misdeeds during their entire physical life on Earth.

*Lord and submit to Him before punishment comes to you, then you will not be helped.” HQ66:8 “O you who believe, turn to Allah with sincere repentance. It may be your Lord will remove from you your evil and make you enter Gardens in which rivers flow, on the day on which Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will gleam before them and on their right hands — they will say: Our Lord, make perfect for us our light, and grant us protection; surely You are Powerful over all things.”*

**11)** Notwithstanding several provisions of warning verses in the Holy Qur’an, on repentance and forgiveness as precursors to salvation, some people will continue to be misled by the accursed devil with misdeeds, continued sinning and then their refusal to seek repentance. For such classifications of people, the Holy Qur’an makes absolutely positive statements in four most powerful verses, given at **HQ3:185** *“Every soul will taste of death. And you will be paid your reward fully only on the Resurrection day. Then whoever is removed far from the Fire and is made to enter the Garden, he indeed attains the object. And the life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanities.”* **HQ3:128** *“And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”* **HQ66:6** *“O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones; over it are angels, stern and strong. They do not disobey Allah in that which He commands them, but do as they are commanded.”*

**12)** Almighty God expresses His own patience and willingness to forgive different peoples who sinned, and who later regretted their wrong doings, repented 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.”*

**13)** In Islam, the Holy Qur’an as the final revealed scripture to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), has stated in so many places, open invitations from Almighty God to all mankind: to seek forgiveness from Him directly. This must always happen as a one-on-one direct plea from persons<sup>5</sup> to

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

<sup>5</sup> Islam makes provisions for Muslims to compulsory prayers five times daily. Those compulsory prayers give Muslims opportunities five times daily, to repent and seek forgiveness directly from Almighty God. Muslims are not required to appear before a religious leader or priest as an agent to hear confessions and then to grant them forgiveness.

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.”*

**14)** However, there are certain fundamental conditions attached to such pleas: The pleader to Almighty God must accept truthfully from pleader’s heart and mind 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<sup>6</sup> 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.”*

**15)** 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>7</sup>out.” The next phase is indefinite and timelessly stalled till the Decision on Great Day of Judgement.

### **Conclusions on Repentance:**

- a)** Repentance (*taubah*) is the essential prequalification to forgiveness (*maghfirah*).
- b)** The opportunity to enter into repentance and seek forgiveness resides within people, in their material life, whilst still living on Earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Material agent is taken to mean those persons, who act as in-between Almighty God and all people.

<sup>7</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.”*

- c) Repentance (*taubah*) originates with the offender.
- d) Forgiveness (*maghfirah*) (*maghfirah*) comes from the aggrieved party, provided repentance was genuine. Repentance followed by forgiveness prepares for salvation (*khalas'n*).
- e) There is neither repentance nor forgiveness after material death of the person and needs to wait the final outcome of Decision reached on the Great Day of Judgement.

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**Fiji**