

Sūrat al-Hud Verse 90

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ

11:90 - Ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him in repentance; surely my Lord is Merciful, Loving.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What is the difference between seeking forgiveness and repenting?
- 2) Which other names of Allah can you think of that are similar to the ones mentioned in the verse?

Commentary

Prophet Shu‘ayb tells his people to do two things as a conclusion to all that he has preached to them. While warning and making his people realize the wrong they have done, the Prophet also gives them hope of what to do to make amends. They should seek forgiveness for the wrong they have done and turn back to Allah. Forgiveness would purify them of the pollution of sin and they would then turn to Him in a state of purity. Istighfar is to stop sinning and ask for the previous sins to be erased. Tawbah is to turn towards Allah with the heart and soul and start afresh.

Istighfar – Knowing that human beings were prone to slip, Allah in His immense mercy and wisdom, has opened the door of Istighfar for His servants, the door of seeking forgiveness after a sin. So whoever commits a sin, but repents and wishes he had not committed it, and knows that he will not do it again - at least will try never to repeat it again - can enter that door, and have the sins erased from his record. Istighfar is the weapon of believers against the Shaytan who tries to lead them into Hell through inviting them to sin. According to a hadith of the Holy Prophet (S), Iblees declared to Allah that he would continuously try to lead humans astray so long as they were alive. Allah answered that He would continuously forgive them so long as they sought His forgiveness. The best time to seek forgiveness is during the early hours of the morning before dawn. That is a very special time, when all duas are accepted. The Holy Qur'an describes the believers as those who seek forgiveness at the time of dawn.

Tawbah - The word tawba means return or turning back to Allah. It can be described as a return to purity of the soul after it has become polluted through sin and distanced itself from the Mercy of Allah. It is also a return from the domain of the physical nature to the domain of spirituality and primordial nature (*fitrah*). Every turning back of the human being to Allah is wrapped up in two other turnings: the turning of Allah towards the human being to enable him/her to turn to Him, and then the turning of Allah towards the human being again after he turns to Him to accept him.

The two names at the end of the verse are to give hope to those who have done wrong. Even if the sin is huge, the path to Allah is always open. He is merciful to His servants and loves them and will accept their repentance. He gives them many chances to turn back to Him. Both the qualities of mercy and love are an encouragement for Allah's servants to have hope that they will be accepted by Him despite doing wrong.

Lessons

- 1) When human beings sin and do wrong, there is always hope that they can turn back to Allah.
- 2) Seeking forgiveness and turning in repentance to Allah are the two ways open for purifying the soul and being accepted by Allah.
- 3) Allah is Merciful and loves His creatures.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Seeking forgiveness – 3:135, 11:52, 71:10
- 2) Repentance – 9:104, 9:118

Connecting topics

- 1) Forgiveness and Repentance - <https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-241-on-q-574-forgiveness-and-repentance/>
- 2) Turning to Allah - <https://academyofislam.com/quranic-reflection-no-713-ayat-9104-turning-back-to-allah-swt/>
- 3) Istighfar - <https://en.wikishia.net/view/Istighfar>
- 4) Seeking Forgiveness - <https://www.al-islam.org/understanding-month-glory-lessons-month-ramadhan/seeking-forgiveness-allah>