

## What is the sincere repentance (tawbah nasuh)?

By *Hussein*

Created 30.09.09

### What is the sincere repentance (tawbah nasuh)?

Wed, 30/09/2009 - 15:10 |  Hussein

#### A Brief Description of the Question:

God Almighty declares in the surah At-Tahrīm (Holding (Something) to be Forbidden) in the eighth verse: “O ye who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your evil deeds and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow”. What is the meaning of sincere repentance in the verse?

#### The Answer:

Nasuh is the exaggeration mode of the word nush. It means to give advice a lot. **The repentance is described as something giving advice a lot. That is to say, it recommends its holder to leave his sin, removes him from the evil deeds, and tells him to turn to Allah with sincere repentance.** Thus, sincere repentance is: Leaving the sin; Remorse over the sins committed; Resolving never to return to sins; If it is related to the rights of another person, then, returning the rights or property one took. 4

Our prophet defines the sincere repentance as: **feeling remorse, seeking an absolute refuge in Allah and not returning to it again just as there is no return for the milk into the udder.** (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 1/446)

Ghazali described repentance as follows: Those asking Allah His forgiveness with sincere repentance are the ones showing persistence in their vows until they are dead. They make up their mistakes in the past and never think of repeating the same sin, except for lapses and slips. It is the resolution in repentance. They are the people whose sins are turned to virtues by Allah, and who compete for good deeds. 5

2.The conditions for the repentance being accepted:

**That Allah acclaims those turning to Him in repentance (the Quran, Repentance (At-Tawbah) 9/112) and says He likes the people knocking the gates to repentance is a proof that repentances are to be accepted by Him. (the Quran, the Heifer (Al-Baqarah 2/222)**

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) tells how Allah becomes joyful when His servants seeks his forgiveness with the following analogy.: **‘When a servant of Allah returns to Him and repents, Allah becomes happier than a traveler who loses his mount which has all his belongings and provisions on and then resorts to the shade of tree after losing all hope only to wake up and find his mount staring in his face, and then out of joy and happiness erroneously says: ‘OAllah! You are my servant and I am your Lord.’ (Bukhari, Muslim) (Bukhari, Daawat 4; Muslim, Tawbah 3).** As it is emphasized above, Allah’s joy is more than that of a man losing his camel and then finding it again when His servants turn to Him.

There are some requirements for repentance to be accepted by Allah. However, those requirements show differences depending on the type of wrongdoing committed. It is very important to know against whom it is committed at the time of seeking forgiveness of Allah. Therefore, we can divide it into two:

A. The sins involving God’s due: there are three stipulations in order to repent of the sins relating to His rights.

1) Remorse over having committed the sin; there occurs a sense of uneasiness and penitence within the conscience of man when it is come to a decision that the sin committed is a misdeed and harms the relations between Allah and His servant.

The servant transgressing will stand before the gate of repentance in a state jerking out of the perturbation and lurching with penitence and having a prudent heart and soul. 7 The perturbation mentioned is an element encouraging man to repent.

Penitence is the first condition of repentance. As a matter of fact, our prophet said **that repentance is feeling remorse in order to emphasize it.** (Ibn Majah, Zuhd 30; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 1/376, 423). To feel remorse is repentance itself. Repentance is impossible without having deep regretful feelings.

2) Abandoning the sin that is repented: Penitence cannot only be confined to the heart and neither is it a creep, recoil nor is a spiritual repentance in the form of weeping. That is to say, it is not only composed of some sorts of inner feelings. Rather, it is a process during which some actions are constructed on internal sensations. For instance, the person seeking repentance must give up the wrongdoing (8), live up to Allah’s orders as far as he can (9), and should not continue the sin that is repented. 10. Should he happen to keep committing the sin even though he has repented, he will fall into a contradiction with himself. Such a manner is not going to comply with the repentance and the vow not to repeat that sin. On the other hand, abandoning the sin immediately is going to be an indication of his repentance and decisiveness not to go back to the same sin again.

3) Resolve not to repeat the sin that is repented: The person who has turned to Allah with repentance because of his past sins should be strong-willed not to commit the same sin again so that he will repent truly. (11). Repentance and decisiveness for not repeating the same sin will be known with their true meaning merely by Allah as they are related to the heart. Therefore, it will not be known by people about who truthfully has repented. (12) The person should promise Allah not to commit the same sin again so that it will have the true essence of penitence. (13)

b- The sins that involve the rights of other men: there are four conditions for making tawbah for the sins involving other people’s rights. The fourth stipulation, apart from the three conditions stated above, is that it is compulsory that the rights be restored to the people and he has to ask for forgiveness from the person whose right is violated. If those rights are in the form of property, then he may encounter the following possibilities:

1. The grabbed possessions should be given back if they are still available and their true owner is known. 14. At this point it is not sufficient to conceal the sin and repent only.

2. If the stolen belongings are at the hands of the thief and yet their true possessor is not known, then those belongings should be given out as alms and he should not keep them any more. 15

3. If a man wronged the others in the past years and their true holders are not known, then he should give the equal amount of money to charity.

4. If the possessions the wrongdoer has are not fungible goods and if their value can be estimated and if he has enough money, he should give its equivalent to their owner. 16 If he cannot pay for them, he should intend to give them back when he has enough money. We can expect of Allah’s forgiveness for the person that tries to restore the properties to their true owners as far as he can even if he finally fails. 17

5. A man who is not sure how much of his own material goods is mixed with what is forbidden picks a quantity of sum in accordance with his own assumption and gives alms intending getting rid of the rights of other people. 18

If the sinner seeks the pardon of his Lord and carries out those conditions, Allah will accept his repentance and will be ashamed to punish the repentant.

### 3. Time factor in penitence:

The sins are hurdles in the path going to Allah. The sinner is similar to a person who has got poisoned. Just as it is so perilous to waste time for a poisoned person, so too is it very risky for a man committing sins to delay his repentance.

A believer who has just sinned will be very irritated out of his sin as a result of his trust in God and will seek out ways to be removed from that sin. There is concurrence of opinion about the fact that it is fard to ask for Allah’s forgiveness just following the sin committed. In addition, those holding their penitence in delay get sins due to delaying it. 19

According to Ghazali, once the man realizes what he has done is a sin, he is to feel remorse and cleanse its effect with a good deed. Otherwise, the wrongdoings will dwell in his heart and their removal is going to be impossible. 20

**Thus, in a hadith, it is said, “when the servant commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart, and if he seeks forgiveness, that black spot is removed, and if he returns to sin, the black spot grows.....”(Ibn Majah, Zuhd 29)**

The following hadith illuminates us about the last time for penitence: **“Allah, the Lord of honor and glory, will accept the repentance of His servant till his death-rattle begins.” (Tirmidhi, Daawat 100; Ibn Majah Zuhd 30).** When the death comes and the death-rattle begins, the penitence will not be accepted.

The reasons why tawbah is not accepted at the parting breath are that the man is in the state of hopelessness at that moment. However, the penitence should be sought at a situation when the servant is still hopeful of life. At the parting breath, the proposal is cancelled from servants. The deeds committed at that time cannot be regarded as good or bad. However, penitence is of the worldly deeds and should be done before the proposal is over. In the hereafter, everybody is going to be regretful and yet their states are not going to be evaluated as repentance. 21 It is because the moment when the sinners feel remorse is a moment when the proposal is concluded. 22 The last minute repentance is not accepted and it is like nothing and as a result, it means nothing. 23 The person seeking repentance at the time of his parting breath is regarded like a man who has never repented throughout his lifetime. 24

As a conclusion, we can draw a timeline with regard to repentance: the time for penitence starts just after the moment a sin is committed, continues in the following days with no regard to any time limit and ends when the death signs appear. That is to say, the last time is when hope of life expires, the death marks become visible and the person lives his last moments.

### 4. The place factor in repentance:

Though some certain places for prayer and Hajj (Pilgrimage) are obligatory and virtuous, there is no any such a condition for penitence. Since tawbah (penitence) is multi-dimensional remorse, it does not start and end at a definite place.

Therefore, being in the mosque, dervish lodge or in a small Islamic monastery is not a must for asking for the pardon of Allah. On the other hand, it is not obligatory to come together with congregation in order to make tawbah in the form of chorus in groups.

A person who has committed a sin can make his repentance in any place. Any place for a person thinking about his past sins and coming into a decision to get rid of his sins is a place for repentance. That is to say, a worker can decide to start for making tawbah at his work, a farmer at his land, those being at home can make their repentance at their abodes.

After all, Hazrat Yunus (Peace be upon him) was in the stomach of the fish and in the darkness of the sea and said **“There is no God but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!” (the Quran: 21-The Prophets (Al-Anbiya, 21/ 87) and asked for Allah His forgiveness just because he did what was virtuous though he could have done the most virtuous. 25 And Allah pardoned him.**

And as it is known, eating the forbidden apple in the heaven, Hazrat Adam and Eve disobeyed Allah’s order. Having been expelled from Paradise and walking in the world for a long time, they turned to Allah in repentance because of their mistake at the top of a mountain called **“Mountain of Mercy”**. And they said: **“Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.” The Quran: -The Heights (Al-Araf), 7/23). They asked the pardon of God and God Almighty granted His forgiveness upon them.**

The process for tawbah begins when the heart decisively comes into a decision to get rid of sins. At every place where this decision is taken, the repentance is sincere. Confining the penitence to a place, laying down a sacred place condition for it stems from not knowing the essence of tawbah and failing to work out the message of Islam for the issue.

#### Conclusion:

God Almighty created man in a nature apt to being able to do both good and evil deeds. Tawbah is the solution for being cleansed out of sins and mistakes committed, and spiritual dirt. Through repentance, the servant is removed from his sins and faults and becomes as if he has never sinned. It is an undisputable fact that every man is in need of penitence.

Tawbah can be made just following the sin or until prior to the death rattle and signs for death come out. Since the appointed time is not definite, a person should repent without wasting any time.

A man Needs no means for making tawbah nor a certain place or time for asking in repentance.

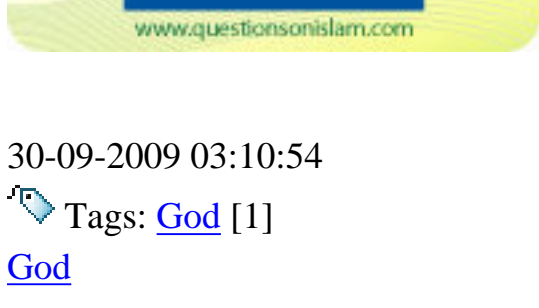
For a true penitence, a person should feel remorse over having committed sins, and leave the place where he sins together with a resolution not to go back to the same sin. Giving the rights of their true holders back is the most crucial element of tawbah.

The suspicion whether he is cleansed out of his sins after his penitence is something baseless, Allah keeps His tawbah door open for people committing every type of sin. The point about which people should be cautious is if repentance is done with sincerity or not.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Firuzabadi, Muhammed b.Ya’qub, al-Qamusu’l-Muhit, Beirut 1991, I, 166; Jawhari, Ismail b.Hammad, as-Sihah fi’l-Lughah wa’l-Ulum, Beirut 1974, I, 146; Ibn Manzur, Jamaluddin Muhammad b.Mukarram, Lisanu’l-Arab, Beirut 1990, I, 233.
2. For those definitions, see, Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad, Ihyau Ulumi’d-Din, (trns. Ahmed Serdaro’lu), Istanbul 1974, IV, 10; Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, al-Futuhatu’l-Makkiyya, (invs Uthman Yahya), Cairo 1988, XIII, 298; Ibn Hajar, al-Askalani, Shihabuddin Ahmad b.Ali, Fathu’l-Bari bi Sharhi’l-Bukhari, Cairo 1987, XI, 106.
3. Qurtubi, Abu Abdillah Muhammad b.Ahmad, al-Jami li Ahkami’l-Qur’an, Cairo 1959, XV, 268; Ibn Kathir, Tafsiru’l-Qur’ani’l-Azim, IV, 59.
4. Ibn Manzur, ibid, II, 617; Ibnu’l-Qayyim, Madariju’s-Salikin, Cairo trs, I, 356.
5. Ghazali, Ihya, IV, 78. 6. It is stated that that anxiety is a sign of belief in a hadiths as follows: “A person is a believer if he commits a sin and if that sin disturbs him.” See, Bukhari, Daawat, 4; Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 49; Ahmad b.Hanbal, ibid, IV, 12. 7. Ghazali, Ihya, IV, 9. 8. Qurtubi, ibid, V, 91. 9. Qasimi, Muhammad Jamaluddin, Mahasinu’t-Ta’wil, (invs. M.Fuad Abdulbaqi), Cairo trs, XII, 4597. 10. Ibnu’l-Qayyim, al-Jawziyya, Muhammad b.Abuabakr, Madā’ariju’s-Salikin, Cairo trs, I, 301. 11. Qurtubi, ibid, V, 91. 12. M.Abu Zahra, al-Jarima wa’l-Uquba fi’l-Fiqhi’l-Islami, Cairo trs, s.223. 13. Ibn Hajar, ibid, XI, 106; Alusi, Ruhul-Maani, IV, 240. 14. Sarakhsi, al-Mabsut, IX, 176; Kasani, Badayi, VIII, 96; Alusi, ibid, VII, 96. 15. Aliyyu’l-Qari, Sharhu’l-Fiqhi’l-Akbar, (trns. Yunus Vehbi Yavuz), Istanbul 1979, p.415. 16. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, Futuhat, XIII, 298. 17. Ibn Hajar, ibid, XI, 106. 18. Ghazali, Ihya, IV, 68, 69. 19. Ibn Qayyim, ibid, I, 297, 298. 20. Ghazali, Ihya, IV, 13. 21. Alusi, ibid, XXVIII, 158. 22. Qurtubi, ibid, V, 93. 23. Suyuti, Abdurrahman Jalaluddin, ad-Durru’l-Mansur fi Tafsiri’l-Ma’thur, Beirut 1414h, II, 458. 24. Mawardi, Tafsir, I, 456. 25. Tabari, Abu Jafar Muhammad b.Jarir, Jamiu’l-Bayan an Ta’wili’l-Qur’an, Beirut 1988, XVII, 80. Ass. Prof Mehmet Soysaldı

75 26 24 23 17 64 38



30-09-2009 03:10:54

Tags: [God](#) [1]

[God](#)

**Source URL:** <http://www.questionsonislam.com/question/what-sincere-repentance-tawbah-nasuh>

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.questionsonislam.com/subject-categories/essentials-faith/god>