

The State of Repentance:

<https://myislam.net/#step6>

After self-evaluation, comes Repentance. Self-Evaluation will make you identify what you do wrong. Repentance is the cleansing station to get rid of what will delay you in your trip.

Practicing the State of Repentance:

I thought to start with "How" to practice or how to repent first, before translating the stage from Ibn ElQayyim because he wrote a very long chapter for this stage. The stage of Repentance is the first application of all the previous stages:

1. **Past:** You start by becoming Conscious of the danger of the sin and wake up from the heedlessness. In simple word "**Regret doing the sin**" – **Stage of Consciousness**
2. **Present:** You stop doing it. You can't repent while doing the sin, which is obvious of you already passed the first step and regret doing it. However, sometimes you become Conscious during the sin (example is the hadeeth of the three people trapped in the cave and one of them was reminded of Allah when he was about to commit adultery. He immediately STOPPED).
3. **Future:** You commit to ***NOT*** doing this sin ever, again. This is the **stage of commitment (Azm)** and **stage of Sel-Evaluation**. You need to commit to avoid doing the sin and keep self-evaluating yourself. I will put here, again, the example of the person who was missing Fajr prayer.

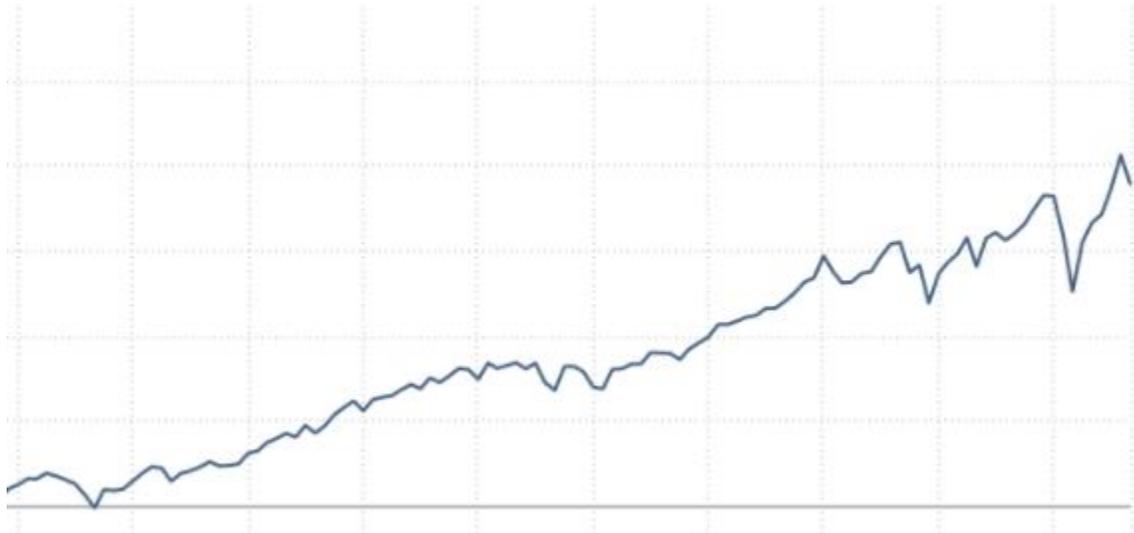
Date	Plan	Actual	Notes
9/20/2020	Pray Fajr before Shorooq	I missed by few minutes	I need to setup another way to wake me up. I will ask a friend to call me.
9/21/2020	Pray Fajr before Shorooq	I was able to wake up but I went back to sleep	I will ask my friend to stay with me on the phone until I make Wudu
9/25/2020	Pray Fajr before Shorooq	I was able to pray Fajr on time but it was very close to Shorooq	I will try to wake up 15 minutes earlier, tomorrow
8/12/2021	Pray Fajr in congregation	Prayed Fajr in congregation	Missed First Rakaa.

			Tomorrow I will wake up earlier
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4. **People's rights:** The last condition of Repentance, if you committed a sin against others (such as stealing from someone). Simply, is to return their right or get their forgiveness. This part is the most complicated one and better to avoid.

For more details you may listen to <https://youtu.be/TP-X1ME9Ivs>

In the previous example, it might look easy because he divided the plan into smaller goals. If he had the goal to catch the first rakaa in congregation, he would have never been able to stay for a year. Do not look at how small was the goal. Instead Look at the progress he had in a year. The example of waking for Fajr, is a real example for a friend of mine. The difference between him and others, is the curve of progress in his relationship with Allah. While others go up and down in big waves, he is able to stay going up, with exception of small dips from time to time. It reminds me with Microsoft Stock after Satya took over (2014 -2020)



Overall, the curve is going up. It is normal to have set backs from time to time but when you self-evaluate yourself from year to year, you find yourself progressing up. In the previous example, in Sept 2020, he was hardly praying Fajr before Shoroq at home. Aug 2020, he is praying Fajr in congregation, consistently. **This is how to use repentance and Self-Evaluation to make progress.** Start small with big intentions at the end.

The Unavoidable Obstacle (Self/Nafs)

Well, the previous example of praying Fajr was not the hardest. You only have to face your "Self" (Nafs) in one simple desire, "Sleep." There are other harder battles with your "Self". If you are addicted and enjoy a sin, it will be very hard to stop it, even slowly. However, you can cut the roads to it, slowly. Ibn ElQayem

has a chapter about the evil self "النفس الامارة بالسوء". However, he did not get into details in this chapter. Instead, he had a very powerful paragraph in stage 15 giving the example of "Self" as a Mountain that we have to pass to reach our destination. I think there is a reason for mentioning this in such an advanced state. Therefore, I will not get into this in details here. We can pass this stage with some sins with the intention that as we advance, we will acquire more power to fight. In another book called "The Sickness and The Cure" (الداء والدواء), he explained, in details, how to stop such sins. He gave one of the hardest sins, which is between Men and Women.

The part that he mentioned in stage 15 Started with:

يقول ابن القيم فى المدارج: "فالنفس جبل عظيم شاق فى طريق السير الى الله – عز وجل – وكل سائر لا طريق له إلا على ذلك الجبل, فلا بد أن ينتهى إليه, ولكن منهم من هو شاق عليه, ومنهم من هو سهل عليه, وإنه ليسير على من يسره الله عليه.

"Self" is a great mountain that is very hard to climb. It is the middle of the road to Allah. Each traveler has to climb this mountain. However, it is harder on some than others. **Only Allah can make it easy.**"

Therefore, I will not go beyond that sentence "**Only Allah can make it easy**". The only way to move forward is to ask Allah to make it easy. Lots of supplications, Monologue, duaa ... The Duaa was the first answer of Ibn ElQayem in his book "The Sickness and The Cure".

You can refer to audio lectures about duaa

- https://youtu.be/btviYS_NypE
- <https://youtu.be/nX4cDaMy7Bw>
- <https://youtu.be/osCvLMoNmbA>
- <https://youtu.be/Cqgp878cH5M>

I do not want to get stuck in such hard and tough part because as we get closer to Allah, Duaa will be closer to acceptance and we get closer to being a Walyee (Protected by Allah). Also, as we get higher in the stages, all this life desires will look smaller and easier to ignore. However, it is still an obstacle of your progress and you have to pass it. This was the question that led to Ib ElQayem's book "The Sickness and The Cure."

Ib ElQayem's book "The Sickness and The Cure." Started with a question from someone asking for help. He is doing a sin that he can't stop

and he knows it is going to destroy him in this life and the hereafter. It is the same problem of most of us who want to pass this mountain. You can't regret because it is taking most of your heart and you enjoy it. You can't commit to stopping it, because you know the pain when you need it. This is similar to the addiction problem. You can't stop it all one time. However, it requires "Strong Commitment" That is why you have to pass the stage of commitment that you want to get closer to Allah. Ibn ElQayeem ended his paragraph about Nafs in Maadarej by saying that passing this mountain requires: Strong Will, Strong Commitment, Patience, Courage, and steadiness of the heart. However, this is a gift that Allah gives to whom he wants."

«فبين العبد وبين السعادة والفلاح: قوة عزيمة وصبر ساعة وشجاعة نفس وثبات قلب، والفضل بيد الله يؤتيه من يشاء، والله ذو الفضل العظيم»

For example, if there is a wrong love relation between two, they enjoy being together and can't regret it or commit to stop it. However, their strong commitment to cure themselves and get closer to Allah, will allow them to take the medication. It is similar to treating addiction. When the Quran treated Alcohol addiction, it started slowly by making it hard to continue your normal life with it, before making it Haram. Today, to treat a drug addict, they have to have a long term plan, including psychological treatment. This plan will never succeed without strong will and strong commitment from the patient. When USA wanted to reduce smokers, they made it hard to smoke anywhere and you have to look for a place away from people to smoke, which is not available all the time. Therefore, a lot of people decided to go through the treatment to stop it. We need to do the same. Make committing the sin harder. In the hadith of the person who killed 99 souls, he was asked to immigrate his current environment to be able to repent. The cure will start by staying away.

Let's go back to our example. For the lovers to have a correct repentance, they have to have the main three conditions (Regret, Stop, And Commitment to stay away). Therefore, they need to start the treatment for the sickness of their hearts. Their repentance has to include cutting any way that they can contact each others. He might need to travel away and change his contact information. As you progress in the stages, you will start seeing all those desires as fake. It is very interesting seeing how people evolve during COVID-91. With the social distancing, a couple fail in love in one of the virtual games with virtual avatars. While, it was all fake, I know someone who spent time trying to recover from it. After a while, he said

"How did I enjoy such a fake world?" This is exactly what you feel when you get to advanced stages. I felt that for a while, and I am sorry for losing it.

There is not one treatment that will fit all. However, keep trying and note the reason every time you fail and fix it. The only thing that we should not do is to give up fighting, stop the Duaa, or give in with what our Selves want. Keep fighting, change the environment, listen to lots of Tazkiah and heart purification lectures, look for good company, and keep asking Allah for help. Having a close religious friend who you can talk to, will be very helpful.

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) said: "There was a man from among a nation before you who killed ninety-nine people and then made an inquiry about the most learned person on the earth. He was directed to a monk. He came to him and told him that he had killed ninety-nine people and asked him if there was any chance for his repentance to be accepted. He replied in the negative and the man killed him also completing one hundred. He then asked about the most learned man in the earth. He was directed to a scholar. He told him that he had killed one hundred people and asked him if there was any chance for his repentance to be accepted. He replied in the affirmative and asked, 'Who stands between you and repentance? **Go to such and such land; there (you will find) people devoted to prayer and worship of Allah, join them in worship, and do not come back to your land because it is an evil place.**' So he went away and hardly had he covered half the distance when death overtook him; and there was a dispute between the angels of mercy and the angels of torment. The angels of mercy pleaded, 'This man has come with a repenting heart to Allah,' and the angels of punishment argued, 'He never did a virtuous deed in his life.' Then there appeared another angel in the form of a human being and the contending angels agreed to make him arbiter between them. He said, 'Measure the distance between the two lands. He will be considered belonging to the land to which he is nearer.' They measured and found him closer to the land (land of piety) where he intended to go, and so the angels of mercy collected his soul".

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

The solution

If you are reading this now, then Allah choose you to send you the awakening alarm. Do not ignore it. There are multiple reactions to the call of Allah:

1. Completely ignore, assume I am fine, and continue my life
2. Feel a little bit of guilt, but do not know where to start
3. I know there is something wrong, but I am not able to stop it. My craving and my desires are stronger than my well.
4. I am in early depression and I do not feel motivated to do anything or even think if I am right or wrong
5. I can change one thing
6. I change my life4.

1. For the first type, please, re-think your action. You are in heedlessness and you might not receive the alarm, again. Listen to the following session <https://youtu.be/gLzpcem5wpA>
2. For the rest of the types, start with asking Allah for help. Listen to the following sessions:
 - a. https://youtu.be/btviYS_NypE
 - b. <https://youtu.be/nX4cDaMy7Bw>
 - c. <https://youtu.be/osCvLMoNmbA>
 - d. <https://youtu.be/Cqgp878cH5M>

The most accepted duaa:

Imam **Al-Bukhari** narrated that the Messenger of Allah ASWS said:

"من تعار من الليل فقال: لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له له الملك وله الحمد وهو على كل شيء قدير، الحمد لله وسبحان الله ولا إله إلا الله والله أكبر ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله، ثم قال: اللهم اغفر لي، أو دعا استجيب له، فإن توضأ وصلى قبلت صلاته."

“Whoever happens to wake up in the night (with or without an alarm) and says: Laa Ilaaha Illallaah, wahdahu la shareeka lah, la hul mulku walahulhamd, wa huwa ‘ala kulli shay’in qadeer. Alhamdulillah, wa Subhanallah, wala ilaaha illallaah, wallahu akbar, wa laa hawla wala quwwata illa billah, Then asks for forgiveness, or make Du’a, Allah will answer him. Then if he performs Wudu’ and prays, Allah will accept his prayer.”

https://iloveallah.net/static/Zikr_table2.pdf

4. for the fourth type, you might need additional help. Try a knowledgeable friend, first. Talk to a close one. Make sure to find a good company. I am

writing this in 2020, during COVID-19 and social distancing crisis. The depression rate is the highest in our lifetime. If Allah sent you here, then there is a reason for that. Trust Allah. You might be passing through the worst time in your life. Do not give up on Duaa and Asking Allah for help.

5. For the fifth and sixth type, Duaa and asking Allah for guidance should be the first thing to do. If I want to add one more thing, it will be joining a good company and go to the congregation prayers. You may start with an easy prayer, but this is the way to change. This is what the scholar advised the man who killed 100 people to do. Change your environment and always be with good company as Allah advised us on Al-Kahf (The Cave) 18:28:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ
وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا
قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

"And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance, and let not thine eyes pass beyond them in quest of the beauties of this world's life; and pay no heed to any whose heart We have rendered heedless of all remembrance of Allah, because he had always followed [only] his own desires, abandoning all that is good and true."

Al-Kahf (The Cave) 18:28

I have never thought that this option will be hard, until the year 2020 when mosques were closed, and social gatherings were not allowed, because of COVID-19. This is the time when lots of people got lost.

This stage does not end here. It starts here. Ibn ElQayem will return to it, again, at the end at Stage 64 (Continuing Repentance). We will start here and continue improving as we go in shaa Allah. We need tools that we will pick as we go to improve our hearts to become closer to Allah and away from the worldly desires.

Suggested Action Plan:

1. Make a list of all the sins you have
2. Take the hardest sin and create a plan for it
3. Take the easiest and start the Repentance for it immediately

4. It will be good to keep a record of actions, plans, and notes
5. Listen to the following Lectures

Audio Lectures for the state of Repentance:

- - <https://youtu.be/TP-X1ME9Ivs>
 - <https://youtu.be/XhrvEYD8BZY>
 - <https://youtu.be/PGjR-9-wg2M>
 - <https://youtu.be/aqRx9U69w6c>
 -
-

The following are parts that were translated as is from the Chapter of repentance from Madarij Assalekeen.

The State of Repentance

Imam Ibn ul Qayyim al Jawziyyah

Madaarij as-Saalikeen

AlJumuah Magazine

The state of repentance, tawbah, is at the beginning, the middle and the end of all states of submission to the will of Allah. The servant who seeks the pleasure of Allah never abandons tawbah. He remains in the state of tawbah until his death. Whatever his state of belief, the servant makes tawbah his constant companion. Thus, tawbah is at the beginning and at the end of his servitude to his Creator. His need for tawbah at the end, just as at the beginning, overrides, and supersedes all other needs. Allah says: "And turn to Allah altogether (make tawbah), O you who believe so that you may succeed," (24:31)

The verse above is contained within a Madinan Surah (revealed after the migration to Madinah), in which Allah addresses the people of emaan, who are the best of His creation. He calls upon them to make tawbah "turn in repentance" to Him after they had already believed, gone through hardships, trials of faith, executed patience, migrated and performed jihad. Allah then made success conditional on perfecting such tawbah, as the effect is often conditional on the cause. No one can hope for success, except: those who make tawbah. Allah says: "And those who do not make tawbah are indeed the dhaalimoon (wrongdoers)." (49:11)

Allah divides His servants into two categories only: the repentant and the wrongdoers. There is no third category. Allah calls those who do not make tawbah, "dhaalimoon" (wrongdoers and transgressors) and no one is more of a wrongdoer and a transgressor than a person who does not repent for his evil actions. This state is a result of a person's ignorance of his Lord and the rights due to Him, as well as, his own defects and

the evil of his deeds. The Prophet, sallallahu alayeh wa sallam, is reported to have said: "O people, make tawbah to Allah. By Allah, I make tawbah to Him more than seventy times each day." (Bukhari)

His companions used to count for him in each congregation his saying one hundred times: "My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance, for You are At-Tawwab (the One who accept repentance), Al-Ghafoor (The Oft Forgiving)." The Prophet, sallallahu alayeh wa sallam, is also reported to have said: "No one will be rescued (on the Day of Judgment) by his deeds. They (his companions) asked even you Messenger of Allah? He said, even me, unless Allah would grant me His mercy and Grace."

May Allah's blessings and peace be upon His Messenger, the most knowledgeable among His creation of Him, His Rights, His Greatness and what servitude He deserves. He is the most knowledgeable of servitude and its requirements and the most committed in servitude to Allah.

The Starter (Fatihah) of Tawbah

Tawbah is the return of the servant to Allah. It is also his turning away from the path of those with whom Allah is angry and those who are astray. This returning cannot be done except by Allah's guidance to the Straight Path. The servant will not attain guidance except through Allah's help and the servant's submithrough tawheed. Surat-ul-Fatihah explains this concept in the most complete and eloquent manner.

Whoever appreciates Surat-ul-Fatihah and gives it is right estimate, through knowledge, contemplation upon its facts and by living its directives, will realise that one cannot recite it, with the true recitation of a servant, unless one makes sincere tawbah. The perfect guidance to the Straight Path cannot be attained with the indifference to sins or the persistence on sins. Indifference to sins negates the knowledge of guidance. Persistent sinning negates the intention and the will of the servant. Thus, tawbah will not be valid except after one recognises the sins, admits to them and seeks to rid oneself of their evil consequences.

Seeking Refuge from Sin

The first aspect of tawbah, then, is to see how one was taken away from seeking the pleasure of Allah, by committing sins. Next, one has to recognize that Allah didn't safeguard him from sin. One should also ponder how happy one was while sinning and being persistent on the sin, while knowing with surety that Allah ever watches over whatever is done in the heavens or on the earth. If the servant had sought refuge in Allah, he would not have gone away from the guidance of obedience, "And whoever holds firmly to Allah, then he is indeed guided to a Right Path." (3:101)

If one's holding onto Allah is firm, one would never be forsaken by Allah, "And hold firmly to Allah, He is your Mawlaa (Protector) and what an excellent Mawlaa and what an excellent Naseer (Helper)." (22:78)

In other words, whenever we hold firm to Him, He will become our Protector and He will support us against our nafs (inclinations) and the Shaytan. These two enemies, the nafs and Satan, are the ones that do not leave the servant for even a moment. Their enmity is more harmful to the servant than the enemies from without. Attaining victory over such enemies

is more difficult, and the servant's need for such a victory is far more important. The degree of help rendered to defeat these enemies is dependent upon the degree of our dependence and holding onto Allah. If we do not hold firmly to Allah, we will go away from Allah's protection. This is indeed the true loss. Allah could have aided us in staying away from sins, however, because we deserted Him, we were allowed to listen to any obey our nafs. If He wished to protect us, the sin would not have found a way to get to us.

When the servant becomes heedless of the consequences of sin, he finds pleasure when he satisfies unlawful desires. This pleasure in disobedience is evidence of his ignorance of the Greatness of the One of disobeys, and his ignorance of the evil consequences of sins and evil actions. His pleasure with sin has concealed all of this from his sight. In fact, his pleasure with sin is more harmful to him than perpetrating the sin itself. The believer can never have any pleasure from sin. He cannot have complete satisfaction with it. On the contrary, he would not even pursue it, except with grief in his heart. But the intoxication of the desires obscures one from feeling this remorse. When the heart becomes empty from such grief and one is happy with sin, then one should question his faith and weep for the death of his heart. If one were alive, he would be sad for the perpetration of any sin, big or small. The evil effects of sin, more times than not, go unnoticed in us and in our brothers and sisters in Islam. Diligences in constant self-

evaluation is necessary in leading us away from sin and its destructive ends. One can do this by focusing on the following.

1. The fear of dying before making tawbah.
2. Remorse about the good that was missed because of the disobedience of Allah.
3. Working seriously on regaining what has been missed.

If one becomes **completely heedless** then one becomes persistent, which means constant disobedience *with the intention to perform the sin again and again*. This by itself is another sin that could be far greater than the first. Part of the punishment for sin is that it leads to a greater sin, then another, and so on until it completely and certainly destroys the person if he does not repent.

Persistence on sin is another sin. Not attempting to rectify the sin means persistence on it and **satisfaction** with it. This is the sign of ruin. Worse than all of that, is the commission of sin in public when we are sure that Allah watches and sees everything from above His Throne. If we believe that Allah watches us, yet we proceed to commit sins publicly, this is a great contradiction. But if we don't believe that He watches us, then we are completely out of the realm of Islam.

There are two considerations for a sinner:

1. lack of embarrassment from Allah knowing that Allah's sight watches overall, and
2. lack of fear to go out of the deen.

Therefore, one of the conditions of the acceptance of tawbah is that a person should firmly believe that Allah was watching and that He will always watch over him. He sees everything during the perpetration of sins.

The reality of tawbah is to return to Allah is not sound or complete without the knowledge of the Lord's names and attributes and their manifestations within Himself and in the world. The repenting servant should know that he was running away from his Lord, captured in the grip of his enemy. He didn't fall into the claws of his enemy except as a result of his ignorance of his Lord and his daring to go against Him. He should know how and when he became ignorant, and how and when he was captured. He should believe that tawbah requires great determination and complete awareness to rescue himself from the enemy and be able to return and run back, to his Lord Ar-Rahman Ar- Rahim. He should realize that returning to his Lord is actually turning away from the road of destruction, where his enemy had taken him. He should know the number of steps taken away from his Lord and the efforts and obstacles that he must strongly work on to get back to the Straight Path.

The Rich Meanings of Tawbah and Istighfaar

Imam Ibn ul Qayyim al Jawziyyah Madarij us-Salikin

Translated by Uwaymir Anjum Al Jumuah Vol. 16, Issue 04/05

Scholars interpret tawbah (repentance) to mean all of the following: (i) immediate renunciation of the sin, (ii) firm intention and determination to not return to the sin ever again, (iii) regret over having committed a sin, and, if the sin was against the rights of another human being, then one must also, (iv) compensate for it. These are known to be the conditions of tawbah, or repentance. However, in the words of Allah and His Messenger, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, tawbah has a wider meaning, and includes not only the aforementioned conditions, but also generally carrying out all the commandments of Allah with persistence. Tawbah also requires disliking and renouncing those people who refuse to repent, encouraging them to repent and advising them against ignoring the practice of repentance. So repentance is the opposite of committing sins in every way, and, in its general sense, does not consist merely of renouncing the sin and regret over it. The word tawbah is like the word taqwa, in the sense that the latter is used sometimes in a specific sense where it means, "immediately stopping from disobeying Allah or carrying out an obligation." However, the actual meaning of taqwa is more general: "taking all that Allah has given us of wealth, children, security and pleasure and all else as a means to protect ourselves from what we dislike or fear in our journey to Allah." For this journey is full of pitfalls and replete with the enemies of our soul beginning with our own baser selves that incite us towards evil and unrestrained desires and ensnare us in the traps of Satan whose mission it to prevent us from this journey to Allah and make us return to baseness and ruin. The essence of tawbah is to return to Allah and to adhere to what He loves and renounce that which He dislikes. Tawbah is a journey from the disliked to the liked. Istighfaar and Tawbah Istighfar, meaning seeking forgiveness, is

mentioned in the Qur'an in two ways: either by itself or coupled with tawbah (repentance). The single mention of istighfar (without the mention of tawbah) finds an example in the saying of Nuh alayhes salam in the Noble Qur'an: "Seek forgiveness of your Lord, you all, (for) He is Oft-Forgiving: He sends the heavens over you raining;" [10:11] and in the saying of Saleh to his people: "If only you (were to) ask Allah for forgiveness, you may hope to receive mercy." [27:46] Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, also says: "And seek forgiveness of Allah, for Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." [2:199] and "But Allah was not going to send them a penalty whilst you [O Prophet] were amongst them; nor was he going to send it whilst they were asking for forgiveness." [8:33] The mention of istighfar coupled with tawbah appears in the following verses: "Ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him; He will provide you with a goodly provision to an appointed term and bestow His grace on every one endowed with grace, and if you turn back, then surely I fear for you the chastisement of a great day." [11: 3] And: "And, O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord (istighfar), then turn to Him (tawbah); He will send on you clouds pouring down abundance of rain and add strength to your strength, and do not turn back guilty." [11:52] Saleh said to his people: "And to Thamood (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than He; He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him; surely my Lord is Near, Answering." [11: 61] Istighfar: not just cover up, but total removal of sins. Therefore, istighfar (seeking forgiveness) singly is similar to tawbah (repentance); rather, it is indeed repentance. Seeking forgiveness, moreover, fully removes the sin, undoes its effects and prevents its evil, and not merely hides the sins as some people have conjectured. For Allah may cover and hide the sins of those who seek forgiveness and even of those who do not; but istighfar is more than just a cover. The essence of istighfar (seeking forgiveness) is that it earns one the prevention from the evil of the sin. Its literal meaning is related to that of al-mighfar, "what saves and covers the head from discomfort or harm (from sun, sand, rain, etc.)" and covering is necessary to this meaning, but not sufficient: for other coverings of the head like 'emamah or qubba' are not called mighfar. We conclude that something cannot be called a mighfar unless it provides more than covering: it must also save and protect . It is in this meaning that istighfaar saves one from the punishment: "And Allah was not going to send his punishment whilst they were asking for forgiveness." [8:33] Of course, if one insists on sinning and demands from Allah forgiveness (without fulfilling its conditions), then this is not a true istighfar, and it does not prevent the punishment. Istighfar (seeking forgiveness) includes tawbah (repenting), and tawbah includes istighfar: each one is implied by the other in its entirety. This comprehensiveness of the meanings of istighfar includes its meaning of asking for forgiveness as a shield or cover: cover from our human shortcomings and faults that are harmful and

destructive. And the greatest and most harmful of all human shortcomings are his ignorance (of one's faults) and transgression. By virtue of this ignorance and transgression, the enemy drags a human being into what utterly destroys him. The shield against these two errors is to be aware of one's faults and be keen to bring out in one's character the God-given virtues of knowledge, justice and righteousness. The more a person ignores his human nobility bestowed upon him by Allah when Allah breathed into him His spirit (rooh), the more he lowers himself to the animalistic ground, and the more his ignorance and transgression are fuelled. When the two words tawbah and istighfar are used together, (always istighfar followed by tawbah), then the first one (istighfaar) means asking for safety from the evil and harm of what has occurred, and the second one (tawbah) means returning to Allah and begging for safety from the evil of what one fears in future. So here we are concerned with two things: one is the sin that has already occurred, and istighfar (in its specific sense) is to seek protection from its evil effects; and the other is the repetition of the same sin in future, which we fear, and tawbah is the determination to not do it again. A complete return to Allah (rujoo`) includes and necessitates both of these: istighfar as well as tawbah. When used in a couple, both aspects of this return to Allah are emphasized individually, whereas, when used alone, either one of these two words implies the other.

The Unavoidable Obstacle

Imam Ibn ul Qayyim al Jawziyyah Translated by Abu Sabaayaa Madaarij us-Saalikeen In 'Madarij as-Salikin' (2/218-222), Ibn al-Qayyim has a section about the obstacles that Satan puts into the path of the one who chooses to live his life for Allah. He mentions the six commonly known obstacles in the order that they will be thrown into the path of the believer, such that whoever passes through one obstacle is then faced with the next (disbelief, followed by innovation in religion, followed by major sins, followed by minor sins, followed by permissible acts that distract one from acts of obedience, followed by acts of obedience that are of lower reward than others). However, he mentions a seventh and final obstacle for the one who passes through the above six successfully: "...So, if he successfully passes through these, there remains only one obstacle from which the enemy (Satan) calls him from, and this is an obstacle that he must face. If anyone were to be saved from this obstacle, it would have been the Messengers and Prophets of Allah, and the noblest of His Creation. This is the obstacle of Satan unleashing his troops upon the believer with various types of harm: by way of the hand, the tongue, and the heart. This occurs in accordance with the degree of goodness that exists within the believer. So, the higher he is in degree, the more the enemy unleashes his troops and helps them against him, and overwhelms him with his followers and allies in various ways. There is no way he can overcome this obstacle, because the firmer he is in calling to Allah and fulfilling His commands, the more the enemy becomes intent upon deceiving him with foolish people. So, he has essentially put on his body armor in this obstacle, and has taken it upon himself to confront the

enemy (Satan) for Allah's Sake and in His Name, and his worship in doing so is the worship of the best of the worshippers...and none are aware of this except those with complete and perfect insight." Ibn al-Qayyim's words here are worthy of reflection (as always). Notice here how, as opposed to the other six obstacles, this particular obstacle is something that the believer has no control over. If one is a kafir, it is in his hands to abandon kufr for faith. If one is upon bid'ah, it is in his hands to abandon bid'ah for the Sunnah. If one is indulged in major or minor sins, it is in that person's hands to abandon those sins and instead indulge in acts of worship and goodness, and so on and so forth. This is because each of these actions emanate from the person himself, and he thus has the ability to cease from and repel these actions and traits whenever he chooses. As for the harm that others seek to inflict upon the person due to his faith, there is no way to avoid this obstacle. Why not? Because if one has passed through all of the other obstacles successfully, there is no other way for Allah to test and distinguish him. This is the ultimate test, the test of a lifetime, the test that only the strongest can pass - and this is why this was the test reserved for the Prophets, Messengers, and their true followers. When it is said that the obstacle is unavoidable, what is meant is its occurrence, not the possibility of reducing and easing the hardship related to that obstacle. So, one is not to sit with his hands on his knees and abandon supplication to Allah, seeking permissible means of help from others, etc. in addition to the other means available to deal with this obstacle. Yes, the Prophet said: "Know that if the entire world were to gather to do you some harm, they would be unable to harm you except with something that Allah has Decreed for you," but he also said: "Be keen in doing that which will benefit you." In fact, part of the test of this final obstacle is for you to display your dependence and trust in Allah by calling upon Him, perfecting your worship, strengthening your resolve, making your connection and dedication to Him stronger than it ever was before, and remaining in such a state until the end. This is how you pass the test, overcome the obstacle, and become part of that blessed group that Ibn al-Qayyim described as being "the best of the worshippers" and "those with complete and perfect insight."

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