

Repentance as Demolition and Reconstruction

This book explores the true meaning of repentance and guides on how to achieve it.

Publisher(s): Al-Balagh Foundation

Table of Contents

Publisher's Note	3
Repentance in Language, Law and Meaning	4
Notes	8
Repentance in Attributes and Consequences	9
Note	14
Repentance Indicates the Truth of Islam	15
Notes	18
The Psychological and Social Impacts of Repentance	19
Notes	22
The Necessity of Repentance	23
Elements of Repentance	25
1. Knowledge	25
2. Feeling one sinned (caution of conscience)	26
3. Strong-Will.....	26
Achieving Repentance	28
Note	29

Publisher's Note

The Almighty, Allah says:

“And whoever does evil or wrongs himself and then seeks forgiveness from Allah, he shall find Allah, All-Forgiving, and All-Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 4:110)

All praise be to Allah, the Most Beneficent, and the Most Merciful. Peace and blessings be upon the Guide and Saviour of mankind Muhammad, and his infallible progeny; the lights of guidance and signposts of piety, and upon the righteous warriors for Truth among his companions.

Allah, the Most High, Who created man, showed him the two ways of righteousness and evil, by revealing the Divine messages and sending down the prophets to guide and lead mankind towards obedience, and piety and to warn them against evil.

The Almighty Allah has bestowed His blessings and favours upon mankind by leaving the door of repentance open in the case that one is misted or gone astray or is encircled by sins and crimes. He, Allah, made this door (of repentance) open for those who repent and seek His forgiveness and enter it without fear and, in addition, their sins will be forgiven as if their mothers had newly given birth to them.

Allah, the Exalted, not only accepts their repentance without mediation, such as through a priest or clergyman, (or introduction papers) but also promises to change their evil deeds into those that are good.

Allah, the Most High, says:

“Except him who repents and believes and does good deeds; then these and they who, Allah changes (their) evil deeds to good ones. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, All-Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 25:70)

Thus, repentance is an obvious way to reform man and is considered among the most successful means of social defence against crimes, because it confronts, with righteousness, those who commit sins and offences and constantly creates the hope in them, of attaining righteousness which leads them towards good and virtue. Repentance, also, creates the strong will in the sinner's soul to revolt against the many deviations and offences.

It, also, means a genuine rejection of disobedience; a great uprising against corruption and mischief; vices which the enemies of Islam used to spread evil among Muslim nations in order to cause deviation in their beliefs, destroy their values and, also, to make their glorious civilization fall.

Al-Balagh Foundation beseeches Allah, the Most High, white presenting to its dear readers this booklet - “Repentance as Demolition and a Reconstruction”, to make all of us successful and prosperous on the path of true repentance in order that we may return towards the true Islamic Shari'ah.

Al-Balagh FoundationAl-Balagh Foundation

Repentance in Language, Law and Meaning

Generally, repentance means to give up sin and is the best way of expressing an apology. Thus an apology is of three kinds:

Either the one apologizing says: 'I did not do'.

Or says: 'I did wrong and condemn the action' and, indeed, gives it up. This last step is called 'repentance'.

Repentance in law means to give up sin for its wickedness; to regret the committed sin and to make the decision not to repeat it. Thus, whenever these above mentioned points are achieved, the conditions of repentance will be complete.

When one repents to Allah, he should remember what to do in return:

“... and turn (repentant) to Allah all, O believers, so that you may be successful.” (Holy Qur’an, 24:31)

“Will they not then turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 5:74)

“Then Allah turned to them mercifully ...” (Holy Qur’an, 5:71)

This means before making his repentance to Him. A repentant is one who seeks and accepts repentance. On the one hand, man is the one who repents to Allah; on the other, He turns towards man mercifully.

A repentant is one who repents much and gives up his sins, gradually, until he leaves them, altogether. It may also be said that Allah is He Who frequently accepts His servants' repentance. He says:

“Whoever repents, and does righteous deeds has surely turned to Allah in goodly conversion.” (Holy Qur’an, 25: 71)

i.e., an absolute repentance which means to choose between giving up wickedness and the searching for beauty:

“On Him I have put my trust and unto Him is my return. Verily He is the Oft-Pardoning, the All-Merciful.”¹ (Holy Qur’an, 13:30)

Repentance in the Arabic language, means to apologize for doing wickedness, to confess committing it and, also, to promise to give it up, and not return to it. It is the best form of an apology, coupled with righteousness and remaining innocent from doing it.

Repentance in jurisprudence means: “The return from disobedience to obedience with the intention of seeking the absolute approach to Allah, the Most High.”

This return or change can be applied to all actions, speech and behaviour emerging from man and which influences his thoughts, sensations and feelings.

Repentance, in a factual analysis, means transition and change in life and the nature of behaviour, because it is the result of an essential, ideological and psychological change which occurs deep within man.

The acceptance of repentance in its reality expresses Allah's love for His servants and the perfectness of His attributes of forgiveness and mercy.

It, also, expresses Allah's good will and the continuation of His eminence and goodness over man's way of life and to be included in goodness as it came from the 'hand' of its Creator; far from any deviation, haughtiness and deterioration found in the labyrinths of evil and corruption.

Repentance in legitimacy of its existence and man's acceptance of the consequences resulting therefrom, as well as the practical impacts produced by this existence, indicates the greatness of Allah's power, and the possibility of His estimation of the world; expresses the Almighty Allah's ability to forgive in the sphere of universal correlation and existential order without causing an imbalance in the equilibrium of an action or the consequences resulting therefrom.

He, the Exalted, through His wisdom, made the human self a source for human action. Any action starts from an imagination. Thus, the psychological tendency towards any action that is to be done and, then, the choosing of it and the deciding to perform it in preparation of its occurrence, stipulates its regularity in the series of causes and the general universal results.

Thus, man's endurance for the results of an action remains permanent as long as there is a psychological and ideological connection and bodily effort in its personification to bring his essence into existence. Then the connection between an action and its performer remains due to the fact that the action makes its impression on self with a negative and objective achievement occurring outside the will of good...as an extension for the action, itself, and his will.

Therefore, no one has the power to accept repentance; that which nullifies the impact of an action, or to think oneself exempt from responsibility after its occurrence except the One Who created the worlds and their systems and the one who can deal with it and overcome it and removes what He wishes and sets what He wishes. The Almighty Allah says:

“His Command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it, Be, and it is.” (Holy Qur’an, 36:82)

“... Allah indeed does what He pleases.” (Holy Qur’an, 22:14)

The repentance from the Almighty Allah on His servants means: The acceptance of man's apology and the removing of the results which may occur upon him genetically and penalty.

The Most High says:

“... Surely good deeds tab away evil deeds. This a reminder for the mindful.”(Holy Qur’an, 11:114)

Among the system of soul and behaviour, which the Almighty Allah has made, is that the will of good and behavioral extension are able in the factual world of existence, to eliminate that which what was caused by the will of evil and manifest it in the outside world with His leave and will.

According to the logic of constitutional existence, without the Almighty Allah's legislation through His Mercy and Kindness, there would be no repentance, and man's bearing the results of his deeds would be in harmony with the rules of justice even in the case of man's regretting or asking forgiveness or repentance.

How beautifully Imam Ali bin Al-Hussein (a.s.) describes this idea, in detail, in one of his supplications:

“... he does not deny Your Justice, O Lord, if You punish him, He deems not Your Forgiveness too great, if You forgive him and pity him for verily

You, the Gracious Master, Who does not deem it difficult to forgive great sins ...”²

And, also, he (a.s.) say:

“...I could not deserve, thereby, the obliteration of a single sin out of all my sins! And if You were to forgive me when I should deserve Your Forgiveness and pardon me when I should merit Your Pardon, verily it would not be due to me on account of merit, nor do I deserve it on account of worth for my recompense from You, for the first thing wherein I disobeyed You, was Hell Fire. So, if You chastise me, You would not be unjust to me.”³

This is a fact attained by modern research and scientific studies and, in which, it is proved that every deed made by man or others, leaves traces and distinguishable movements which are continually repeated in this universe, as long as it exists, because this universe acts like a recorder; recording every deed and movement.

The Holy Qur'an records this fact, which is connected with the universal existence, by saying:

“And the book is placed, and you see the guilty fearing for what is in it, and they say: O woe to us! What a book is this! It leaves out neither a small thing nor a great one, but numbers them (all), and they find what they did confronting them. And your Lord wrongs not anyone.” (Holy Qur'an, 18:49)

“On the Day when Allah will raise them altogether, then inform them of what they did. Allah, words it, while they forget it, and Allah is witness over all things.” (Holy Qur'an, 58:6)

“Surely We give life to the dead, and We write down that which they send before and their footprints, and We record everything in a clear writing.” (Holy Qur'an, 36:12)

“This is Our record that speaks against you with truth. Surely We wrote what you did.” (Holy Qur'an, 45:29)

Thus, man is not eligible for such acceptance of His repentance, nor is it obligatory for Allah to accept his repentance because the foundation in the world of existence, is that there should be regularity, which coincides with Allah's way and adheres to His laws; while deviation and irregularity both contradict this will and remains an irregular declarative testimony for its performer. Therefore, it is not also obligatory for Allah, after sending down the messengers, heavenly Holy Books, warnings and explanations, to eliminate for man his sins or to remove their consequences and punishments.

But, Allah wished to bestow His blessings on His servants through His kindness and His mercy, to eliminate for them the outcomes of their deeds from the record of existence. He, the Almighty, addresses people thus:

“Say: O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.” (Holy Qur'an, 39:53)

How delicately Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) explains this fact:

“If a man sincerely repents, surely Allah will love and protect him.’ Once, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked on how Allah protects man (the

*repentant). He (a.s.) responded: 'Allah will make His angels (who records his deeds) forget to record his sins and will order his organs and all areas of the land to conceal for him his sins. Therefore, when he meets his Creator on the Day of Resurrection, no one will bear witness against him concerning his sins.'"*⁴

This saying and the two above mentioned verses lay stress on the relationship of human action and its genetic connection with universe and with the world around it, in addition to the existence of psychological and intellectual relation in respect to its performer.

Indeed, this saying expresses the force which records and preserves the outcome by an angel⁵ and, also, it considers the bodily existence of man, as a natural existence, and the areas of land as a spatial dimension to the action. Verily, all these will be affected with movement and action and, then, it will be recorded.

Through repentance, man's innocence with his Lord against his evil deed is achieved. Thus, Allah eliminates such a factual outcome after man's intellectual and psychological root is confused and withdraws from it. It will be eliminated from the record of existence by a Powerful Divine Will; above the systems of existence and the laws of his deed, and its outcome will be stopped, despite of its happening on the Day when the universe, itself, will cast its own records and registers of human activities and deeds and counts their outcome along with other universal events, and then, again, repeats the cycle:

“And when the books (records) are spread.” (Holy Qur’an, 81:10)

“And as for him who is given his book in his left hand - he will say: O would that my book had not been given to me!” (Holy Qur’an, 69:25)

“Read your book Your own soul is Sufficient as a reckoner against you this Day.” (Holy Qur’an, 17:14) (Holy Qur’an, 17:14)

Notes

1. Al-Raghib Al-Esfahani, al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an, Chapter On Repentance.
2. Al-Sahifah Al-Sajjadiyah, p. 282, English Version
3. Ibid, Supplication No. 16, p. 60, section 31.
4. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraq, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p- 60.
5. The existence of two angels who are responsible for recording man's actions is among the essential principles of Islamic Ideology; supported by the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah).

Repentance in Attributes and Consequences

How beautiful and deep the meaning is of the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) where he quoted it from the Lord, Allah, the Great:

*“There is no god but Allah (i.e. none has the right to be worshipped but Allah) is my fortress and whoever enters My fortress is safe against My punishment.”*¹

If a Muslim knows the true meaning of 'There is no god but Allah' and comprehends its concepts and contents and then recognizes its impact in his life and the connection it has with his existence, surely he will understand that everything in this existence is founded on the phrase: 'There is no god but Allah' and moves towards it.

Most people, including some of those who memorize the names of Allah, blessed be His names which are considered below His attributes, and actions, who study the science of monotheism with its text and rules and speak about the vividness of the essence of Allah and abundance of His mercy and the relationship of the existence with His power ... are unfamiliar with most facts and distinct impacts of the phrase: 'There is no god but Allah.'

If the dimensions of the self are opened to these vast horizons and if intellects would comprehend what the word of monotheism carries in it of meanings and attributes concerning the Divine Self and lived under its rays and the outpouring of its lights, surely he would understand that he lived under the impacts of these attributes. They are facts which are obvious in the world of existence and are in connection with the essence of man and his existence. He would, also, understand that every distinct Divine attribute filled a gap in the human self and, also, created hope in him.

Thus, happiness would overwhelm him and he would absolutely feel the meaning of existence if he lived while seeking inspiration from its surplus and fills the gaps in his self with its impacts.

What is important, in this research, is to study repentance as an impact in our lives, occurring among the impacts of these Divine attributes.

All fields of existence, including human existence, have a connection with an attribute among the Divine attributes.

Whatever exists in this universe like might, wisdom, science, justice, mercy, kindness, power...etc. is but a shadow in the unlimited Divine perfection, and the distinctions of this perfectness is a secret which aligns the world and the source of its existence and this existence is adopted among His everlasting generous abundance.

Indeed, the Holy Qur'an speaks about numerous Divine attribute and the Almighty Allah describes and glorifies Himself with them. Here, we discuss what relates only with the subject of repentance for it is one of the distinct impacts of visible Divine attributes in man's life.

According to the logic of monotheism, repentance comes as an impact which should be achieved in the system of creation, and as long as its Creator is described with these attributes, it is inevitable that the abundance of good appear. These attributes are:

First: Verily, Allah, the Most High, describes Himself with clemency and the attribute 'clemency' mentioned in most of the Qur'anic sources always

associated with forgiveness, because forgiveness is an impact among the impacts of clemency and an inevitable attribute to it, and no forgiveness comes forth except from a clement nor can a clement be anything but a forgiver.

The word clement (halim) is mentioned eleven times in nine chapters Of the Holy Qur'an; where the attribute of clemency (hilim) is associated six times with forgiveness while the other five are associated with the attribute of richness, science and thankfulness.

Clemency, for man, means to restrain oneself from anger and achieve patience in himself, but for Allah, the Almighty, clemency means to grant a respite to man and delay punishment and to give him both enough assistance to review himself and an opportunity to return to himself.

Forgiveness: It generally means elimination, covering, protection and conservation against impurity.

But, forgiveness concerning Allah, the Most High, is to purify His servants, eliminate their evil deeds, protect them against chastisement, and guard them against their shortcomings without disclosing them.

The Almighty, Allah says:

“Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, the Most Forbearing.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:225)

“... and know that Allah knows whatever is (latent) in yourselves, therefore be careful of Him; and know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Forbearing.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:235)

Allah, the Exalted is distinguished by His knowledge of what is in human souls of good and evil and does not disclose them but on the opposite He protects them and gives them the opportunity to repent and return towards truth. Indeed Allah, the Almighty, is distinguished by this characteristic which is called clemency.

Verily, His distinguished with clemency, forgiveness and protection opens the door of repentance to His servants; as He does not deal with them through punishment, but He embraces them with His clemency, generosity, forgiveness and widespread mercy, and promises them to take away their sins.

Secondly: The Almighty is attributed with forgiveness and power. His being attributed by power is the base upon which forgiveness is built and from which repentance results, for no one forgives except the Powerful and no one gives of anything except the owner.

If one follows the description of the Holy Qur'an for Allah, the Almighty, and the attribute of forgiveness is being related to Him, one will find that His being attributed as a forgiver mostly accompanies forgiveness and sometimes it is associated with clemency and might.

The Almighty, Allah says:

“... and certainly Allah has pardoned them. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.” (Holy Qur’an, 3:155)

“If you do good openly or keep it secret or pardon an evil, Allah surely is ever Pardoning, Powerful.” (Holy Qur’an, 4:149)

“So, these, it may be that Allah will pardon them. And Allah is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.” (Holy Qur’an, 4:99)

In the above mentioned verses, one will see that all these attributes are linked with each other.

Allah is described as having the ability to forgive what He wills to forgiveness, and repentance is shown as a fact in the world of consequences; as a system in the world of man; as a shadow for the attribute of forgiveness and power and an impact coupled with the human life.

Third: The Almighty being described with kindness.

Divine Kindness: It means to treat people with kindness and sympathize with them.

This Divine kindness appears in the way Allah simplifies whatever makes people come near to obedience and repels them from disobedience in order to show sympathy over them and treat them with kindness. He never charges people with things above their ability nor does He close the door of repentance to them after their disobedience lest their destination would be the chastisement of Hell and aloofness from Allah, the Most High.

Therefore, repentance is an aspect among the aspects of Allah's manifestation with kindness and a state among the states among its appearance in the world of man.

Allah, the Exalted says:

“And remember that which is recited in your houses of the messages of Allah and the Wisdom. Surely Allah is ever Knower of subtleties, Aware.” (Holy Qur’an, 33:34)

In fact, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned the attribute of 'kindness' in seven different places; five of them associated with the meaning of 'cognizant', because of having a spontaneous relationship existing between the two attributes 'kindness and cognizant'. He, the Almighty, is Aware of the weaknesses and feebleness which exists in man's self and which makes him unable to hold to the way of righteousness in what results from him. The Almighty Allah says:

“Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware.” (Holy Qur’an, 67:14)

On the one side, man in his genetic nature stands exposed to venture out of the bounds of behavioral righteousness; while on the other hand, he wishes to return towards righteousness in order to be integrated, once again into the world of good and purity.

In order to do that, man needs tolerance and forgiveness so that his return would be accepted and be pleased with his repentance. Thus, Allah's kindness, i.e., His clemency and His sympathy, is the Intercessor for man for the acceptance of his return because Allah, the Exalted likes His servants to approach Him and also likes to see him as a fact which agrees with the will of his creator and His pleasure.

The Most High says:

“Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:222)

Fourth: His being attributed with Affection and Mercy.

Affection means love, and mercy means to be charitable and benevolent to the one who deserves pity.

And Allah, the Almighty, does not describe, repeatedly, His Divine Self with an attribute nor does He emphasize on it in the same way as describing Himself with the word 'Mercy'. Even the attribute of 'Mercy' used by the Holy Qur'an equals the attribute of 'Divinity'; and is clear when it allows the name of 'Rahman' (Merciful) to be called on His Divine Self instead of calling His Holy Self as 'Allah'. Thus the Holy Qur'an considers the word 'Mercy' enough to be used in invoking His Divine Self for having full reference of it.

The Almighty Allah says:

“Say: Call on Allah or call on the Beneficent. By whatever (name) you call on Him, He has the best names ...” (Holy Qur’an, 17:110)

Both terms, Allah and Rahman 'Merciful' imply 'Self' characterized by Beautiful Attributes. The influence of this Divine Attribute is great on human life, for it is an eternal source elaborating on the feelings of security, tranquility and peace and also a source stirring up hope and expectation in order to continue the relationship between Allah and His creature in human self.

It acts as a vessel of the attributes of nearness which includes the meanings of love, affection, forgiveness, charity and peace ... etc. It acts as a connection which fills up the gap of farness and fleeing and which removes the alienation and disinclination between man and his Creator.

It prepares psychological readiness in man to eulogize his peaceful and sincere relation with Allah, the Most High.

A mood of pleasure and tranquility overflows in man and has the feeling of bliss and protection against falling under the attributes of anger, omnipotence and revenge.

“And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure.” (Holy Qur’an, 24:21)

“And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him. Surely my Lord is Merciful, Loving-kind.” (Holy Qur’an, 11:90)

“And say: My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the Best of those who show mercy.” (Holy Qur’an, 23:118)

“And your God is one God; there is no god but He! He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:163)

Thus, the relationship between Allah and His creatures is distinguished as the Almighty wills to be established on the basis of mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness, condonation, forbearance, and protection to revive man while his heart is filled with tranquility, love and peace and, also, so that his self be filled with hope and expectation and the waiting of benevolence from a Lord Who is characterized by the attributes of affection and love.

Accordingly, the acceptance of repentance is a hope which worries man's heart, and an expectation which lives in him, as an expected result for this beloved relation existing between Allah and His creatures.

Certainly, this hope is a fact and hope is a truth and of which both are incorporated under the shadow of the sacred attributes of the Almighty, Allah.

“Say: O My servants who have been extravagant unto their own selves, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 39:53)

Therefore, the door of repentance is opened and its rope is extended as Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) describes it:

“Repentance is Allah’s rope and assistance for His Divine providence.”

Note

1. Al-Muhajabah al-Baidha'e, Book on Al-adkar and al-Da'awat, p. 274.

Repentance Indicates the Truth of Islam

Man is an addressee concerning jurisprudence, while his diverse activities are fields in which Islamic laws and legislation are practised. And Islam did not come but to coincide between man's activities with his dimensions in life, between the will of good and the will of mercy in this existence. Therefore, this conformity needs utmost accuracy in evaluating man's nature and his readiness and capabilities lest this conformity becomes impracticable, and demolishes the goal of the religion.

Hence, the Islamic duties are obligatory according to the human's readiness and ability.

The Almighty, Allah says:

“Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability ...” (Holy Qur’an, 2:286)

“O you who believe! follow you not the steps of Satan; for whoever follows the steps of Satan, he (Satan) enjoins (unto him) filth and evil; and were it not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy, not One of you would have ever been pure, but Allah purifies whom He wills; and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” (Holy Qur’an, 24:21)

“Have you not considered those who claim themselves pure? No, Allah purifies whom He will; and they will not be wronged the skin of a date-stone.” (Holy Qur’an, 4:49)

“And I exculpate not myself; surely (one's) self is wont to bid (him to) evil, except those on whom my Lord has mercy. Surely my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, All-Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 12:53)

“And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him and We are nearer to him than his life-vein.” (Holy Qur’an, 50:16)

“Verily Allah loves, among His servants, those who turn towards Him when they are tempted.”¹

“Certainly Allah, the Almighty gave three qualities to those who repent, if one of these qualities are given to all people of the heavens and the earth, they surely would be saved; the Most High ² says: 'Surely Allah loves those who turn too much (to Him)’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:222)

and “Those who bear the Throne of Power and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe: Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, so protect those who turn (to You) - till He says- . Surely you are the Mighty, the Wise.” (Holy Qur’an, 40:7-9)

“And those who call not with Allah upon any other god, slay not a soul which Allah has forbidden except for just cause, and do not commit fornication; for whoever does these shall receive (the recompense) of the sin. For him the punishment shall be doubled on the Resurrection Day, and therein he shall abide forever, disgraced. Except him who repents and believes and does righteous deeds, for these are they of whom Allah changes their evil deeds into good deeds. And Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 25:68-70)

On the one hand, Islam aims at the process of conformity between man's will and his activity; on the other hand, between the divine will of good and mercy. It takes into consideration that the human ability, includes his

psychological inclinations and limited bodily and mental ability and what he suffers of the division between the two ways in life; the way of good and evil, cannot always harmonize with the will of Allah, the Exalted, nor can he stand erect along a straight line without any regression or transgression and deviation because the nature of what he bears of capabilities, motives, and tendencies, is unable to be the true shadow on this land for the ultimate will of good and the greatness of mankind.

Concerning this concept, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“A believer looks like an ear (of wheat) which sometime rises straight up and sometimes inclines to itself.”

It is inevitable for a believer to make mistakes now and then.”

Therefore, Islam, as it legislates laws, regulations, and the rules of essential regularities for life, also takes into consideration the fact that there is not a perfect application and the occurrence of offense and deviation from righteousness exists, so it made, for this deviation and disobedience, a special solution and a comprehensive legislation for organizing it in order man return to the path of righteousness and coincide with the will of good and the great goal of this existence which is an integrative trend towards the public interest.

Accordingly, the Islamic legislation for repentance came to emphasize that man cannot be a volitional essence representing the wilt of good and ascend the ladders of perfectness without Allah's mercy and His opening the door of returning towards Him whenever he deviates or goes astray. So, Islam is realistic and practical when it deals with man in a way which fits his true nature as a human who makes mistakes and. then goes straight or deviates (from the right path) and then follows the right way.

Therefore both the Holy Qur'an and the noble Prophetic traditions emphasized this fact, for man, in order to remind him about Allah's grace for him and also to recognize why does he commits sin? Why does he repent? And what is his relationship with Allah when he disobeys, and then repents; deviates and then asks for forgiveness.

Consequently the following text explains and discovers for man, his true nature, his relationship and the degree of his harmony with the will of Allah, the Almighty:

“... and when it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure ...” (Holy Qur'an, 24:21)

“Have you not considered those who claim themselves pure? No, Allah purifies whom He wills; and they will not be wronged the skin of a date-stone.” (Holy Qur'an, 4:49)

“And I call not myself sinless; surely (man's) self is wont to command evil, except those on whom my Lord has mercy. Surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Holy Qur'an, 12:53)

“And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him and We are nearer to him than his life-vein.” (Holy Qur'an, 50:16)

These verses declare that the human self is wont to command evil and, also, inclines to be independent in this existence and to be separated from Allah's will since it succumbs to illusions, devilish insinuations and Satanic temptations in order to be a god on this land, but it is Allah's mercy which

overshadows this miserable creature and overwhelms it by Divine love and forgiveness so that it may raise, once again, from its suppression and collapse and continue on the way of perfection and love of the good.

It awakens, in its depths, the sense of conscience and strives to go beyond the circle of darkness into the world of light and to return towards Allah to achieve its aims in reaching Him, and the everlasting eternity and happiness.

Therefore, the angels glorify and praise Allah and ask forgiveness for him (the repentant) and his Creator, Who counting his disobedience and rebellion will be pleased with his return and love his closeness:

“Surely Allah loves those who turn to Him, and loves those who keep themselves pure.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:222)

“Whoever repents of his sins has no sin for the repentant is Allah's friend.”³

Accordingly, the repentant finds the doors of return lawful and the horizons of repentance wide lest despair overcomes him; hopelessness dominates him and continues in committing sin; and thus says farewell to the life of righteousness ... without return. Accordingly, the repentant finds the doors of return lawful and the horizons of repentance wide lest despair overcomes him; hopelessness dominates him and continues in committing sin; and thus says farewell to the life of righteousness ... without return.

Notes

1. Prophetic Tradition (hadith)
2. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65 narrated by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as.) through his grandfather the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).
3. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65

The Psychological and Social Impacts of Repentance

Repentance with all its external consequences like giving up sin, performing what he had missed in the past, and not returning to it again, all these indicate an eternal psychological behaviour which starts to grow in man's self and which extends out in the form of behavioural correctness and upright human manners.

The repentant also finds, in Islamic Shari'ah, the encouragement towards repentance such as is found in the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.):

“Indeed a man who commits sins enters Paradise, when he repents.”

People asked him: O Messenger of Allah, how that could be?

He (s.a.w.) replied:

“The sin will be before his eyes, and repenting from it, he will run away till he enters Paradise.”

As the Almighty, Allah says:

“Surely Allah loves those who turn to Him, and loves those who keep themselves pure.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:222)

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.), says:

“Whoever repents is Allah's beloved friend and the repentant from sin, has no sin.”¹

And, also, says:

“The expiation of a sin is regret.”²

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) also says:

“If a man sincerely repents, Allah will love him and then protect him.”³

These collections of Islamic texts; which are great in their content, open the doors of hope and return, before the deviated, criminal man, who inclines towards vices and deviations then commits crimes and sins, and who becomes accustomed to such kind of life, the life of deviation and crimes in order not to lose hope in himself or become despaired.

A criminal or a deviated one should realize, even for a while through conscience, that man who dissents against the tradition of this existence; a disobedient and mischievous, harmful being, understands that the society around him dislikes him and looks at him as rubbish of the society and a secretion of a dangerous sickness which poisons the life of mankind and which forms a danger against their security and peace. This concept leaves the sense of deficiency to grow.

Therefore, to open the door of repentance is more helpful for such a man and more beneficial, which returns confidence to him and which saves him against feeling that a society has pressure on him and dislikes him.

Certainty, the society has an enormous psychological impact on the nerves of a criminal and a deviated one. It, also, looks down upon the one who commits sin or who falls to the abyss of vices; so its regulations remain as a basis for evaluating and dealing with this criminal.

Whoever is known as a liar or has an aggressive behaviour: such as committing adultery, stealing, kidnapping or is famous for treachery and bribery and blood shedding or is known as a habitual drunkard, the society looks at such man with this viewpoint and deals with him on the basis of this evaluation.

If a deviate looks at himself and sees that the law runs after him and the society around him disrespects and refuses to deal with him, surely he will be full of vindictive feelings against such a society, and, thus, continue to exceed the bounds of deviation if he finds no hope to reform or correct the concept of such a society concerning him.

But, Islam deals with this deviate and disobedient through mercy and kindness and gives great importance to him and devotes a number of its laws, regulations and instructions to guide and reform this man.

Allah, the Most High says:

“And whoever does evil or wrongs himself and then seeks forgiveness from Allah, he shall find Allah, All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 4:110)

So, the door of repentance is open and the horizons of mercy are wide for this man if he is watchful, wakes up, and wishes to return to the life of purity and righteousness.

As a result of this, Islam has built its position, regarding the repentant, on an essential foundation and a practical evaluation for the truth of behaviour and the consequences resulting from it; this attitude is a deviated one, it is a fact which happened; and man's connection with it and his responsibility for it still exists, but, Allah, through His forgiveness, gave man an opportunity to put an end to this vicious connection and delivered him from its consequences.

Thus, he will not be considered responsible for it as long as his psychological and mental connection is cut off from it:

“The expiation of a sin is regret.”⁴

Thus the repentant is innocent before himself; and his society which surrounds him, from each and every action he commits and then repents therefrom; because Islamic society recognizes the meaning of repentance and believes in the consequences resulting from it. If the repentance of a criminal or a disobedient one is known, he will be forgiven from that which he is known by because Allah, the Owner, is the One Who can forgive in this creation. Indeed, for him, the door of returning and entering, for a righteous and pure life, shall be opened:

“Whoever repents (from his sins) has no sin and is Allah 's beloved friend.”⁵

On the basis of this new feeling, new human feelings will be born in him. He will be changed from a man who felt he was disliked and refused by society, to a man who feels dignified by Allah and the society in which he lives; thus, his movement will sincerely be directed towards doing good and reforming himself after suffering much under the experience of deviation and the bitterness of being far from Allah and expelled from His mercy and feeling the pricking of the conscience, and the criticism of the society to which he belongs.

The Almighty says:

“Say: O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (Holy Qur’an, 39:53) (Holy Qur’an, 39:53)

Notes

1. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65
2. Ibid, p.67
3. Ibid, p. 17
4. Al-Naraqi, Jami' Al-Sa'adat, vol. 3, p. 67
5. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65

The Necessity of Repentance

Since repentance is a decisive human decision to return from wrongdoing, to keep away from evil and depravity and to return to the life of uprightness and obedience, and since its practical consequences are serious in man's life and his destination, repentance is an obligatory duty for every disobedient, criminal and deviated one on the basis of reason and the understanding of the danger of wrongdoing and the harm of deviation and crime.

Both deviation and wrongdoing are dangerous for the life of mankind and cause harm to its benefits of social life; the transgression of the guilty and the criminals against the life system, the exceeding the principles of morals and right behaviour, the threatening the security of mankind and their living and exposing its life to danger.

Through deviation and disobedience man exposes himself to Allah's wrath and, thus, he sells his happiness for pain and torment and ends his life with a sorrowful and dreadful.

Therefore, the disobedient one not only loses both the present life and the hereafter but also causes harm both to himself and to others.

No wise man desires such a disastrous result to occur to himself or is pleased with it, without striving to refuse and change it.

That is why repentance is obligatory for every Muslim and every human on the basis of reason and the comprehension of human interests.

The judgement of the reason for the necessity of repentance coincides with the laws of the Divine Religions, altogether. It purifies man from sins, liberates him from the mazes of deviation and evil and calls him to a life of purity and righteousness. Starting from the principles, Islam considers repentance among its main pillars and a decisive step towards the way of salvation and guidance for the whole of mankind.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions (Sunnah) focuses on the necessity of repentance and the return to Allah, opening a new page in man's record; turning away from the detestable past which is full of rebellious deeds, and which blackens the clear pages by guilty acts and corrupted the beautiful life with the stamp of shame.

So the Holy Qur'an has always taken a firm stance against the disobedient and declared its forgiveness by opening the door of Divine repentance and forgiveness to them. Thus, the Holy Qur'an addresses them:

"... and turn to Allah all of you, O believers, so that you may be successful." (Holy Qur'an, 24:31)

"... He brought you forth from the earth and made you dwell in it, so ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him. Surely my Lord is Nigh, Answering." (Holy Qur'an, 11:61)

***"O you who believe, turn to Allah with sincere repentance ..."* (Holy Qur'an, 66:8)**

Consequently, it becomes man's duty to respond to this Divine call and make use of this unique opportunity before the Day of Regret and Remorse in which man will say:

"... O woe is me, that I fell short of my duty to Allah; and surely I was of those who laughed to scorn." (Holy Qur'an, 39:56)***"... O woe is me,***

that I fell short of my duty to Allah; and surely I was of those who laughed to scorn.” (Holy Qur’an, 39:56)

Elements of Repentance

Repentance is a turning point of behaviour, an ideological alternation and a change which occurs in the life of an individual or a group. Thus it cannot be achieved in the life of an individual unless other main elements are obtained. Among them are:

1. Knowledge

Man, in order to distinguish his diverse behavioral positions and coincide with them, evaluate them and give final decisions upon them and choose what should be chosen, should know its truth and have full ideological lucidity through which he can differentiate between what is right and what is wrong or what is good and what is bad and, also, differentiate between righteousness and deviation and recognize between good and evil. The ignorant man cannot achieve this condition as long as the way is not clear and right to him.

Both knowledge and consciousness are the right ways which lead him towards the Almighty Allah. They are the ideological means by which man is directed to the right path and the guide towards the welfare of humanity and its perfection. They are both two guides which save him against the pit of collapse and the labyrinths of deviation. As long as this condition is not achieved, repentance can never occur.

Thus, it becomes obligatory for everyone to bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and, also, teach the ignorant in order repentance complete all its necessities and nullify all the excuses, under which the disobedient or criminals, may hide themselves.

For the same purpose, it is obligatory for man to learn every necessity of faith and the obligations upon which his guidance and destination depend; and, also to ensure the relation between faith, guidance and knowledge.

On the one side, the Holy Qur'an condemns ignorance; on the other, it praises knowledge and learning. In various places, it makes a connection between ignorance, misguidance and deviation.

The Almighty Allah says:

“They said: Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are truthful. He said: The knowledge is only with Allah, and I deliver to you that wherewith I am sent, but I see you are an ignorant people.” (Holy Qur’an, 46:22-23)

As the above mentioned verse refers to both ignorance and deviation, it, also, refers to both knowledge and faith.

Allah, the Most High, says:

“And those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good, and none is made to receive this except the patient.” (Holy Qur’an, 28:80)

“... those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah ...” (Holy Qur’an, 35:28)

Surely knowledge is the source of every psychological and ideological motivation which man holds in the way of repentance:

- Through knowledge, he realizes how to fear of Allah.

- Through knowledge, it creates in him the feeling of hope and desire to meet Allah.
- Through knowledge, the light of the loving Allah shines in him.
- Through knowledge, his conscience is awakened and to him returns his consciousness.

2. Feeling one sinned (caution of conscience)

When the truth of an action is discovered by man and his outer truth is distinguished before his consciousness and pure inner feelings, he starts to understand in truth and, thus, a balanced action is to be found in him between what he owns of good human values and his bitter and painful reality, and his responsibility of its bad role will be explained in its truth. Thus, the embers of refusal and disgust will be gathered in him and the attitude of refusal and protest will grow in him, thus, transformed into a psychological conflict of bitter conscious remorse as a first means to impose punishment upon himself.

Then, the fires of consciousness will rise till he puts it under his control and becomes victorious because, man, in his inborn nature dislikes deficiency and tries to get rid of it; and always strives for self-perfection and wishes to reach for it by different ways and means.

Man through his ignorance, yields to various unreal factors in which he tries to satisfy his psychological inclinations through deviated ways, but, soon this deviated inclination will be disclosed to him through consciousness and knowledge. Thus, he regrets his evil deeds and tries to separate himself from his crimes and get rid of the impacts of his deviation, for he realizes that what is done by him (of crimes and sins) does not fit with true human existence.

When this regret begins; he starts to feel pain for his evil deeds and his desire to remove this deviated existence, which takes its role as a new force towards change and repentance, moves him to separate from the disliked past in order to make another existence for himself which suits his good human form.

3. Strong-Will

Strong will is an important and active element in the process of repentance, because it is the power which limits the situation; takes a decision after achieving the right conclusion and ideological lucidity, which are provided by knowledge. It is an axis on which one takes action in the process of a psychological and ideological revolution.

If one ventures towards repentance, particularly when one faces psychological conflict, and tries to destroy this behavioral abnormality, taking the direction to Allah; the disobedient and criminal, while are involved in such odd connections with the motives of deviation, need a determination and firm will which enables them to cut off this relation and change their self-direction towards the right path. Without such a will and sincere determination, it is impossible for a man to change from disobedience to obedience. Both sincere determination and firm will are among the psychological starting points for man to take a decision and specify his behavioral position.

How beautifully Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) describes the role of a firm will and its importance in man's life:

“A man never gets weak if he is strengthened with a firm intention (will).”

Consequently, firm will is a power capable of changing a man's route and, also, correcting his direction in life. Consequently, firm will is a power capable of changing a man's route and, also, correcting his direction in life.

Achieving Repentance

In order to achieve repentance, express his sincerity in return towards Allah, man should change his repentance into action and achieve his remoteness against his evil deeds; make for the better in himself; and prove his true love for Allah by fearing Him in all his decisions and actions. To achieve these, he should have:

First: Regret: It means that the repentant feels pain and sorrow about his past sins and have an urgent psychological desire to avoid them and fill the gaps resulting from his previous behavioral attitudes which become odious and disliked.

Second: To give up sins and evil deeds which he used to practise, in the past, and promises himself not to return to them again, i.e., by eradicating the impact of a deviated, psychological impulse which prevented him from expressing himself in any other way.

Third: To avoid what can be avoided of his sinful acts and fulfill what can be fulfilled of them. For instance, if he stole or transgressed against others or did an evil to others by oppressing them, it is obligatory for him either to give back what he stole to their rightful owners or to make an apology for his evils and compensate what can be compensated for the oppressed and the transgressed ... etc.

It is, also, obligatory for him to perform every neglected duty in case of being able to do so, at the time; such as, praying, fasting, pilgrimage (hajj) and filial devotion to parents..., otherwise his repentance is meaningless and there is no achievement in the realms of actions and intentions.

How delicately Imam Ali (a.s.) explains the concept of repentance. Once someone said before him: 'astaghfirullah' (I ask Allah's forgiveness), then Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

“Your mother may lose you! Do you know what 'istighfar'(asking Allah's forgiveness) is? 'Astighfar' is meant for people of a high position. It is a word that stands on six meanings.

1. To repent over the past.
2. To make a firm determination never to revert to it.
3. To discharge all the rights of the people so that you may meet Allah quite clean with nothing to account for.
4. To fulfil every obligatory which you ignored (in the past) so that you may now do justice with it.
5. To aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning, so that you may melt it by grief (of repentance) till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them.
6. To make the body taste the pain of obedience as you (previously) made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. On such occasion you may say: 'astaghfirullah' ¹

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Note

1. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 78