

Sura Yusuf, Verse 97-98

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ

They said: O our father! seek forgiveness of our sins for us, surely we were at fault

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

He said 'I will soon seek forgiveness of my Lord for you, Surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'

Reflections

- the brothers realize their fault. But they are more concerned about if God will forgive them.
- why does Nabi Yaqub say 'I will soon seek forgiveness'? Why didn't he do it right away?
- Nabi Yaqub mentions two names of Allah. What effect do those names have on the brothers? He doesn't mention anything about justice or punishment.

Tafsir

After seeing their father regain his eyesight the brothers are delighted for the father. But they feel very ashamed of what they have done. The realization of all they put their family through hits them hard and they regret their actions deeply. They immediately acknowledge that they are at fault and ask the father to seek forgiveness for them. When human beings realize the extent of their sin and regret having done it, it is a sign of turning back to God. It shows that the heart is not completely hard. Otherwise there would be no realization and no repentance.

The brothers are concerned about their disobedience to God. They ask the father to seek God's forgiveness for them, rather than just his forgiveness. The father does not reproach them or ask them anything. He says he will soon seek forgiveness for them and gives them hope that Allah will forgive them by reminding them that He is the Forgiving and the Merciful. Hadith tells us that Nabi Yaqub wanted to seek forgiveness for them at a special time, when duas are most quickly answered. He waited for the early morning time on a Friday which is the best time for seeking forgiveness from Allah.

Asking someone in a higher position to seek forgiveness for you is allowed in Islam. This verse is proof of that. The brothers ask their father to seek forgiveness for them and the father agrees to. The brothers are aware of the status of their father and know that his prayer for them would be answered. This is known as doing 'tawassul' or using a 'wasilah'. It means using an

intermediary who has a higher status with Allah. Almighty Allah tells the Holy Prophet (s) in the Quran; *when they did wrong, had they come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger also asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning, Merciful* (4:64)

The days of wrongdoing and tolerating the wrongdoing were now over.

Scholars say that for the oppressor (*dhalim*) there are three days;

- a) The day of power (when he can do wrong)
- b) The day of opportunity (when he gets the chance to do wrong)
- c) The day of regret.

And for the oppressed (*madhlum*) there are also three days:

- a) The day of sadness (when he bears the wrong done to him)
- b) The day of thought (when he plans how to counter what is done to him)
- c) The day of help (when he is helped and rewarded by God, either in this world or in the Hereafter)

Of course days here refers to periods of time.

The day that the brothers put Nabi Yusuf in the well they were laughing and Nabi Yusuf was sad and humiliated. Now it was the opposite.

It is never too late to seek forgiveness of Allah. However great the sin, if there is true understanding of the seriousness of the sin that was committed and a sincere desire to repent and turn back to God, Allah will forgive and accept the person back. In fact Allah dislikes a person who loses hope in the mercy of God. That is one of the major sins.

Hadith

There are four signs of a repentant person:

- 1) He is sincere to God in his actions
- 2) He shuns falsehood
- 3) He attaches firmly to truth and
- 4) He is eager to do good.

The Holy Prophet (s)

Al-Harani, Tohaf al-Uqool, p. 20

Almighty Allah told Nabi Dawood, ‘O Dawood, when my believing servant commits a wrong deed, then he returns [to Me] and repents and feels ashamed when he remembers it, I will forgive

him and I will make the recording angels forget it, and I will turn it into a good deed, for surely I am the most Merciful.

Narrated by Imam as-Sadiq (a)

Biharul Anwar, 30/28/6

(Discuss with students why God would be so forgiving. He loves the human being and wants happiness and success for him)

Important Lessons

- 1) Acknowledging the sin is the first step towards getting it forgiven.
- 2) Family relationships are too precious to let mistakes of members spoil them for ever.
- 3) A parent will always love and accept the child back, even when they have wronged them.
- 4) When someone acknowledges the wrong they have done to you do not reproach them for it or rub it in.

Possible Ideas for activities

- let children make a door of repentance. Make a key (Istighfar) and a lock (hard heart).

Imam Zayn al Abidin (a) says; *My God ! You are He who has opened a door to Your pardon and named it 'repentance' for You said, 'Repent to God with unswerving repentance' (66: 8). What is the excuse for him who remains heedless of entering the door after its opening?"*

Sahifa al-Kamilah, the whispered prayers of those who repent.

- children could make a tree of repentance. What are its fruits (sincerity, love of Allah, good deeds, feeling sorry, ashamed . . .)?

Story

Effect of true repentance

When the order prohibiting wine-drinking was revealed a caller was sent by the Messenger of Allah (S) who announced that henceforth no one shall consume liquor. By chance, one day the Holy Prophet (S) was passing through a by lane when a Muslim man also entered it carrying a bottle of wine in his hand. He was terrified on seeing the Holy Prophet (S) and he said fervently to the Almighty Allah, "I repent for this and I shall never drink again. Please save me from disgrace."

When the Messenger of Allah (S) came near he asked, "*What is there in the bottle?"*" "It contains Vinegar," replied the man. The Holy Prophet (S) put forward his hand and asked the man to put a little bit on his palm. When the Prophet (S) examined it, it was indeed vinegar. The person was overwhelmed with emotions and he began to weep and say, "By Allah! It was wine!"

“But before this I had repented and begged Allah not to disgrace me,” He added. The Messenger of Allah (S) said that it was true, “Allah changes the sins of repenters into good deeds. “They are the ones whose sins are changed into good deeds by Allah.”

Source: Misbahul Qulûb

Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

<http://maarefislam.persianblog.ir/post/191/>

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