

Friday 6th October 2006

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ أَنْفُسِنَا
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Praise be to **الله**.

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our bad deeds. Whomever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whomever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

I testify that there is no God but **الله** to whom there is no partner

and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

"And seek Tawbah and return unto Allah together, O believers, in order that you may be successful" (S24, A31)

Brothers and sisters, it is unbelievable that Ramadan is almost two weeks in. We are now in the middle ten days, the days of "maghfira", the days of seeking the forgiveness of Allah, and seeking "Tawbah". This is the month of forgiveness, so waste no time.

Allah^(SWT) in this aya is addressing the believers and is telling them to seek Tawbah. Tawbah in this aya is expressed as an order, in a sense it is expressed as a "Fard" and is therefore obligatory. Just as much as it is obligatory for us perform "salat" and "siyam", we are also asked in this aya to seek Tawbah. So, what do we understand by Tawbah, and why is it obligatory?

Allah^(SWT) States in the Holy Quran:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

"And I created the jinn and mankind only that they may worship Me" (S51, A56)

Muslims are fully aware that the sole purpose of our existence is to worship our creator, our Lord. Muslims have no difficulties or conflicts with this relationship. Our minds are not in turmoil because we have to worship Allah, and our hearts are not in despair. In fact, our minds and hearts are at ease with this relationship, because we know that this relationship is essentially for our own benefit. This is what the Holy Quran tells us:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ ﴿٢﴾

"And observe your duty to Allah, and Allah will teach you" (S2, A282)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾

"And whosoever keeps his duty to Allah, Allah will appoint a way out for him" (S65, A2)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيُخْرِجْهُ مِنْ أَرْضٍ مِمَّنْ يَسْرًا ﴿٤﴾

"And whosoever keeps his duty to Allah, Allah will make their path easy" (S65, A4)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيُخْرِجْهُ مِنْ أَرْضٍ مِمَّنْ يَسْرًا وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا ﴿٥﴾

"And whosoever keeps his duty to Allah, Allah will remit from him his evil deeds and magnify his reward" (S65, A5)

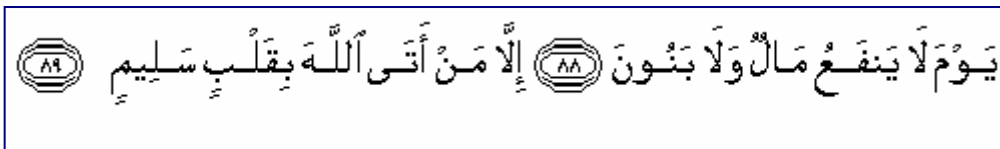
Muslims know that in fulfilling this relationship we succeed in this life and in the hereafter. This understanding is unique to those who truly believe in Allah^(SWT) and

submit to him willingly and knowingly. Muslims also know that when we submit to Allah^(SWT) everything we do becomes an act of worship. The manner we relate to each other becomes an act of worship, the way we work becomes an act of worship, even the way we drive and the way we park become an act of worship.

Muslims, however, are usually familiar with the obligatory acts of worship of praying, fasting, giving Zakat and performing Hajj. These are considered as conspicuous, open acts of worship that demand a physical component that others may witness. So it is not surprising that Muslims tend to associate worship with these obligatory acts only. Muslims may feel that if they perform these obligatory worships, they have worshiped Allah as is needed.

However, it may surprise you that these obligatory acts are not the *only* acts of worship in Islam. There are many *inconspicuous* acts of worship that have no physical element which others can witness because they are conducted in ones heart. In Arabic, the terms used are "Dhahira", conspicuous and "Battinah" which means internal and inconspicuous. In this context, "Battina" means of the heart.

We tend to forget, or probably ignore, these acts of worship. This is not surprising because, as the term implies, they are done inconspicuously. As the term implies, we do not witness each other performing them. When a brother or a sister comes to pray, this may give us a reminder and encouragement for us to do the same. But how do we tell when one of us is being remorseful or is seeking Tawbah. These acts of worship by their nature are inconspicuous and it is important for us to remind each other of how important they are. It is through these acts of worship that we are able to clean our hearts, and it is our hearts that Allah^(SWT) will look at on the day of judgement.

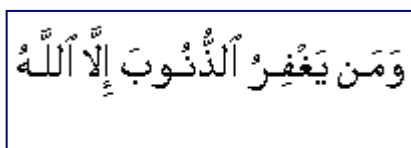


"The Day whereon neither wealth nor children will avail, but only he that brings to Allah a sound heart (free from evil)" (S26, A88-9)

It is important for us to know how to clean our hearts so as on the day of judgement we can go to Allah and say, here we are, we have come to You with a sound heart.

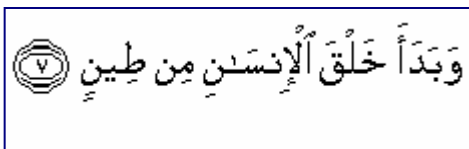
One of the acts of worship that can clean our hearts is Tawbah. Indeed, Tawbah may be one of the most important acts of worship of the heart, and it is probably the first step in returning to Allah^(SWT).

What does Tawbah mean? We understand Tawbah as abstaining from sin and asking forgiveness from Allah. It is probably understood as repentance. However, the word Tawbah in Arabic does not mean repentance. It actually means to *"return back"*. Tawbah literally means returning back to Allah^(SWT). It is returning back to our creator and back to the straight path of Allah, for who else can forgive our transgressions?

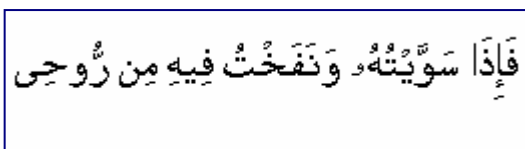


"And who can forgive sins but Allah" (S3, A135)

Tawbah should be considered as a great gift and blessing from Allah to us. As humans, all of us tend to lose our ways now and again, some more so than others. To err and to sin is only human. It is part of our makeup, which is described in the Holy Quran:



"And He began the creation of mankind from clay" (S2, A7)



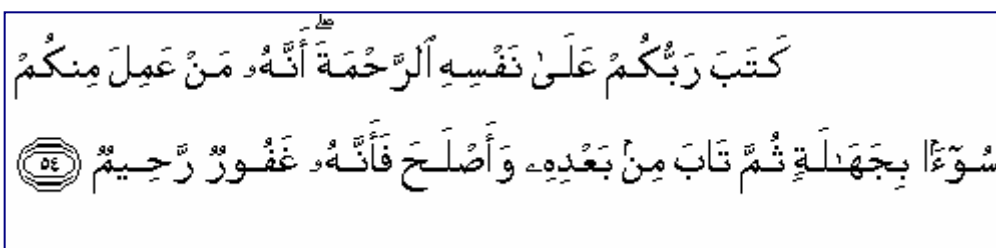
"When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit" (S15, A29)

Mankind has been created from earth, and then Allah tells us in that creation is a breath of Spirit. From these ayas, scholars suggest that mankind has two tendencies related to his dual creation. We are either drawn downwards when we promote our earthly desires and needs, or lifted upwards when we promote our spirit.

There is however no escape that the clay in us will occasionally overcome the spirit, and we will err. It is not surprising that humans, and that includes Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists and every human being will sin. What is surprising however is that some are prepared to indulge and persist in a path of sin.

What would have been our position if there was no way back? Imagine an existence without "maghfirah" or "tawbah". It would have been a disaster. Unfortunately, brothers and sisters, some people do believe that this is the case. They feel that once they have committed a sin, there is no way back for them, there is no "maghfirah" and there is no "tawbah". They give up hope in Allah's forgiveness, and give in to further sin. This is exactly what shaitan wants us to believe.

Listen to what Allah tells us in the Quran:



"Your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts righteously, then He is Forgiving, Merciful" (S6, A54)

And now listen to what the Quran tells us about satan:

إِذَّمَا أَسْتَرَلَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ
بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا وَتَقَدَّ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

"It was Satan who caused them to fail, because of some (sins) they had done. But Allah Has blotted out (their sins): For Allah is Forgiving, Most Forbearing" (S3, A155)

Satan will remind us of our sins to make us slip again and again, but Allah assures us that He will blot our sins if we seek a sincere "Tawbah". There is your choice brothers and sisters, and you chose your path.

Allah^(SWT) in His infinite mercy has given us the path of Tawbah, the path to return back to Him. Allah^(SWT) wants us to return to Him, and He has guided us accordingly. Allah tells us in the Holy Quran after Adam has sinned, Allah in His mercy taught Adam the words to seek Tawbah, and Allah mercifully accepted Adam back:

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

"Then Adam received from his Lord words, and He turned to him mercifully. Surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful" (S2, A37)

Listen to what Adam and Hawa' said:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا
وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

"They said: Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves: If You forgive us not and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers" (S7, A23)

The message is clear. Allah wants us back and Allah has given us the path to Tawbah. However, when we read these ayas, some may believe that Tawbah is to simply declare that you have erred or sinned, hope for the best and leave things as they are, only to sin again, and go through the same process over and over. This is not the Tawbah that Islam teaches. This type of behaviour is called "nifaq", or hypocrisy. Brothers and sisters, to simply declare in our Du'a that we have wronged ourselves without acting on it is not considered a sincere Tawbah, and will achieve little.

There are defined rules for seeking Tawbah, and returning back to Allah. Tawbah has four important steps that need to be fulfilled as we seek to return to Allah, and return to the straight path, and as we seek to clean our hearts.

Firstly one must recognise and regret that he has sinned:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا

They said: Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves

Secondly, one has to refrain from the act of sinning, and thirdly, one must be determined not to return to sinning.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ
لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"Except for those who repent, mend (their lives) hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah's sight: if so they will be with the believers" (S4, A146)

And finally one must seek the forgiveness from Allah for his or her sins:

وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

If You forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers

These are the rules for “tawbah”. Brothers and sisters, every time we sin and transgress, we burden our selves and we burden our hearts. In a hadeeth saheeh, the Prophet^(SAAWS) tells us that every time a person sins, a black blemish is imprinted in that person's heart. If the person repents and seeks forgiveness, his heart is cleansed, and the blemish is blotted out.

Every time we sin, a black blemish is imprinted, and if we persist in sinning our hearts will become increasingly burdened, until all these black blemishes take over our hearts and our hearts become as the Holy Quran describes:

كَأَلَّا بَلَّ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Nay, but on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they have earned" (S83, A14)

Brothers and sisters, repenting from sin and seeking forgiveness is obligatory in Islam. Allah has blessed us with the path back to Him, and promised us His support as we seek his forgiveness:

ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"Then He turned to them (mercifully) that they may turn (to Him); surely Allah is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful" (S9, A118)

This Holy month of Ramadan is a wonderful blessing from Allah asking us to return to him. Let us clean our hearts and better ourselves. Let us show others what Islam is all about. We have no excuse not to seek Tawbah. It even gets better when we read that if we truly seek a sincere Tawbah, our sins are not only blotted out, but they are even turned into "Hassanaat":

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ
اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

"Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (S25, A70)

Some minor sins may be forgiven by our daily acts of worship, doing good deeds, attending the Jum'a prayers, fasting Ramadan and so forth. These acts of worship will ISA wipe our minor sins away as long as we avoid the bigger sins and as long as we do not persist with the minor sins.

However, the bigger sins, "Al-Kaba'er", need a Tawbah. These sins need a Tawbah that is sincere, a Tawbah that shows regret and shows determination in repenting and a Tawbah that seeks the forgiveness of Allah, and we all know how forgiving Allah is. This is the Tawbah that is described in the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا

"O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance" (S66, A8)

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفرُ الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ . الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا . أَمَا بَعْدُ :

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوْبُوْا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُكَفِّرَ
عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهَارُ
يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعَى
بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا اِنَّكَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٨﴾

"O ye who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow. On the Day that Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their Light will run forward before them and by their right hands, while they shall say, "Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us, and grant us Forgiveness: for You has power over all things" (S66, A8)

Brothers and sisters, we have no time to waste. This is the month of "Tawbah". We need to seek Tawbah to Allah. We need to clean our hearts from those dark spots before our hearts become so heavy with them. Time is passing us by, and we may not see the light of another day, or another Ramadan. Hasten to a forgiveness from Allah, and do not dwell in the hope of eternal existence.

The door back to Allah is always open. The path back to Allah is clear. Let us seek Tawbah to Allah, and let us openly help each other in the process.

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ﴿٥﴾

"And help you one another unto righteousness and piety, and help not one another unto sin and transgression" (S5, A2)