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Second Greater Sin: **Yās** (Despair)

Despair

The second Greater Sin is to despair of the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.). “Al-yās–so Min Rḥallah” (To despair of the Rḥ of Allah) Rḥ: according to the dictionary means a breeze that pleases and comforts. Those who do not believe in the Power, the Mercy and Bounty of Allah (S.w.T.), develop a kind of despair. The Holy Qur’an has termed such people as Unbelievers (Kafir).

“...and despair not of Allah’s Mercy; surely none despairs of Allah’s Mercy except the unbelieving people.” (Surah Yāsuf 12:87)

The Holy Imams, Imam Ja’far as–Sadiq (a.s.), Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.), Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) have classified “despairing of the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.)”, to be a Greater Sin; as we have mentioned at the beginning.

The Greatest Sin After ‘Shirk’

After ‘Shirk’ no sin could be greater than to despair of Allah (S.w.T.)’s mercy and benevolence. This attitude reduces a person to a state of utter hopelessness. He imagines himself to be destined for Hell, and therefore he sees no benefit in doing good and avoiding evil. Consequently he tries to achieve as much worldly pleasure as possible and thus gets further involved in all kinds of sinful acts. Any other type of sinner could be pardoned if he repents. But the one who despairs does not deserve to be pardoned because the mental condition of such a person does not lead him towards repentance, but instead, induces him to continue to commit further acts of transgression against Allah (S.w.T.)’s commands.

Hence it means that despair is the greatest of the sins. It is appropriate therefore that all the different kinds of despair may be explained and also their cures, so that the believers can keep themselves away from them.

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has created a cause of all the phenomena of this world by His unlimited power and absolute strength. For example, in the physical affairs food is needed for satiation of hunger, water for quenching thirst, doctor and medicine for curing diseases and work for removing poverty.

In the same way the spiritual phenomena also depend upon various causes. The salvation of a sinner depends upon his repentance, the achievement of absolute belief needs the guidance of an infallible guide (Imam), and the attainment of grades in piety and the high stages of the hereafter depend upon the purity of intention in the deeds performed. The aim of creating man was to make him think and recognise Allah (S.w.T.) in the proper way. But the complete recognition or belief is not possible till man realizes that the Creator of causes as well as effects is Allah (S.w.T.). The causes by themselves cannot bring out an effect till the One who has created these causes gives the capability to the cause to bring out such effect. Therefore one should not be pleased at the apparent causes or be aggrieved due to their absence.

Cause is Not Independent

When causes that would fulfill needs or desires appear, man becomes happy and he believes in the Might of Allah (S.w.T.). But when these causes fail to have any effect he becomes sorrowful. In order to avoid such a situation Allah (S.w.T.) has laid down a procedure. Firstly he renders the causes ineffective so that the believer may not consider these to be originally having the effective properties. On the other hand he creates the factors which were hereto non-existent, so that the believing people may not fall into despair. A few examples are mentioned to explain this fact.

First Example: Fire Did Not Burn : Knife Did Not Cut

The fire ignited by the order of Namrud to burn Ibrahim (a.s.) was made bereft of its burning property, by Allah (S.w.T.). It is said, that the fire was so intense that birds flying at a height of Three miles used to be scorched by the heat and drop dead.

So they threw Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) into the fire with the help of a catapult from far away. In the Holy Qur'an Allah (S.w.T.) says:

“We said: O fire! be coolness and peace to Ibrahim.” (Surah al-'Anbiya' 21:69)

The fire immediately lost its essential property of burning, and cooled down; and if Allah (S.w.T.) had not ordered it to be peaceful (safe) for Ibrahim (a.s.) it would have become colder and may have frozen Ibrahim (a.s.) to death.

In the same way when Ibrahim (a.s.) proceeded to slaughter his son Ismail (a.s.) the knife was blunted by Allah (S.w.T.)'s command. Ibrahim (a.s.) threw the knife away and a voice emerged from it. “The Khalil (friend) of Allah (S.w.T.) commands me to cut and the Lord of the Khalil restrains me from it.”

Second Example: Musa (a.s.) and Fir'on

History records that the tyrant rulers have always oppressed Allah (S.w.T.)'s representative on earth, the Prophets and the Imams. These rulers have made relentless use of all the might and power at their command to pursue the Prophets and terminate their lives. But the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) used to render their efforts null and void. The life of Musa (a.s.) during the reign of Fir'on is full of such instances from the beginning to end.

A powerful king like Fir'on wanted to kill Hazrat Musa (a.s.) while he was still in his mother's womb, but he did not succeed and Musa (a.s.) was born. Fir'on continued in his efforts to murder him but all his plans were foiled by Allah (S.w.T.). Physical and spiritual causes are of no significance in comparison to the Divine decree. Thus Musa (a.s.) was not only born safely but grew up in Fir'on's own palace and in his own lap.

“And Fir'on's wife said: A refreshment of the eye to me and to you; do not slay him; maybe he will be useful to us, or we may take him for a son; and they did not perceive.” (Surah al-Qaṣaṣ 28:9)

Third Example: The Attack of Abraha on the Ka'ba

In the year of the birth of Holy Prophet (S) the army of Najjashi came to attack the Holy Ka'ba. It was led by the commander Abraha. The army consisted of elephants and possessed all the armaments of war. Abraha, proud of his large army and weapons was confident of success. But the creator of all causes weakened their efforts. When Allah (S.w.T.) willed all the human and animals in the army came to a standstill. However much they tried, the elephants refused to move towards the sacred house.

On the other hand 'Abab' appeared on the horizon. Each of these birds carried Three pebbles; one in the beak and one each in their claws. They surrounded the complete army and began to pelt them with pebbles. Each pebble fell on the head of the soldiers and pierced through their body to reach the ground and sank into it. Consequently the entire army perished, except one soldier. This soldier retreated to king Najjashi and related the episode in detail. This incident gained so much importance that the year began to be referred to as 'ʿimul Feel', or the year of the Elephant. Thus the history of Arabs record the birth of the Holy Prophet (S) to be in the year 1st ʿimul Feel and the year of his Be'sat (declaration of Prophethood) to be 40th ʿimul Feel.

Fourth Example: The Holy Prophet (S) and How His Life was Saved

The protection of the Holy Prophet (S) from the blood-thirsty people of Makkah and later his being shielded from death in the various battles is considered to be a sign of Allah (S.w.T.). All the polytheists had united to martyr the Holy Prophet (S) right from the day he declared his Prophethood. They had all the means to achieve their purpose but as a Persian couplet says: “Who can extinguish the lamp lighted by Allah (S.w.T.).”

Fifth Example: He Creates Without an Apparent Cause

Even if the apparent causes, both material and non-material ones, are absent, Allah (S.w.T.) creates them by His unsurpassed power. There are numerous examples of such a phenomenon. The foremost example is that of the father of man, Hazrat Adam (a.s.) whom Allah (S.w.T.) created without the union of a male and a female. Adam (a.s.) came into existence from non-existence. Similarly Prophet Isa (a.s.) was born to the chaste maid, Janabe Maryam (a.s.) even though a man had not touched her.

Hazrat Yahya (a.s.) was born to Hazrat Zakaria (a.s.) when he had reached an extremely old age and when his wife had lost all hopes of conceiving. Hazrat Ishaq (a.s.) was born to Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) when Hazrat Ibrahim was aged and in spite of his wife Janabe Sarah being barren previously.

The Holy Prophet (S) And His Knowledge

The Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (S) did not attend any school nor did he learn from any teacher. He was not trained to read and write by any mortal. Yet, he was the teacher of humanity and was having command upon the Qur'anic sciences. In fact his personality was a conglomeration of the qualities of all the previous prophets. The presence of such outstanding qualities in one person without any apparent causes, can only be understood to be the Divine will.

Invocations are Answered Without the Presence of Apparent Means

The Beneficial God listens to the invocations of His creatures and fulfills their desires. Many a times we see that people who have no means whatsoever are able to get rid of their afflictions and distress. Due to the grace of Sadaqah, incurable diseases are cured and destitutes become rich. People surrounded by calamities are saved in ways they could not have even imagined.

The traditional reports are replete with such instances. The unlimited beneficence and grace of the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has been described by Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) in the following couplets:

“Only the wise could estimate, the unlimited Grace of the Almighty Allah who releases us from calamities, and removes grief from the defeated hearts. On numerous occasions, man is sorrowful in the morning. But by evening his disposition changes into happiness. So when you are surrounded by difficulties, repose absolute hope in the Unique God.”

Love of 'Ali (a.s.)

Imam Yafai writes in his book, 'Rawzatul Rehayin' the explanation of Diwan al-Mubdi and says, “A certain king gave a pearl to his jeweller. The jeweller's child somehow got hold of this pearl and broke it

into two pieces. The jeweller was in agony. He was asked by some person to recite the above mentioned couplets of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) with sincerity. Hardly had he begun to recite that a messenger from the king arrived. He told him that physicians have suggested that if his pearl is powdered and given to the sick princess she would be cured of her malady. The King has sent orders to the jeweller to powder that pearl at once and take it to the palace.

The Destiny of Man

The spiritual factors which are connected with the hereafter have some causes, the affect of which is kept in abeyance by the Will of Allah (S.w.T.). For example those who perform Jihad against their ownelves achieve for themselves a high position in the Hereafter. Those who do not believe in the prophets, the deeds of such people are nullified.

Balam Baqr and his Eternal Damnation

Balam Baqr had achieved a high stage of perfection. But in order to please the ruler he started opposing the prophet of his time. Consequently he became involved in a life of sin from which it was not possible to extricate himself. He was doomed to Hell, to the seventh stage of the fire that is the worst of the stages of Hell. He is compared to a dog in the holy Qur'an,

“And if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby; but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire, so his parable is as the parable of the dog; if you attack him he lolls out his tongue; this is the parable of the people who reject our communications; therefore relate the narrative that they may reflect.” (Surah al-Araf 7: 176)

A Warning

Believing people are those who have realized Allah (S.w.T.). The believing people should be particularly careful not to confuse the apparent causes as the basis of all phenomena. In spite of realising the supreme authority of Allah (S.w.T.) and His creations, a public misconception in this regard can damn them to perdition. They should know that they could be damned to perdition if they depend upon the apparent causes and consider them to be the basis of all phenomena because the centre of all phenomena is Allah (S.w.T.). He is capable of making all the causes ineffective.

Beauty of the Hereafter

When all the means of salvation are annihilated, the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) creates a cause due to his unlimited Mercy. Numerous traditions report incidents where people who had been involved in calamities and damned for destruction were, in the last moments, saved by Allah (S.w.T.). They had been completely lost in the darkness of sins but were summoned towards their Lord by His limitless Mercy. The desolate deserts of their life were once again green and fertile. The bounties of Allah (S.w.T.)

bestowed upon them surprised all the intelligent witnesses of these incidents.

The Magicians of Fir'on

Magic is a Great Sin and the worst of the professions. A magician is destined to Divine punishment, and Hell will be his abode. The magicians of Fir'on, were ordered to challenge Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and belittle him. But their wicked craft was of no avail, and they failed miserably. At that moment Divine Grace descended. The magicians intuitively sensed the power of Allah (S.w.T.) that gave Hazrat Musa (a.s.) superiority over them. Neither the lure of wealth nor the warning of torture and death by Fir'on could shake their belief. They were redeemed.

“Certainly I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and certainly I will crucify you all. They said: No Harm; surely to our Lord we go back.” (Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:49-50)

Asiya was a Believing Woman

Upon whomsoever He wishes, Allah (S.w.T.) bestows a respectable position in this world, as well as the hereafter. Asiya, Fir'on's wife was leading a life of affluence and material comforts, when her heart became illuminated by the light of belief. Even though she had to go through untold hardships because of her husband Fir'on, she did not flinch. She declared her belief in Allah (S.w.T.) and His Prophet, Musa (a.s.), without any fear. At the time of her death, when she was being martyred, she prayed to her Lord.

“...she said: My Lord! build for me a house with Thee in the Garden and deliver me from Fir'on and his doings, and deliver me from the unjust people.” (Surah at-Tahrim 66:11)

People of the Cave

The people of the cave whose number is said to be seven were living during the reign of the tyrant king Daqiyānīs. Daqiyānīs had claimed divinity and people used to follow him. But suddenly the hearts of these seven people became illuminated with true belief.

They set aside the false claims of Daqiyānīs and in order to tread the path of true beliefs, renounced the worldly power and headed for the mountains and hid themselves in a cave.

This incident is described in detail in Surah al-Kahf. Their example is preserved in history till the Day of the Judgement.

Realization Before Death

It is known that there have been people so much involved in sins that their salvation appeared impossible. But in their last moments, realization dawned on them and they prayed for pardon. Due to

their sincere repentance all their sins were pardoned and the Mercy of the Merciful Allah (S.w.T.) came to their rescue. Thus, they were able to achieve salvation and happiness in the hereafter. They shall be among the successful ones on the Day of the Judgement.

Immediate Death on Embracing Islam

One such fortunate person was a Jew at the battle of Uhud. His name was 'Makhrūq'. He addressed his tribesmen as follows: "You are not aware that Muhammad (S) is the truthful and the promised Prophet." They replied, "How do you know we are not aware?" "Then why don't you come for his help?" he asked. The tribe said. "Today is Saturday (sabbath)."

He said, "But that was at the time of Hazrat Musa (a.s.), it is abrogated by the Holy Prophet (S) and is not acceptable to him." When he did not receive any response from the people of his tribe he went to the Holy Prophet (S) and became a Muslim. He was extremely wealthy. He entrusted all his wealth to the Holy Prophet (S) and himself entered the battlefield to face the unbelievers. He was soon martyred. It is said that the Holy Prophet (S) often gave charity from the property of Makhrūq, the martyr.

Eternal Bliss

Hur ibn Yazid Riyāhi was the commander of Ibn Ziyad. He had obstructed the way of Imam Husain (a.s.) and forced him to halt at Karbala. This despicable act would have condemned him to eternal damnation. But when he heard the sermon of Imam Husain (a.s.) on the day of Aash-Shūrā and also his Isteghasa, (call for help) his heart underwent a transformation. The Mercy and the Grace of Allah (S.w.T.) came to his rescue. He repented sincerely and aligned himself with the martyrs of Karbala. In this way he was able to achieve eternal bliss. In the last moments of his life Imam Husain (a.s.) gave him the good news, "You are 'Hur' (Free) as your mother has named you."

Wise People Never Lose Hope

One should never lose hope of achieving high moral traits and perfection in one's faith. In fact one should not even doubt the possibility of achieving it. Even though this type of deficiency in hope is not totally Harām, yet the true believer should refrain from it. On the other hand he should not consider his apparent capabilities; like youth, strength, wisdom, capacity to think, ability to work, enthusiasm, love etc. to be sufficient for success in the hereafter

Many a people had lacked the above qualities but when the Mercy and Grace of Allah (S.w.T.) came to their aid, they were raised to a high position. For example people like Fuzail ibn Ayaz, Imran Sabi, Barham Nasrani and Sahib Riyaz who received the Tawfīq from Allah (S.w.T.) when had become weak due to old age and were incapable of hardwork and active life, yet they achieved an exalted position.

Hopelessness is a Great Sin

Hopelessness is a Greater Sin because it implies negation of the Absolute Sovereignty of the Almighty. A heart illumined with the knowledge that Allah (S.w.T.) the Creator of all existing things is the best Planner, the best Executor and the best Protector; a person who has the knowledge that it is Allah (S.w.T.) who bestows a super-abundance of sustenance, security and welfare on His creatures because of His boundless Mercy, limitless Generosity and unsurpassed Knowledge, will be comforted and reassured. The heart of such a person will be calm and peaceful and the question of feeling sorrowful and aggrieved will just not arise. The creator is not unmindful of the needs of a child in its mother's womb. Nourishment is supplied to him through the umbilical cord. When the child is born, Allah (S.w.T.) provides him through his mother, wholesome and easily digestible milk. Gradually Allah (S.w.T.) develops in him various capabilities needed for the different stages of his growth.

To ensure the security and happiness of the child Allah (S.w.T.) creates deep and abiding affection in the heart of the mother for the child; and she is prepared to sacrifice all her comforts and pleasures for the child's sake.

After having the awareness, discussed above, is it possible for one to lose hope in his Lord? No! In fact it makes it easy to repose faith in the Creator and go through all the ups and downs of life with resignation and fortitude.

Hopelessness is a Sign of Disbelief and Lack of Knowledge

Despair is a form of hidden disbelief. It is the result of ignorance about the greatness of one's Lord (Allah (S.w.T.)). Giving in to despair is equivalent to disbelieving in one's Lord (Allah (S.w.T.)), which is a Greater Sin. One should therefore be extremely cautious and guard against putting oneself in such a woeful state. The noble Qur'an explains this in the verse,

"... Surely none despairs of Allah's Mercy except the unbelieving people." (Surah Yusuf 12:87)

Hope is Embedded in Human Psychology

The Almighty in His infinite Mercy, has embedded hope in human psychology. Even in the worst of circumstances, there is a faint glimmer of hope in the human heart, and this helps him to overcome his feeling of hopelessness. He therefore turns to his Lord and supplicates for Mercy, forgiveness and redress, and Allah (S.w.T.) never turns away a supplicant.

The Cure of Hopelessness

1. Power of Allah (S.w.T.)

Praise be to Allah (S.w.T.) for His supreme and absolute authority over the vast universe; the earth and the seven skies. He sets the course of the stars and the planets; and not a leaf falls without His permission. He is able to do what He wills. Intellect and reason get bewildered in trying to understand His Might and Greatness. Can such an Almighty be unable to fulfill the meagre needs of his creatures. Certainly not! So how can hopelessness be justified.

2. Personal Experiences

One must ponder upon the various blessings Allah (S.w.T.) bestowed on us in the past and which we had taken for granted. The Almighty has brought us safely out of the darkness of the womb. He is thoughtful of our needs and He knows them better than our ourselves, and fulfills them without our asking. He has rescued us from many a dangerous situations, disease and calamities. He has bestowed numerous blessings, physical, material, mental, social and spiritual upon us yet we become confident of our standing as individuals. Then why should there be hopelessness? Is He unaware of our condition? I seek forgiveness from the Almighty Allah! Allah (S.w.T.) is far too exalted.

3. Outward Examples

Let us study the situation of those who were in extremely difficult times but were hopeful of the Lord's Benevolence and Mercy. They continued to entreat Allah (S.w.T.) till He accepted their prayers and redressed them.

Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) and his Male Child

Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) was one hundred and twelve years and according to another report one hundred and twenty years. His respected wife Hazrat Sarah was ninety-seven years. They did not have any children. Allah (S.w.T.) sent to them an Angel to inform them that they would be gifted with a son.

“And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed, then We gave her the good news of Ishaq and after Ishaq of (a son's son) Yaqub.”

“She said: O wonder! Shall I bear a son when I am an extremely old woman and this my husband an extremely old man? Most surely this is a wonderful thing.”

“They said: Do you wonder at Allah's bidding? The Mercy of Allah and His blessings are on you, O People of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious.” (Surah Hūd 11: 71-73)

In brief, the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.) blessed Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) and Janabe Sarah with a son, Ishaq, at an age when it could never have been expected.

Hazrat Zakaria (a.s.) and his Son Yahya (a.s.)

The age of Hazrat Zakaria (a.s.) was ninety-nine years and that of his wife eighty nine. Yet, he was hopeful of the Grace of Allah (S.w.T.) and he prayed with sincerity, "He said My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head flares with hoariness, and my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee: And surely I fear my cousins after me, and my wife is barren, therefore grant me from Thyself an heir, who would inherit me and inherit from the children of Yaqub, and make him, my Lord, one in whom Thou art well pleased."

O Zakaria! Surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be Yahya: We have not made before anyone his equal. He said,

"O my Lord! When shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached the extreme degree of old age? He said: "So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing." (Surah Maryam 19:4-9)

Thus Allah (S.w.T.) accepted the invocation of Hazrat Zakaria (a.s.) and Hazrat Yahya (a.s.) was born to him.

If one is suffering from some disease for a long time and there seems to be no hope of curing it, one must consider this disease to be a penalty for his sins (kaffara).

On the other hand if due to his prayers and Sadaqah the disease is cured it becomes a mean of salvation.

Hazrat Ayyub (a.s.) and Tribulations

If one intends to achieve humility and insight, he must study the life of Hazrat Ayyub (a.s.). After being inflicted with a horrible disease for seven years and according to other reports for eighteen years, he prayed to Allah (S.w.T.).

"And Ayyub, when he cried to his Lord, (saying): Harm has afflicted me, and Thou art the most Merciful of the Mercifuls." (Surah al-'Anbiya' 21:83)

Allah (S.w.T.) responded to his entreaty by curing his malady and also gave him wealth as before.

Hidden Wisdom in Poverty and Destitution

If one is afflicted with poverty for a long time and is unable to see a way out, then this situation can be viewed in two ways: First, it is possible that there may be a hidden wisdom in his poverty, and if he had access to this knowledge he may himself choose this state for himself and be happy in the bargain.

Secondly, those who spend the earlier part of life in poverty usually become enriched at a later stage and therefore have a comfortable time in their old age.

Wealth in the Empty Hands

As an example an incident is quoted from the book “Faraz Bēdashshuda”:

A rich businessman says, ‘I was travelling for Hajj and had 3000 dinars and gold and silver ornaments with me. I had tied them up in a bag attached to my cummerbund. But I dropped this bag when I went to answer the call of nature. I had proceeded many miles further, when I realized my bag was missing. I had a lot of wealth so I did not find it imperative to go back and look for my money nor was it possible to return. When I came back to my native place one calamity upon another befell me. Gradually all my wealth disappeared. My public respect began to change into shame. Due to embarrassment before friends, gossip of the enemies and further destitution I was compelled to leave my native village. During this journey I spent a night in a hamlet. At this time, all the money I had was one-sixth of a silver coin. It was a dark, rainy night. I took my wife to a cheap hostel for the night. All of a sudden my wife began to have labour pains and a child was born. My wife said that she needed something to eat, otherwise she may starve to death. I took the small silver coin and knocked at the door of a vegetable seller. After repeated requests he opened the door. I explained to him my circumstances and gave him the coin. He brought some curd and ghee in an earthen bowl. As I turned back and walked a few paces, I slipped and the earthen bowl dropped from my hands and broke. I was struck with grief and could not control myself.

I began to slap my face and yelled loudly. The window of a nearby house opened and someone enquired as to who I was and why was I creating a din and disturbing the neighbourhood. I explained my circumstances in brief and added that I, my wife and the child were starving of hunger, and this misfortune has befallen me. The man asked, “Is your hue and cry only for a piece of silver.” ‘No’, I said, “I had never been so miserly.” Then I told him about the year when I had lost my bag of 3000 dinars and ornaments. He asked me if there were any distinguishing marks on my moneybag. I thought he was trying to fool me, so I protested. But he insisted and I told him. Then he called me in his house and sent his slave to get my wife and child. The slave returned with my wife and child, and our host put us up for the night. In the morning he gave some dinars and said that till my wife recovers, we must stay in his house.

Ten days passed in this manner. Everyday he used to give us some dinars. Then one day he asked me about my profession. When I told him that I was an expert trader, he gave me some money and told me to start a business. After conducting the business for some months, I offered him his share of the profits. He went into the other room and returned with the moneybag that I had lost years ago. I was overjoyed to see it and became unconscious due to the excitement. I thanked Allah (S.w.T.) and returned to my native village. Gradually my economic conditions began to change and once more I was a rich man.

“It may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, maybe that you love a thing while it is

evil for you.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:216).

“Allah brings about ease after difficulty.” (Surah at-Talaq 65:7)

Cure for Hopelessness in Difficult Times

If a person is involved in worldly problems he should turn towards two realities. Firstly, this world is a place of test and trial for everyone. There is no one who could escape its clutches. Secondly, one must look at the conditions of people who are worse off than us. In this way one can get peace and solace by comparing ones condition with that of others. Even in the greatest calamities, we should continue to rely upon the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.). Many a people of the past had been afflicted with tribulations with no relief in sight. But the Merciful Allah (S.w.T.) gave them success.

In the book “Faraj Baid as Shiddah” the respected author, Husain bin Saad Dabistani has recorded more than 500 incidents where people, surrounded by troubles from all sides were given relief by Allah (S.w.T.) after all hopes were shattered. Further we ourselves witness many cases where the invocations and Sadaqah of the religious personalities help the people out of difficult situations. In the same book there is an incident where a resident of Madinah says, “I was rich and had all the good things in life. Eventually I became poor and destitute. So I went to Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and told him of my problems. He expressed pity upon my condition and recited the following couplets for my sake, “If you fall into difficult times do not be impatient. Because for a long time you have experienced comfort.

Then after every discomfort is comfort and consolation. And the saying of Allah (S.w.T.) is the most truthful. ‘So do not despair, certainly despair is disbelief.’ Allah (S.w.T.) may enrich you in a short while. After that do not forget your Lord. Certainly Allah (S.w.T.) fulfills His promise. If the intellect had the capacity to produce food the wealth of the world would be only with the intellectuals. Beware, do not lose hope when you face calamities. Behind the curtains are concealed astounding candles (of hope).”

The narrator says, “When I heard these lines my grief changed into happiness and hopelessness turned into optimism. Very soon the doors of Mercy opened upon me and my bad times changed for the good.”

A Reminder

This book relates from the Holy Prophet (S) that to ward off calamities this Qur’anic verse should be recited.

“There is no God but Thou, glory be to Thee, surely I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss.” (Surah al-’Anbiya’ 21:87)

“Allah (S.w.T.) is my Lord, and I do not associate him with anything.”

We should remember that despair is the worst of the sins, because it implies that the connection

between Allah (S.w.T.) and his creature has been severed. It signifies turning away from the Divine nature. Because even if an iota of belief remains in a person's heart, he could not sever relations with his Nourisher and Cherisher. It may be that sometimes a sort of hopelessness pervades his imagination but he soon recovers and repents of his sin.

Every Sin is Pardonable

According to the verse of the Holy Qur'an and Mutawatir (widely related) traditions all the sins which man commits are pardonable if he repents sincerely. It is wrong to say that such a sin can never be pardoned. The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Glorious Qur'an,

“And He it is who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deeds and He knows what you do.” (Surah Ash-Shūrā 42:25)

Allah (S.w.T.) has mentioned His names as:

- 1) Tawwabun (one who accepts Tawba)
- 2) Gaffarun (one who pardons)
- 3) Ghafīrun (one who forgives totally)
- 4) Ghāfir udh-Dhunuba (Pardoner of sins)
- 5) Qābil ut-Tawba (one who accepts repentance)

Allah (S.w.T.) has given a general invitation to all the people to turn towards Him and seek forgiveness for their sins. If we study the meaning of the 54th verse of Surah az-Zumar we find that sinners have no cause to lose hope. This Ayat is also known as Ayat al-Rahma (The verse of Mercy).

“Say: O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah ; Surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (Surah az-Zumar 39:53).

Unlimited Grace

A few points must be noted from the above verse.

Firstly, Allah (S.w.T.) says, 'O my servant' and not 'O sinners.' Even though he is addressing the sinners he addresses them as 'my servants'. So that the hopelessness of the servants may be transformed into hope in His Mercy.

Secondly, he says, "Who have acted extravagantly." This denotes a soft approach. Allah (S.w.T.) does

not say ‘O you who have acted blatantly,’ So that the sinners may not lose hope of obtaining pardon.

Hopelessness is Harām

The third point to be noted is that the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has told the sinners, “Do not despair of the Divine Mercy.” The use of a negative term signifies the prohibition of hopelessness. Also it means that to lose hope regarding salvation is Harām.

The fourth point is that Allah (S.w.T.) did not stop at this, He further adds, “Surely Allah (S.w.T.) forgives the faults altogether,” signifying that the statement covers all the sins.

Fifth Point: The addition of the word ‘altogether’ at the end signifies that the statement includes all sins without any exception.

Sixth Point: The last point is that at the end of the verse, Allah (S.w.T.) repeats, “Surely He is the forgiving, the merciful,” to stress upon the fact that Allah (S.w.T.) desires and wishes to forgive those who repent.

Repentance of the Killer of a Prophet is also Acceptable

Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari (r.a.) relates that a woman came to the Holy Prophet (S) and asked, “If a woman kills her child can she seek pardon?” The Holy Prophet (S) replied,

“By Allah in whose control is the life of Muhammad (S) even if this woman has killed seventy Prophets and then feels remorse and repents and Allah is convinced of her sincerity and the truth of her statement, upon the condition that she does not repeat the sin, her repentance shall be accepted. And her sins would be pardoned. Surely Allah is oft forgiving and forgives, ever so beyond measure. Verily one who repents (sincerely) is; as if he has never committed that sin.”¹

Despair in the Acceptance of Prayers is Also Improper

If we pray to Allah (S.w.T.) for some worldly benefits or the Hereafter and our prayer is not answered it raises two noteworthy points. Firstly, we must know that Allah (S.w.T.) has promised to accept all prayers and Allah (S.w.T.) never goes back on His word.

As it is mentioned in the Holy book,

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 186)

At another place Allah (S.w.T.) says,

“And your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you.” (Surah Ghāfir, 40:60)

The second point is that due to His unlimited wisdom He may delay the acceptance of some prayer. So if we do not get immediate gratification we should not lose hope of having our prayers accepted.

Prayers May Not Be Accepted Due to Sins

Sometimes the sins of a person come in the way of the acceptance of his prayers. At other times Allah (S.w.T.) may delay the acceptance due to some hidden wisdom. This would compel the person to repeat his prayers and thus he would be entitled for additional *Tawāb*. The opportunity to invoke is itself a blessing of Allah (S.w.T.).

Another possibility is that Allah (S.w.T.) wishes to hear the entreaties of His creature many times before He fulfills his wishes.

Delay in the Acceptance of Prayers Causes Nearness to Allah (S.w.T.)

Sometimes there is a delay in the acceptance of prayers because, to supplicate Allah (S.w.T.) continuously is the best of worship. It is the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.) that he may want us to continue to pray to Him. It is a means of seeking nearness to Him. For whomsoever He wishes good, He gives him the *Tawfīq* of supplicating Him by delaying the acceptance of his prayers.

Allama Majlisi (r.a.) writes in the book ‘Hayatul Qulub’ that Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says in a reliable tradition, “Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) used to visit the populated cities and the desolate forests so that he could derive lessons from the creatures of Allah (S.w.T.). One day he saw a worshipper busy in prayers. His dress was made of fur and the surroundings filled with his intonation. Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) was astonished at his appearance. He went towards him, sat down and waited for him to conclude his prayers. When he finished his prayers, Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) said, “I appreciate your way and want to befriend you. Tell me where do you stay so that I could come to meet you whenever I want.” He said, “You will not be able to travel on my path.”

“Why?”

“I walk on the surface of the water.”

Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) said, “The Almighty Allah who has given you the capacity to walk on water, can also enable me to do so. Come, arise, today I shall spend the night with you at your residence.

When they reached the bank of the river the man uttered “Bismillah” and stepped in the river and was soon on the other side of it. Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) also recited Bismillah and crossed the river. This man

was astounded. Then both of them entered his house.

Ibrahim (a.s.) asked him, "Which is the most difficult day?" He replied, "The day Allah will reward and punish all His creatures according to their deeds." Ibrahim (a.s.) said, "Let us together pray that Allah may protect us from the hardships of this day."

According to another report Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) said, "Let us pray together for the sinful believers." The worshipper said, "I will not participate in this prayer because I have been praying for something for the past thirty years and till date it has not been fulfilled, so there is no scope in praying for something else."

Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) said, "O worshipper! when Allah holds a creature dear He delays the acceptance of his prayers so that he may continue to plead and supplicate Him. On the other hand when He dislikes a person He answers his prayers immediately or creates hopelessness in his heart so that he would stop praying."

Then he asked the worshipper about his prayer which has not been accepted till then. He said, "One day I was busy in my prayers when I saw a handsome boy grazing a herd of sheep and goats. I asked him whose animals were those. He said they belonged to him. Then I asked him who he was. He said that he was the son of Khalilullah (Friend of Allah) Ibrahim (a.s.) and that his name was Ismail. At that moment I prayed to Allah to let me see my 'Khalil' Ibrahim (a.s.)." Ibrahim (a.s.) said, "Now your prayer has been answered. I am that Ibrahim (a.s.)." The worshipper became extremely overjoyed and embraced Ibrahim (a.s.). He kissed his head, eyes and hands and thanked the Almighty Allah with sincerity. After this both of them together prayed for the believing men and women.

1. Liyali Akhbār

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