

OPEN ACCESS: “EPISTEMOLOGY”

eISSN: 2663-5828;pISSN: 2519-6480

Vol.13 Issue 14 December 2023

REPENTENCE: VERTEBRA OF NOBLE HUMAN LIFE

Prof. Dr. Israr Ahmamd Khan

*Department of Tafsir, Faculty of Theology, Social Sciences
University Ankara, Turkiye.*

Abstract: Human beings are intrinsically equipped with capability to do good and inclination to commit sin (The Qur’an, 91:7-8). Due to human nature of forgetfulness and love for change, men and women may fall victim to their propensity to act sinfully. This situation calls for amelioration through the process of repentance comprising several dimensions and stages. This article represents a humble endeavor to reflect on definition, significance, dimensions, conditions, and ways of execution of repentance. The methodology applied in the discussion is critical analysis. The conclusion reached in the discussion is that opportunity to repent and reform is the only opportunity to get connected with Allah, the Superbly Magnanimous (*al-Rahman*), the Sublimely Gracious (*al-Rahim*) and the only way to do away with corruption on earth.

Keywords: Doing Good, Committing Sin, Repentance, Human Nature, Critical Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The parents of entire mankind (Adam and Eve: peace be upon them) were placed in the paradise with some advice from their Creator, Allah, but they erred: “*And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers. But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from what they had been in. And we said, "Go down, as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time. (2:35-36)*¹. In these two verses one can see that both, Adam, and Eve (peace be upon them) forgot when enjoying their heavenly life in the heavenly abode the advice given to them by Allah and thereafter, they were stripped of their graceful opportunity and sent down to the earth where they realized their error. They did not know how to ameliorate the situation in their favor. At this juncture, Allah helped them. This celestial succor was the concrete form of REPENTENCE (*Tawbah*): “*Then Adam received from his Lord words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Acceptor of repentance, the Merciful*” (2:37)². Why did Adam (and his wife Eve) succumb to satanic trap and then forget the advice of Allah? Probably, Adam’s nature as human was in total commensurate with his amnesia. The Qur’an says: “*We created man out of the extract of clay*” (23:12)³. As is well known, the nature of soil is ever-changing, inconstancy, variableness, and unsteadiness hence keeps transforming its color, smell, and components. Since man originated from quintessence of earth, his nature, predisposition, propensity, preference, and proclivity keep changing from time to time with the change of time and space. These attributes of human beings lead them to alteration of ideas and actions, which may, at times, be undesirable and reprehensible. Human existence comprises a heavenly constituent (i.e., the Divine Spirit) alongside its earthly component (i.e., clay extract). It is the heavenly dimension of humans (intellectual power), which makes them realize the right and the wrong in their thoughts and practices. This realization climaxes, most of the times, with their resolve for reformation. The very first step towards repentance.

REPENTENCE: SIGNIFICANCE

The Qur’anic term for repentance is *tawbah* which literally signifies return. Due to cherishing and exercising sinful scheme an individual or group of individuals distance themselves from the praiseworthy form of relationship with the Creator, the Cherisher, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe. Thus, the intention and execution of repentance remove the distance and bring the individual concerned back to Allah. English term repentance hardly conveys the message inherent in the Arabic *tawbah*. Repentance merely denotes remorse for the wrong committed and strong wish to have never done that.

The *tawbah* is an intention and action for amelioration of situation held and carried out by humans. The term *tawbah* also applies to Allah to Whom humans return through *tawbah*. It is not only humans who tend to create distance between themselves and Allah, but it is also Allah Who maintains remoteness from sinful humans. When humans make *tawbah*, Allah eliminates the gap and renews His Connection with the individuals concerned. This is the return of Allah towards humans. In the Qur'anic term this return of Allah is but His *tawbah*: “*And He also relented towards the three whose cases had been deferred. When the earth, for all its spaciousness, became constrained to them, and their own beings became a burden to them, and they realized that there was no refuge for them from Allah except in Him; He returned towards them that they may turn back to Him. Surely, it is Allah Who is Much Returning, Ever Merciful*” (9:118)⁴. In this verse the term *tawbah* occurs twice, first from Allah (*taba ‘alayhim*) and then from humans (*li yatubu*).

Tawbah from humans means seeking forgiveness of Allah for their sins and errors, major or minor, whereas that from Allah connotes His Pleasure over human repentance and His Acceptance of human appeal for His forgiveness. Few examples from the Qur'an may suffice to corroborate the idea:

- 1) “*Thereupon Adam learned from his Lord some words and repented⁵¹ and his Lord accepted his repentance for He is Much Returning (al-Tawwab), Most Compassionate*” (2:37)⁵.
- 2) “*And remember Moses said to his people: "O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So, make tawbah to your Maker, and toil hard; that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker." Then He made tawbah towards you: For He is Oft-Returning (al-Tawwab), Most Merciful*” (2:54)⁶.
- 3) “*But whoso (a thief) repents after his wrongdoing and amends, lo! Allah will make tawbah toward him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*” (5:39)⁷.
- 4) “*And We took a covenant from the Children of Israel and sent to them many Messengers. But whenever any Messenger brought to them something that did not suit their desires, they gave the lie to some of them and killed the others, thinking that no harm would come from it. Thus, they became blind and deaf (to the Truth). Thereafter Allah turned towards them in gracious forgiveness; but many of them became even more deaf and blind (to the Truth). Allah sees all that they do*” (5:70-71)⁸.
- 5) “*Allah made tawbah (turned with favor) to the Prophet, the Muhajirs, and the Ansar, who followed him in a time of distress, after that the hearts of a part of them had almost swerved; but He made tawbah*

(turned) to them (also): for He is unto them Most Kind, Most Merciful” (9:117)⁹.

One of the countless attributes of Allah as mentioned in the first two quotations above from the Qur’an (2:37; 2:54)¹⁰ is *al-Tawwab* (Much-Returning in forgiveness), which obviously indicates to the fact that Allah is Ever-Forgiving. It means that whosoever commits sin and upon having realized his/her wrongdoing feels remorseful and seeks forgiveness of Allah is warmly welcomed by Allah’s Mercy and Grace. Thus, the sinful repents and returns to Allah Who loves those who keep returning to Him again and again: *“Indeed, Allah loves those who are constant in repentance and purify themselves (2:222)”*¹¹.

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF REPENTENCE

Repentance is not merely one single act of seeking forgiveness from Allah. It comprises four dimensions. In other words, Allah accepts repentance of the repenting only when he/she fulfills four conditions: (1) sincere return to Allah, (2) renewal of faith in Him, (3) demonstration of good deeds, and (4) consistency in following the right path. The Qur’an clearly mentions these four conditions for Allah’s acceptance of repentance: *“But I am indeed Most Forgiving to him who repents and refreshes his faith and does noble deeds and keeps to the Right path”* (20:82)¹². It is then quite pertinent to deliberate over these four conditions for Allah’s Forgiveness.

1-SINCERE RETURN TO ALLAH: This first condition as referred to in the above verse (20:82)¹³ signifies one’s realization that he/she committed wrong and strong wish to return to Allah, seeking His forgiveness for the error he/she made. When the first man and woman realized their mistake, they entreated Allah to forgive them their misdeed: *“Both cried out: ‘Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the losers”* (7:23)¹⁴. The Qur’an terms this first condition as sincere repentance (*tawbah nasuha*): *“O ye who have attained to faith, turn to Allah in sincere repentance (tawbatan nasuha); probably, your Lord will obliterate your evil deeds and admit you to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow”* (66:8)¹⁵. It is the sincere return to Allah which ensures expunge of errors committed from the record of deeds.

2-RENEWAL OF FAITH: The second obvious condition for the completion of the process of repentance is that one must further strengthen his/her belief in the fundamentals i.e., belief in Allah with all His attributes, and commands, belief in the Messenger Muhammad (s.a.w.) as the Last and True Apostle of Allah, and belief in the Day of Judgment when human deeds will be reckoned and accounted for. Keeping further strengthened the faith in Allah, His Messenger, and the Day of Judgment is to indeed protect oneself from falling victim to any kind of allurements in life. Allah commands the believers to invariably keep vigilant about the probable sources of harm to true faith. The

Qur'an invites the believers to keep refreshing their faith in these words: "*O ye who have attained to faith! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and in the Book He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and in the Last Day, has indeed strayed far away*" (4:136)¹⁶. Indeed, true, and strong faith protects one from Satanic traps.

3-COMPREHENSIVNESS IN NOBLE DEEDS: One's sincere return to Allah and renewal of faith need to reflect in life and activities. Mere intention may not suffice to authenticate the process of repentance. The Qur'an connects true faith with doing good deeds and mentions this connection hundreds of times in a way that it becomes obvious that mere claim to having faith is not reliable unless espoused by noble deeds. It is noteworthy that the Qur'an uses the term *salihat* (noble deeds) which means all that have been prescribed by Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.). Few verses may suffice to prove the idea:

- 1) "*But those who believe and do righteous deeds, He will reward them in full. Allah does not love the unjust*" (3:57)¹⁷.
- 2) "*He will grant those who have believed and done good deeds their rewards in full and will give them more out of His bounty*" (4:173)¹⁸.
- 3) "*Allah hath promised those who believe and do good works: Theirs will be forgiveness and immense reward*" (5:9)¹⁹.

In these verses the term *salihat* denotes plural form of *salih* (noble deed). It simply means that doing selective good deeds and ignoring others in the desirable noble deeds run counter to the spirit of the Qur'anic verses. Doing good deeds in every field of life, social, political, economic, cultural, educational, devotional, and intellectual is the demand of the Qur'anic phrase "*those who attain to faith and do noble deeds (salihat)*". Without perfecting this 3rd condition the authentic repentance may remain elusive.

4-CONSISTENCY IN WALKING ON THE RIGHT PATH: The 4th condition for reliable repentance is that one must be constant and regular in one's submission to Allah alone. The daily Islamic prayer (*solah*) requires recitation of the 1st Qur'anic chapter (*al-Fatihah*) which signifies pledge of allegiance to the will of Allah: "*Thee Alone we submit and Thee Alone we invoke for help*" (1:5). This pledge entails authentic information about the right path. That is why, one repeats his/her appeal to Allah in his/her prayer (*solah*): "*Show us the right path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray*" (1:6-7)²⁰.

PROBABLE CATEGORIES OF ERRORS

Significance of repentance, amelioration, reformation, and continuation on the right track could fully be grasped in the light of knowledge of the categories of errors in life. To understand these categories, one needs to take into consideration five categories of rights: (1) rights of Allah, (2) rights

of society, (3) rights of human self, (4) rights of other creatures including animals, and (5) rights of the environment. An error which requires repentance and amelioration might be in relation to any of these rights.

1-RIGHTS OF ALLAH: Rights of the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe are countless. To believe in the oneness of His Entity, in the uniqueness of His Powers, in the exclusiveness of His Commands, and in the comprehensiveness of human submission to Him, all these constitute the rights of Allah. An aberration in any of these rights is a blatant error for which repentance needs to be in place. Only one Qur’anic phrase—“*Submit to Allah and ascribe no partner to Him*” (4:36)²¹—may suffice to thoroughly describe the rights of Allah. The entire universe, heavenly objects: sun, moon, galaxies, and earthly phenomena: waters, lands, woods, valleys, trees, mountains, animals, wind, precious deposits, life resources etc. submit exclusively to Allah. Innumerable humans and Jinn also submit to Him. But many humans and Jinn ascribe partner to Allah. Ascribing partner to Allah is a gross error on the part of Humans and Jinn concerned. The Qur’anic term for such error is *shirk* which is in total in contrast with submission to Allah alone. This situation entails repentance and amelioration.

2-RIGHTS OF SOCIETY: The Qur’an describes many rights of society for individuals. One single verse (4:36) may suffice to grasp the idea concerning social rights on individuals: “*Treat excellently your parents, near of kin, orphans, the needy, the neighbor who is of kin and the neighbor who is a stranger, to the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful.*” The excellent treatment of all members of society (parents, relatives, neighbors, spouses, friends, companions, poor people, and the unfortunate) is the right of every individual in society to be sincerely fulfilled by others. Non-excellent treatment of society by individuals constitutes an error which needs amelioration through repentance.

Dreading consequences of dishonoring rights of society can be reckoned from a highly authentic report on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, a Companion that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “The pauper of my community is the one who carries with him on the Day of Judgment good deeds, but since he reviled someone, levelled against someone false accusation, embezzled in someone’s wealth, killed someone unjustly, and hit someone violently, his good deeds would be distributed among the victims whose evil deeds will be given to him, and he would be consigned to hellfire” (Muslim, Sahih, Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah, Bab Tahrim al-Zulm, Hadith No. 2581). If the wrong doer wishes to be exonerated from the humiliating end-result on the Day of Reckoning, he/she must repent, ameliorate, and reform before the death overtake him/her in the worldly span of life. In case he/she reaches the life hereafter without having been forgiven by Allah in response to his/her sincere

repentance and resolve to ameliorate the situation, there will be no escape from the painful end.

3-RIGHTS OF HUMAN SELF: Every human individual has natural right to live, seek knowledge, earn, marry, enjoy, and express. Any hindrance or suppression of any of these rights may cause mischief in society. Such a society beset with mischief deprives individuals of his/her freedom to live, earn, marry, and enjoy. The Qur'an condemns those who endeavor to create mischief in the land: "*And seek not spread of mischief in the land, for Allah does not love those who seek mischief*" (28:77)²². Whether individuals singly or collectively spread corruption on earth to hinder the development of other individuals, it is an unjustifiable act.

4-RIGHTS OF OTHER CREATURES: The earth is inhabited by several known and unknown creatures including animals, domestic or free. Birds, cattle, and other categories of animals have the right to live and grow. Humans are required to honor their rights. The Qur'an categorically exhorts mankind to take care of their domesticated animals: "*He it is Who spread the earth for you; and made in it paths for you, and sent down water from the sky, and then through it We brought forth many species of diverse plants. So, eat yourself and pasture your cattle. Surely there are many Signs in this for intellectuals*" (20:53-54)²³. The countless species of plants grown on the earth due to rainwater which serve as sources of sustenance for both humans and animals must be taken care of by humans. Destruction of these sources of sustenance is tantamount to the destruction of both human species and animal species. In modern times, bombardment of crops, trees, and plants with a view to causing starvation of both humans and animals must be counted an unpardonable act of destruction. Those responsible for this heinous crime must return to their Creator, seeking His forgiveness.

5-RIGHTS OF ENVIRONMENT: There is a deeply rooted connection between humans and their physical surroundings comprising plants, trees, waters, wind, and other creatures including animals. A wholesome ecological environment ensures healthy survival of human individuals. Ecological disbalance on the earth due to indiscriminate felling of trees and plants, emission of deadly gases from factories, dumping of industrial chemical waste in oceans, and construction of skyscrapers on hills and sea beaches keeps dragging human habitats to irreparable doom. Destroying human ecosystem is to destroy human opportunity to live happily. Today, ecosystem stands sacrificed at the alter of commercial considerations. Such a destruction of the environment might not appear unlawful and sinful act. But keeping in view the ultimate hazard caused to humanity, it must be considered an evil deed, rather a criminal act, indeed. Those responsible for eco-imbalance must be invited repent and reform.

WAYS AND FORMS OF REPENTENCE

As has been seen above, humans have an inborn tendency of forgetfulness and infatuation towards change in life and activities. So, driven by these two traits men and women succumb to the trap of Satanic forces and commit errors, major or minor. After committing evil deeds, humans by nature realize that what they did was wrong and against human nature. This realization leads them to rectify their wrong doings through the process of repentance. The Qur'an describes human tendency and inclination towards seeking forgiveness from Allah in these words.

- 1) *“And those who, having done something shameful, or wronged their own souls, remember Allah, and ask for forgiveness for their sins. And who can forgive sins except Allah? And they never persist knowingly in what they have done” (3:135)²⁴.*
- 2) *“He who does either evil or wrongs himself, and then asks for the forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate” (4:110).*
- 3) *“And when those come to you who believe in Our verses, say, “Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy: that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself - indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful” (6:54)²⁵.*

These verses mention general principles of repentance and its acceptance by Allah. One may feel curious about concrete steps to be taken in the process of repentance. Here are the most desirable ways to repent and reform.

1-OBSERVANCE OF SPECIAL SOLAH: The Qur'an repeatedly invites human individuals and nations to entreat Allah in all situations. When someone does anything wrong to an individual or a group of individuals and later realizes his/her mistake, the only idea which flashes his/her mind is that he/she must apologize to the victim or victims of his/her abuse. Similarly, after having committed evils which incur wrath of Allah, the evil doer must realize his/her errors and turn to Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Sublimely Gracious with an intention to appeal His Mercy to forgive his/her errors. The Qur'an introduces to Allah the Unseen for mankind through, among others, two most essential attributes, the Most Benevolent (*al-Rahman*) and the Sublimely Gracious (*al-Rahim*). The former refers to Allah as the Only One Who grants mankind His Favours without having been requested, and the latter signifies that Allah is the Only One Who grants mankind all that it appeals for, including His Pardon for its wrong doings. Men and women are well-aware that there is no other option except turning to Allah to get their sins expunged from their deeds-record. The highly recommended way for humans to contact Allah is observance of *solah* for supplication to forgive their faults. Observance of *solah* is the most suitable method to enter dialogue with Allah Who Himself recommended it for the Last of His Messengers (peace be upon

them): *“Indeed, there is ease with hardship. Most certainly, there is ease with hardship. So, whenever you are free, stand in devotion, turning to your Lord with volition”* (94:5-8)²⁶. In these verses Allah also taught the entire mankind to turn to Allah in complete devotion (in the form of *solah*), seeking His blessings. Seeking Allah’s forgiveness is surely to seek His blessings.

It is reported on the authority of Abu Bakr al-Siddique that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “There is none who commits sin, performs ablution in the best way, thereafter, observes two cycles of *solah*, and beseeches Allah for forgiveness, but Allah does not forgive him/her for his/her sin” (Abu Da’ud, Sunan, Kitab Tafri’ Abwab al-Witr, Bab fi al-Istighfar, Hadith No. 1521)²⁷. It is not only once that one should offer prayer (*solat al-tawbah*) but it needs to be observed again and again whenever one is earnestly inclined towards Allah, the Sublimely Gracious. Recurrence of repentance prayer will prove beyond doubt the sincerity of the person concerned towards forgiveness of Allah.

2-CONSTANT INVOCATION FOR FORGIVENESS: Bending and prostrating before Allah in prayers are the two positions when the person is very close to Allah; so, the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) advised his followers to utilize this opportunity to invoke a lot Allah’s mercy (Muslim, Sahih, Kitab al-Solah, Bab ma Yuqalu fi al-Ruku’ wa al-Sujud, on the authority of Abu Harayrah, Hadith No, 482)²⁸. It is then highly advisable to seek Allah’s forgiveness in the above-mentioned two states in *solah*. It is to be borne in mind that the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) himself paid special attention to seeking Allah’s forgiveness when bending and prostrating. On the authority of Syedah ‘A’ishah it is reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) would make *du’a* in the state of bending and prostrating: *“subhanaka Allahumma Rabbana wa bi hamdika Allahumma ighfir li”* {Glory be to You O Allah, our Lord, O Allah, forgive me out of Your Great Favor} (Abu Da’ud, Sunan, Kitab al-Solah, bab fi al-Du’a fi al-Ruku’ wa al-Sujud, Hadith No. 877)²⁹.

The Qur’an eulogizes intellectuals because of their capability to observe keenly natural phenomena, their ever readiness to remember Allah’s powers and blessings, and their earnest appeal to Allah to save them from being doomed in the life hereafter: *“Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding. those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or (reclining) on their backs, and reflect in the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): ‘Our Lord! You have not created this in vain. Glory to You! Save us, then, from the chastisement of the Fire’”* (3:190-191)³⁰. So, who are the intellectuals? They are the ones who are ever conscious of what they do in their daily life, realize immediately the error on their part if they commit anything wrong, bring to their mind powers and blessings of Allah, and keep feeling very much concerned about their fate in the life hereafter. The seekers of Allah’s forgiveness must be counted among the intellectuals. It is because

seeking forgiveness of Allah is a consciously intellectual act of remembering Allah. The above verses (3:190-191)³¹ mention that intellectuals remember Allah in all situations, standing, walking, sitting, and reclining. It may then be derived from these verses that those desirous of seeking Allah's forgiveness need to do so day in day out in all conditions, sitting, reclining, standing, and walking.

The Qur'an teaches mankind to always seek forgiveness and grace of Allah: "*And say: "My Lord, forgive us and shower us with Grace, for You are the Best of those that are gracious"*" (23:118)³². The original Arabic text to be uttered time and again as transliterated in Roman is: "*Rabbighfir warham wa anta khair al-rahimin*". This phrase of seeking forgiveness of Allah needs to be uttered as many times as possible day and night. It is to be remembered here that this phrase was originally for the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) and thus through him for the entire mankind including his followers who are but intellectuals.

3-BRINGING TO CONSCIOUSNESS THE DAY OF RECKONING: The most important factors to ensure righteousness in one's life are (1) sincerity of commitment to Allah, and (2) awareness of the life hereafter. The fact is that the awareness of the life hereafter where none, but Allah will be the Authority (*Maliki yawm al-din—1:4*) serves as continuous reminder to men and women of the nature of what they do and of what they should do to avoid the painful end. The Qur'an reminds the entire mankind that they need not to be apprehensive of punishment on the Day of Judgment if they are loyal to Allah, have clear concept of hereafter, and do always noble deeds: "*Whether they are the ones who believe or whether they are Jews, Christians or Sabians – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and do righteous deeds – their reward is surely secure with their Lord; they need have no fear, nor shall they grieve*" (2:62)³³. The constant consciousness of the Day of Judgment protects one from doing anything wrong and if he/she commits any sin, immediately realizes his/her error, and turns to Allah to seek His forgiveness. The Qur'an inculcates the mankind to invariably invoke Allah to grant them the best in this worldly life and the best in the life hereafter: "*And there are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us the best in this world and the best in the Hereafter and protect us from the torment of the Fire"*" (2:201)³⁴. Indeed, the noble deeds in worldly life usher to the noble end in the life hereafter and protect one from the tragic end.

4-DOING COMPENSATORY NOBLE DEEDS: Noble deeds ensure Allah's forgiveness and endless mighty rewards. The Qur'an counts ten comprehensive noble deeds which bring the two favors from Allah: "*Surely, the men who submit (to Allah) and the women who submit (to Allah), the men who have faith and the women who have faith, the men who are obedient and the women who are obedient, the men who are truthful and*

*the women who are truthful; the men who are steadfast and the women who are steadfast, the men who humble themselves (to Allah) and the women who humble themselves (to Allah), the men who give alms and the women who give alms, the men who fast and the women who fast, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah much: for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and endless mighty reward” (33:35)³⁵. This verse counts ten noble deeds in the form of human attributes which signify continuing and lasting mode of behavior i.e., the people, male or female, are easily recognized through their well-known noble qualities in their personal and social life. For example, one of the ten qualities (the 4th one) as mentioned in the verse (33:35)³⁶ is truthfulness (*wa al-sadiqin wa al-sadiqat*: the men who are truthful and the women who are truthful), which means that the people are known for their honesty on all occasions, and society cannot, therefore, think about them otherwise.*

The 7th quality mentioned in the verse (33:35) is almsgiving (*wa al-mutasaddiqin wa al-mutasaddiqat*: the men who give alms and the women who give alms) which is highly appreciable in the eyes of Allah. Financial succor to the needy, particularly among the close relatives, is the 3rd obligation after doing justice to the people and treating them excellently: “*Surely, Allah commands to do justice, treat people excellently and provide financial help to kith and kin, and forbids all that is behaviorally shameful, logically horrible, and socially mutinous. He exhorts you so that you may be mindful” (16:90)³⁷. It is noteworthy here in this verse that the mention of three obligations and three prohibitions together connotes mutual link among the two categories of acts, one noble and the other condemnable. The link is that obligatory acts are impossible to be in place in the presence of prohibited traits in one’s character. The prohibited thoughts and activities will continue to stain one’s life unless removed through the process of repentance which will surely cause the obligatory thoughts and activities to flourish.*

The Qur’an time and again describes two categories of deeds as highly praiseworthy: (1) *taqwa* (piety)— “*Verily, Allah loves the pious people” (3:76; 9:4)³⁸; and (2) *ihsan* (excellence)— “*and treat others excellently as Allah indeed loves excellently generous people” (2:195; 5:93)³⁹. *Taqwa* and *Ihsan* are comprehensive terms covering almost all good deeds, such as charity work, controlling anger, forgiving others, and keeping promises etc. By dint of continual demonstration of *taqwa* and *ihsan* in life men and women may deserve special favors from Allah, forgiveness, and hefty rewards. It is not appropriate to consider seeking Allah’s forgiveness only once as sufficient. One is rather required to continuously struggle in earning Allah’s favors more and more. Only then there is a possibility of a blissful life. The entire Qur’an reiterates significance of enduring noble acts in the eyes of Allah. One**

example from the Qur'an may suffice to bring the idea home: *"The believers have indeed attained true success: those who, in their Prayers, humble themselves, who avoid whatever is vain and frivolous, who observe charity work, who strictly guard their private parts"* (23:1-5)⁴⁰. As a matter of fact, regular observance of solah, abstinence from frivolous acts, helping the needy, and safeguarding chastity are noble deeds which enable men and women to reach the point of Allah's forgiveness and mighty rewards.

5-INVOKING ALLAH TO BLESS OTHERS WITH FAVORS:

Unfortunate are those who hardly stretch their hands to Allah, seeking His blessings. And flagrantly unlucky are those who never bother to think to invoke Allah's mercy in someone else favor, neighbors, relatives, friends, children, spouses, teachers, students, shopkeepers, customers, elders in society etc. The Qur'an exhorts mankind to treat their old parents excellently and invoke Allah's mercy in their favor: *"Your Lord has decreed: Do not worship any but Him; Be good to your parents; and should both or any one of them attain old age with you, do not say to them even "fie" neither chide them, but speak to them with respect, and be humble and tender to them and say: "Lord, show mercy to them as they nurtured me when I was small"* (17:23-24)⁴¹. Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is quoted by the Qur'an to have prayed on several occasions, not only for himself but also for his parents, his descendants, for the believers in general, and for the Arabs:

- 1) *"And when Abraham prayed: "O my Lord! Make this a place of security and provide those of its people with fruits for sustenance"* (2:126)⁴².
- 2) *"Our Lord! Make us submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits itself to You, and show us the ways of Your worship, and turn to us in mercy. You are Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate"* (2:128)⁴³.
- 3) *"Our Lord! Raise up from our offspring a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your verses, and instruct them in the Book and in Wisdom, and purify their lives. Verily, You are the Most Mighty, the Most Wise"* (2:129)⁴⁴.
- 4) *"My Lord! Enable me and my offspring to establish Prayer, and do accept, our Lord, this prayer of mine"* (14:40)⁴⁵.
- 5) *"Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day when the reckoning will take place"* (14:40).

Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is a role model for the entire mankind: *"You have a good example in Abraham and his companions"* (60:4)⁴⁶. His stand concerning invoking Allah's blessing for others must be imitated by all men and women.

Seeking Allah's favor for others is highly valuable. It is reported on the authority of Abu Darda' that the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) said that when a Muslim

prays to Allah to grant another Muslim good, the angel says that the same good for him too (Muslim, Sahih, Kitab al-Zikr wa al-Du'a, Bab Fadl al-Du'a li al-Muslimin bi Zahr al-Ghayb, Hadith Nos. 2732-2733)⁴⁷.

CONCLUSION

Human beings represent both heavenly qualities (viz, *taqwa* and *ihsan*) and earthly traits (viz, *fujur*: evil doings). Committing *fujur* needs not to continue in one's life. Those who succumb to evil doings must realize that occurrence and continuation of sinful acts would deprive them of their innate heavenly qualities. This realization must lead them to turning to Allah seeking His forgiveness through a process known as repentance (*tawbah*) which comprises four stages: (1) turning to Allah to express remorsefulness, (2) renewing their sincerity to Allah, (3) performing good deeds afresh, and (4) remaining steadfast on the right path. The process of repentance calls for total submission to Allah. The repentant is required to seek forgiveness of Allah for the wrongs he/she might have done concerning five categories of rights: (1) rights of Allah, (2) rights of society, (3) rights of the self, (4) rights of other creatures including animals, and (5) rights of environment. The penitence, indeed, is a process of overhauling human behavior, which needs to be executed at every level, family, school, society, mosque, market, commercial center, and office. The sincere implementation of the process of *tawbah* will certainly eradicate corruption and mischief (*fasad*) from the land.

¹ Al Quran 2:35-36

² Al Quran 2:37

³ Al Quran 23:12

⁴ Al Quran 9:118

⁵ Al Quran 9:118

⁶ Al Quran 2:54

⁷ Al Quran 5:39

⁸ Al Quran 5:70-71

⁹ Al Quran 9:117

¹⁰ Al Quran 2:37; 2:54

¹¹ Al Quran 2:222

¹² Al Quran 20:82

¹³ Al Quran 20:82

¹⁴ Al Quran 7:23

¹⁵ Al Quran 66:8

¹⁶ Al Quran 4:136

¹⁷ Al Quran 3:57

- ¹⁸ Al Quran 4:173
¹⁹ Al Quran 5:9
²⁰ Al Quran 1:6-7
²¹ Al Quran 4:36
²² Al Quran 28:77
²³ Al Quran 20:53-54
²⁴ Al Quran 3:135
²⁵ Al Quran 6:54
²⁶ Al Quran 94:5-8
²⁷ Abu Da'ud, Sunan, Kitab Tafri' Abwab al-Witr, Bab fi al-Istighfar, Hadith No. 1521
²⁸ Muslim, Sahih, Kitab al-Solah, Bab ma Yuqalu fi al-Ruku' wa al-Sujud, on the authority of Abu Harayrah, Hadith No, 482
²⁹ Abu Da'ud, Sunan, Kitab al-Solah, bab fi al-Du'a fi al-Ruku' wa al-Sujud, Hadith No. 877
³⁰ Al Quran 3:190-191
³¹ Al Quran 3:190-191
³² Al Quran 23:118
³³ Al Quran 2:62
³⁴ Al Quran 2:201
³⁵ Al Quran 33:35
³⁶ Al Quran 33:35
³⁷ Al Quran 16:90
³⁸ Al Quran 3:76; 9:4
³⁹ Al Quran 3:76; 9:4
⁴⁰ Al Quran 23:1-5
⁴¹ Al Quran 17:23-24
⁴² Al Quran 2:126
⁴³ Al Quran 2:128
⁴⁴ Al Quran 2:129
⁴⁵ Al Quran 14:40
⁴⁶ Al Quran 60:4
⁴⁷ Muslim, Sahih, Kitab al-Zikr wa al-Du'a, Bab Fadl al-Du'a li al-Muslimin bi Zahr al-Ghayb, Hadith Nos. 2732-2733