

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah

We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him

That Muhammad (saww) is his slave and messenger

Introduction

- Since the Holy month of Ramadhan is approaching, this is a good time for us to repent for the sins that we may have committed over the year. It is said that during this month, the doors of heaven are open; therefore we should ask Allah not to close them for us. Further, the doors of hell are closed in this month and we should ask Allah to keep them closed for us.
- In a sermon given by the Prophet (saaw) on the last Friday of Shaban on the reception of the Holy month of Ramadhan, the Prophet said: *“O people! Indeed your souls are dependent on your deeds, free it with Istighfar (repentance); lighten its loads by long prostrations; and know that Allah swears by his might: That there is no punishment for the one who prays and prostrates and he shall have no fear on the day when man stands before the Lord of the worlds.”* (Please refer to the handout for details of this sermon)
[taken from *Mafaith al-Jinan*, by Shaikh Abbas Qummi]
- In the Holy Quran Surah Al-'Alaq [96:19], Allah swt says:
Perform the Sajdah and get closer to Me

وَأَسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ

Prolonging the Sajdahs reminds the Satan about his disobedience to the Almighty and the reason for his banishment from Paradise. Imam Sadiq said: *“Indeed when a servant prolongs his Sajdah in a manner that no one sees him, Satan says: Woe unto me! They are obedient and I disobeyed; they prostrated and I refused.”*

[*Men of God* by Syed Akramulla, <http://www.islamicoccasions.com>]

- It is said that one who has good morals (*Akhlaq*) during this month, will be able to pass the ‘Siraat’ on the day that feet will slip. Thus we should remember the lessons on Akhlaq that we have learnt in the tafseer classes and should especially apply these in the Holy month of Ramadhan. These lessons Insha' Allah will be beneficial for us on the Day of Judgement.

Merits of the soul: Repentance (Tawbah)

The reality of tawbah

- *Tawbah* means return to the soul's initial spirituality after the light of its human nature (*fitrah*) and its spirit has been covered by the darkness of sins and disobedience. The human soul in its initial state has neither any spiritual virtues nor any vices. It is capable of reaching any station, but in its original state it is pure, sinless and has an intrinsic luminosity. The

perpetration of sins causes obscurity within the heart, and the light of intrinsic nature is extinguished and converted into darkness. However, before total darkness envelops the heart, if a person awakens from the slumber of negligence and makes repentance, the soul gradually returns from the darkness to the light of its original nature and essential spirituality.

- Imam Baqir (as): “*One who repents from sin is like the one who has not sinned.*” [Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, kitab *al-'iman wa al-kufr*, bab *al-tawbah*, hadith #10]
- Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) said: “*When a servant turns to God with sincere repentance (tawbatun nasuh), God loves him and covers him (i.e. his sins) in the world and the Hereafter.*” The Imam was asked, “*And how does He cover him?*” The Imam (as) replied, “*He makes the two angels (assigned to write his deeds) forget that which they have written of his sins. Then He inspires his limbs (saying), ‘Conceal his sins,’ and He inspires places of the earth (saying), ‘Conceal the sins that he used to commit over you.’ Then he meets God in such a manner that there is nothing to bear witness against him regarding any sin.*” [Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, kitab *al-'iman wa al-kufr*, bab *al-tawbah*, hadith #1]

Surah Tahrir [66:8]

- In Surah At-Tahrir [66:8], Allah swt says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance, It's certain that your Lord will acquit you of your evil deeds, and will admit you into gardens underneath which rivers flow. Upon the day when God will not degrade the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light running before them, and on their right hands; and they say, Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us Surely Thou art powerful over everything.
- The Arabic word **عَسَىٰ** means *maybe* or *likely* if it is related to mankind. But if it is related to Allah, it means *certain*.
- In the above verse, the oft-forgiving Lord has invited man to turn to Him with sincere repentance so that He may bestow His grace on him and forgive his sins.
- However, to achieve the rewards and the blessings mentioned in the above verse, the repentance must be sincere. Sincere repentance implies giving up and discontinuing evil in thought and action with a firm determination not to repeat it ever again. If it is done then Allah will wipe of his past sins and admit him to the eternal land of bliss and happiness.
- The Holy Prophet has defined sincere repentance as follows: “*A sincere repentant never sins again as the milk drawn from the breast never can go back to its source.*” [The Holy Qur'an, Pooya/M.A. Ali Engl. Commentary]

Tafseer Class on Akhlaq - Summary
Session 08 - Friday, 30 Sep 2005

- According to Imam Ali, a ‘*sincere repentant*’ is one who satisfies the following six conditions:
 1. He is ashamed of his past sins;
 2. He takes up the duties overlooked and fulfills them;
 3. Makes good the willfully ignored conditions of a trust managed by him;
 4. Forgives those who provoke him;
 5. Does not demand repayment of loans from those who are in financial distress;
 6. Makes firm determination not to sin ever again;
 7. Surrenders his self to the adoration, devotion and service of Allah when it had swelled to the point of exploding due to inordinate consumption of worldly pleasures, transgressions and disobedience.[*The Holy Qur’an*, Pooya/M.A. Ali Engl. Commentary]

Surah al Baqarah [2:222]

- In Surah al Baqarah [2:222], Allah swt says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves.
- It is clear from the above verse that Allah loves those who realize their follies and repent.
- Once Imam Mohammad Baqir as told Mohammad Bin Muslim that when a momin commits sins and seeks repentance of Allah, Allah will forgive him and will tell him to start all over again after the repentance. Then Mohammad bin Muslim asked the Imam, whether or not Allah will accept the momins tawbah, if after repentance he commits a sin again. The Imam replied, “Have you ever seen a momin who turned to Allah, and Allah turned him down? Surely Allah is oft-forgiving and merciful.” [*Jami al Sa’aadaat* Vol 3 pg 67]
Indeed it is stated in the Quran again and again that Allah is *Ghafoor* and *Rahim*.

Surah an Nur [24:31]

- In Surah an Nur [24:31], Allah swt says:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

And turn all together to God, O you believers; Happly so you will prosper.
- Allah again in the above verse has asked his slaves to ask Him for forgiveness for their sins since our salvation lies in repentance.

The importance of reciting Du'a Kumayl

- If a man turns to Allah, he will Inshallah not have problems one after the other and Allah will take him under his protection. Allah says that He will surely offer solutions to the problems faced by one who practices *taqwa*.
- It is said that sins lead to evil and mishaps. On the other hand, tawbah is the path of salvation just as sins are the path of destruction.

Tafseer Class on Akhlaq - Summary
Session 08 - Friday, 30 Sep 2005

- Imam Ali has taught us in Dua Kumayl that we should ask Allah for forgiveness of sins since that is for our own benefit.
- We should never doubt the mercy of Allah and should always turn to Him for repentance, for surely He is the All Merciful. Indeed, we begin Dua Kumayl by saying: “O Allah we besiege your *rahma* which encompasses everything.”
- When we read the beautifully written Dua Kumayl, we ask Allah to forgive all such sins that affront our contingency. The sins which affront our contingency are those which deprive us of our powers to resist further sins and deprive us from keeping ourselves chaste. Furthermore, we ask Allah to forgive all such sins that would bring down calamities. We then ask Allah to forgive all our sins which would change the divine favours into disfavours. Moreover, we ask Allah to forgive all such sins that hinder our supplications. Finally, we ask Allah to forgive all such sins that bring down misfortunes.
- It is clear from Dua Kumayl that committing sins has an adverse affect on us and alter the blessings that Allah has provided for us. Thus, we should pray to Allah and ask Him to forgive all such sins which have an adverse impact on us. It is therefore highly recommended that we recite Dua Kumayl every Thursday night so that Allah continually keeps us in His protection.

The request of Prophet Adam

Prophet Adam raised his hands in prayer saying, “O God! Satan was able to deceive me; what defence does my progeny have?” Prophet Adam was thus praying for all mankind who are his progeny. God replied, “O Adam! I have given them the following:

1. If they have a bad intention but do not commit the act, I will not record it;
2. If they commit a bad deed, I will record one sin for them;
3. If they do a good deed, I will reward them ten virtues (*thawab*) for them;
4. If they have a good intention, I will reward them for it.”

Prophet Adam then requested for a further defence from God. God said. “O Adam! The door of repentance (*tawba*) is always open and I always accept the sincere repentance of my servant.”

[*Jami al Sa'aadaat* Vol 3 pg 67]

The essentials and conditions required for tawbah

- *Tawbah* is not accepted from one who merely declares, “I repent.” There are a number of conditions which must be fulfilled before the acceptance of *tawbah*. These are mentioned below in the following hadith:

It is narrated that someone said: *Astaghfirullah* (I seek God's forgiveness) before Imam 'Ali (as). He said to him. "May your mother mourn for you! Do you know what *istighfar* is? Verily *istighfar* is a degree of the *'illiyyun* (people of high station) and it is a word that means six things. **First** is remorse over the past. **Second**, the resolution not to return to it ever. **Third**, to return to creatures their (formerly usurped) rights so that you meet God Almighty

Tafseer Class on Akhlaq - Summary Session 08 - Friday, 30 Sep 2005

in a state of purity in which no one has any claim against you. **Fourth**, that you fulfill every duty that you neglected in order to satisfy your obligation in respect to it. **Fifth**, that you attend to the flesh of your body that has grown on unlawful nourishment so that it melts away as a result of grief and mourning and your skin adheres to your bones, after which new flesh grows in its place. **Sixth**, that you make your body taste the pain of obedience in the same way as it earlier tasted the pleasure of sins. When you have done these things then say *Astaghfirullah!* [*Nahj al-Balagha*, saying # 417]

- This noble tradition mentions two prerequisites for *tawbah* (remorse and resolution), two important conditions for its acceptance (returning the rights of creatures and of the Creator), and finally two points for the perfection of repentance.
- Someone asked Imam Ali Reza why fasting is incumbent for one month and not, say for one week? The Imam replied, “*When Adam consumed the forbidden fruit, it remained in his flesh for one month. From then on, Allah made it incumbent for mankind to fast for one month.*” [*Ilaalul Syaraai’udeen* Vol 2, page 79]
- This above hadith of Imam Ali Reza relates to the fifth point made by Imam Ali in his saying on *istighfar* and it highlights one of the advantages of fasting. The Holy month of Ramadhan is the month, where we should sincerely beseech Allah for His forgiveness.

Tawbatun nasuh (sincere repentance)

- According to great researcher al-Shaykh al-Bahai, there are several meanings of *tawbatun nasuh*. A few of them are mentioned below:
 - *Tawbah* that 'advises' the people, i.e. it invites them to simulate him (the repenter) on account of the good effect produced in the repenter, or *tawbah* that 'counsels' the repenter to root out sins and never return to them again.
 - *Tawbah* that is done purely for God's sake, similar to the pure honey that is free from wax, and thus called *asalun nasuh*. Sincerity requires that the remorse should be on account of the ugliness of sins and the displeasure of God, and not from fear of the hellfire.
 - The word *nasuh* is also related to *nasabah* which means tailoring, because *tawbah* sews together the body of faith which is torn by sin, and because it joins the penitent person to God's *awliya'* (friends) and His lovers in the same way that separate pieces of cloth are joined together by tailoring.
 - Yet another interpretation says that *nasuh* is an attribute of the penitent and *tawbatun nasuh* is a *tawbah* whose performer admonishes himself to take part in a perfect repentance until the effects of sins are totally purged from the heart. This task is only attained by causing the soul to taste regret and grief and by clearing its darkness caused by past sins with the light of virtuous actions.

The sooner, the better...

- Successful *tawbah* is a difficult task. Indulging in sins, especially major and mortal ones, cause a person to become totally forgetful of *tawbah*. If the tree of sins growing in the orchard of the human heart reaches maturity and its roots become strong, the results are

Tafseer Class on Akhlaq - Summary
Session 08 - Friday, 30 Sep 2005

calamitous, causing a person to turn completely away from repentance. Even when the thought of *tawbah* occasionally comes to his mind, he postpones it from one day to another, and from one month to the next, telling himself, *"I will make sound repentance at the end of my life and in old age."* This is wishful thinking. Such a person cannot perform *tawbah* after the roots of sinfulness have grown deep into his personality.

- The best time for *tawbah* is youth when sins are fewer, the inner darkness of the heart is incomplete and all the conditions of *tawbah* are easier to fulfill. This God-given opportunity should be availed at all costs and one shouldn't pay heed to satanic whisperings to postpone *tawbah*. And therefore, one should do *tawbah* as soon as possible after a sin is committed.
- An intelligent person who realizes this fact, abstains from sins, and undoes wrong committed in the past. His penitent heart filled with remorse, develops a firm determination to quit sinful life. God helps him and if his *tawbah* is sincere, he becomes the beloved of God as mentioned in the holy verse: *"Verily God loves the repentant"* (2: 222)
- Imam 'Ali (as) said: *"If you want to win His blessings in the next world, today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of reward. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Is there no one among you to repent for his deeds before his death, compensate for wrongs he has done, and do good before the calamity of retribution descends upon him?"* [*Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon #33]
- Many people die because of the sins that they commit rather than because of death per se. Indeed, there are some sins which when committed make the life shorter. Similarly, a persons good *amaal* can extend his lifetime. Therefore, there is a strong case against deferring repentance given that sins themselves expedite death. That is why it is said that the spring time for *tawbah* is the time of youth when sins are fewer.
- We should also keep in mind that we cannot predict the time of our death. We may not necessarily die when we get old. What if we die young? What if a natural calamity strikes? In such a situation, where we die before repentance, it will be too late for us to do *tawbah*. Thus, it is always better to remain prepared for death and repent our sins. Hence, the sooner, the better...

Repentance for major and minor sins

- No matter what the magnitude of the sin is, we should always remember that we have sinned Allah who is *Akbar*.
- We should not only repent for major sins but also for minor sins. Many people when they commit minor sins do not realize that their minor sins can add up and may even become more of a burden than a major sin. The following hadith from Imam Jafar Sadiq highlights this point:

Two men came to Imam Jafar Sadiq and asked him how they could repent for their sins. One of them said he had only committed minor sins while the second person said that he had only committed one major sin but no minor sins. The Imam said to the 1st person that since you

have only committed minor sins go and collect as many pebbles as the number of sins that you have committed. To the 2nd person, the Imam said that since you have committed one major sin go and collect a big rock and bring it back to me. The 1st person was happy as he thought that his task was much easier vis-à-vis the 2nd person. So he happily collected a lot of pebbles and then came back to the Imam. The 2nd person after some difficulty came back to the Imam with a large rock. When the two men came back to the Imam, the Imam said, "Now both of you, go back and return the stones from the precise places from where you collected them." At this point, the 1st person realized the onerous task ahead of him as it was difficult for him to remember the places from where he had collected the many small pebbles. However, it was much easier for the 2nd person, to return the rock to its original place since he remembered quite well where he got the rock from.

- From the above story it is clear that we should repent not only for the major sins but also for the minor sins. That does not mean that we care less about major sins! Undoubtedly, major sins are more reprehensible than minor sins. But the point is that we should avoid committing not only a major sin but also minor sins since the latter can add up. And if we do commit a sin, then we should repent for it irrespective of whether the sin was major or minor.

Conclusion

Imam Zain al-Abidin (as) said:

"My God!

You are He who has opened a door to Your pardon
and named it 'repentance'

for You said, 'Repent to God with unswerving (sincere) repentance' (66:8).

What is the excuse for him who remains heedless of entering the door after its opening?"

[*al-Sahifa al-Kamilah*, The Whispered Prayer of the Repenters]

Mind Blowing Story

Bahlul and Haroun Rashid go to the Public Bath

One day Haroun Rashid went to the hot bath with Bahlul. The Khalifa jokingly asked, "If I am a slave then what would be my cost?"

Bahlul said, "Fifty dinars."

The Khalifa angrily said, "Lunatic! The low skirt that I am wearing is just fifty dinars."

"I only gave the cost of the skirt because the Khalifa has no value."

Disclaimer:

In this tafseer class, there might be shortcomings in imparting the knowledge of the tafseer. If there is any information that requires correction, please do not hesitate to let us know via e-mail: jaafari_tafseer_committee@yahoo.com.sg. Allah knows best.