

## Ten Incidents regarding those who did Tawba

Written by Ayat. Dastghaib Shirazi

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### Ten Incidents regarding those who did Tawba (Repentance)

By: *Ayatullah Abdul Husayn Dastaghaib Shirazi*

Since the stories of the pious are very useful in awaking sleeping souls we present herewith some incidents regarding those who did Tawba, and quote some incidents that support some of the issues raised in this book. We sincerely hope that our respected readers shall benefit from these.

#### 1. Wine changed into Vinegar

Sabzewari writes in his book *Misbahul Qul* that 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 bylane 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."

#### 2. Repentance is accepted till the last breath

A tradition is recorded from Muawiyah bin Wahab in the chapter of the time for Tawba in *al-Kafi*. He says, 'We were travelling towards Makkah and accompanying us was a religious old man who did not follow the Jafariyya school of thought. Throughout the journey he recited full prayer (as is the practice among Ahle sunnat). The nephew of this old man was also with him and he was a Shia. The old man fell sick during the journey and he told his nephew to explain to him the Shia faith that Allah Almighty make it a way of salvation for him. All his friends were of the opinion that he should be left to die on his previous belief.

The nephew was not able to accept this and he began to say, "O Uncle! After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S), except for a few people, everyone turned back from Islam. After the Holy Prophet (S), 'Ali (a.s.) deserved to be obeyed and it was obligatory on the people to follow him." The old man sighed deeply and said, "I also have faith in this." The next moment he was dead. After this we went to meet Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). 'Ali bin Sar? related this incident to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). He said, that the old man was among the people of Paradise. "How is it possible, Maula?" asked 'Ali bin Sar?. "He accepted the true faith only in his last moments?"

Imam (a.s.) said, "What more do you want from him? By Allah! He has entered Paradise." This shows that there is time for returning to the truth and repenting for sins even till the last breath. (However, one should repent before one is sure of death, as mentioned by us before).

#### 3. A Perfect feeling of Allah (S.w.T.)'s fear is Tawba

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Imam Zainul 'Abidin (a.s.) is quoted in volume 15, page 117 of Bihar al-Anwar to have said, "There was a shroud thief among Bani Israel. One day his companion fell sick and was soon anticipating death. He called his friend, the shroud thief and asked how much he valued him as a friend. The thief accepted that he was a very good friend. The friend said that he had a desire and the thief agreed to fulfill it. The friend showed him two shrouds and told him to choose one for himself so that the other one could be used to bury him "But do not reopen my grave after I am buried and make me naked." This was not acceptable to the thief but due to his friend's persuasion he chose the better shroud for himself and went away.

When the friend died and was buried, the thief said to himself, "The dead cannot know that I have broken a promise to him." He began to dig the grave and was about to uncloth it when he heard a scream and the corpse was saying, "Don't do this!" The thief was frightened and filled up the grave. When his own death neared, the thief summoned his sons and asked them how he had been as a father to them? The sons agreed that he was the best of fathers. The thief said that he had a last wish and the sons agreed to fulfill it.

He said that after he died they should cremate him and throw half his ashes into the sea and half into the desert. The sons agreed to do this and fulfilled their promise after the thief father died. However, the Almighty Allah gathered his scattered ashes and made him alive again. Allah asked him, "Why did you make such a bequest?" He said, "By Your Might, I made such a bequest due to the fear of Your chastisement."

Allah said, "I have pardoned you and changed your fear into safety and also satisfied the people who had claims of rights upon you."

This incident proves that if a person is ashamed of his deeds and has fear of Allah (S.w.T.), the Almighty shall pardon him and also make his enemies satisfied with him.

### 4. Refraining from sin brings forgiveness

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says in Rawdatul Kafi that there was a hermit in Bani Israel. He was absolutely free from sins. Upon seeing this the head Satan called his cohorts and asked which one of them could mislead this man? One of them volunteered and Satan asked what method he would use? He said through women. The Satan told him that he would not succeed because the person was oblivious to sexual pleasure. Another Satan rose up and said he would deviate him through wine and sensuality.

The big Satan said that he too was unsuitable for this job because the sage was not interested in these things. A third Satan stood up and said that he would cause him to err through good deeds and noble character. The big Satan said that indeed he was fit for the job. This Satan, at once went to the place where the sage was engrossed in his meditation, and stood up beside him and began to pray Salât. The worshipper was feeling sleepy but the Satan continued to perform prayers. When the worshipper got tired he would take a rest but the Satan did not take a break.

The worshipper felt himself inferior and went to the devil to ask him the secret of his stamina in praying. The junior devil did not give any reply and the worshipper reiterated his question. Yet there was no response from the devil. When the worshipper asked him the third time the devil said, "The fact is that I had committed a great sin and since then whenever I remember my sin, I get impetus to worship more." The worshipper asked him what sin he had committed so that even he can do it and gain the stamina to worship so much. The devil said, "Go to a particular prostitute in the town, pay her two dirhams and fulfill your needs with her." "From where can I

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get two dirhams?" asked the worshipper, "I don't even know what a Dirham means". The devil took out two dirhams from under his feet and gave them to the worshipper and also gave him his cloak and sent him towards the city. The worshipper sought the address of the prostitute. The people guided him thinking that he was going to her to guide her towards morality. The worshipper gave the two dirhams to the woman and asked her to entertain him. The prostitute invited him inside with respect and said, "Pious people like you do not visit prostitutes. Why have you taken such a step?" The worshipper explained his aim in detail. The woman told him, "Actually, avoiding a sin is easier than repenting for it. Because it is not necessary that a sinner will get a chance to repent. I think that the one who has advised you for this is Satan, who has assumed a human form to mislead you. Go back to your place and you shall find him missing." The worshipper returned home and by chance the prostitute died the same night. In the morning people saw the following inscribed on her door: Take part in the funeral of this woman, She is from the people of Paradise. The people fell into doubt and were so astounded that for Three days they were not able to bury her. Till the Almighty Allah revealed upon His Messenger, M?sa Ibn Imran (a.s.) to recite her funeral prayer and also command the people to participate in it. "Because she had prevented a servant of Mine from committing a grievous sin. So I have forgiven all her sins and made Paradise incumbent on her."

### 5. Allah (S.w.T.)'s Mercy is Very Vast

Tafs?r al-Safi mentions under the exegesis of Surah ?li- 'Imran that one day Sa'ad Ibn Ma'az came weeping to the Messenger of Allah (S). After replying to his Sal?m the Prophet (S) asked him the reason for crying. Sa'ad said. "O Messenger of Allah! A young man is standing outside the house and weeping upon his youth like a woman mourns the death of her child. He desires to meet you." The Holy Prophet (S) ordered that the young man be presented to him. Sa'ad came to the Prophet (S) with the youth. He saluted the Messenger (S). After replying his Sal?m the Holy Prophet (S) asked the young man the reason for his grief. "Why shouldn't I grieve," said the young man, "I have committed so many sins that even a few of them are sufficient to earn me Hell-fire. I am sure I shall be punished for my sins.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "Have you attributed partners to Allah?"

"I seek refuge of Allah from attributing a partner to Him."

"Have you murdered one unjustly?"

"No",

"Allah shall certainly forgive your sins even if they are like mountains," the Prophet of Allah (S) said.

"But my sins are greater than mountains," said the young man."

"Even if your sins are heavier than seven earths, seas, mountains, trees and all creatures Allah will condone them."

"My sins are heavier than all of these," said the youth.

"Allah will forgive them even if they are heavier than the heavens, stars, Arsh and Kursi."

"My sins are more than these."

"Pity on you! O young man! Who is greater, your sins or your Lord?"

Hearing this, the young man fell into prostration and said, "My Lord is pure, nothing is greater than Him and He is greater than the greatest thing."

"Would the High and Mighty Lord not forgive your great sins?" asked the Prophet (S).

'No', said the young man and became silent.

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Then the Holy Prophet (S) said, "Fie on you, young man, can you tell me about one of your great sins?"

"Yes, for seven years I used to exhume corpses and steal their shrouds. One day a young girl from the Ansars died. After she was buried I opened her grave in the middle of the night and removed her shroud. I was about to return when the Shaitan instigated me, I looked at her body and defiled her chastity. When I was leaving, a voice came from behind her head, 'Fie on you for the chastisement of Qiy?ma! You made me naked and junub (ritually impure). Fie on you for the fire of Hell.'"

Then he said, "O Messenger of Allah (S)! I think I shall not be able to even smell the fragrance of Paradise. What do you think?"

"O Transgressor! Get away from me," said the Prophet (S), "Lest your fire may burn me! How close you are to the fire!"

He repeated this sentence a number of times and the youth finally went away from there. After taking some necessary items he went to the mountains of Madinah. He used to tie his hands behind the neck and plead for forgiveness. "I am Your sinful slave and degraded servant. I am regretful of my deeds. O Allah! I went to Your Messenger and he sent me away. This has increased my fear. I implore You by Your greatness, do not make me hopeless and include me among Your mercies." He continued this for forty days. Even the beasts began to take pity upon him. After forty days had passed he asked, "O my Lord! What is Your decision regarding me. If You have forgiven me, inform Your Messenger about it. If You have made a firm decision to punish me, burn me at once or subject me to some other punishment and save me from the degradation of Qiy?ma." Upon this, the Almighty Allah revealed the following ayats on His Messenger (S): "And those who when they commit an indecency or do injustice to their souls remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their faults — and who forgives the faults but Allah, and (who) do not knowingly persist in what they have done. (As for) these — their reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and excellent is the reward of the labourers." (Surah ?li- 'Imran 3:135-136)

As soon as these verses were revealed the Messenger of Allah (S) came out of the door reciting the ayats and smiling. He told the companions, "Who can tell me about the repenting young man?" The companions said, "O Messenger of Allah! He is on such and such mountain." The Holy Prophet (S) went to the young man with his companions and found him standing between two rocks. His hands were tied behind him and his face was black due to the heat of the sun. The eyelashes had fallen due to weeping and he was saying: O Allah! You bestowed countless bounties on me and did favour on me. If I could only know whether my abode is Paradise or Hell. O My Lord! My sins are greater than your heavens, earths, Arsh and throne. If I could only know whether You would forgive me or degrade me on the day of Qiy?ma." He was repeating these words and weeping. He picked up sand and put it on his head. Looking at his conditions, the animals and birds around him were also weeping. The Messenger of Allah (S) came to him and untied his hands. Cleaned the soil from his head and said, "Young man! Good news for you that Allah has accepted your Tawba." Then he told his companions, "You should repent for your sins in this way" and recited the above-mentioned ayats. In this way the good news of Paradise was conveyed to the young man.

A point needs to be explained here. The Holy Prophet (S) drove away the young man probably because he wanted his fear of divine punishment to intensify to such an extent that it could atone for his deadly sins. That the tears of regret may wash his evil deeds and he may qualify for divine mercy. This was exactly what happened. The more earnest a person is in seeking

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forgiveness the more he shall be near to divine mercy.

Hence the driving away of the young man became a cause for the young man's expiation.

### 6. One should remain between Hope and fear till the end of one's life

It is mentioned in Safinatul Behar (Vol. 1, page 127) that the Holy Prophet (S) besieged the fort of Banu Qurayza. Banu Qurayza was a Jewish tribe who lived near Madinah and they were always trying to harm the Holy Prophet (S) and the Muslims. At last the Messenger of Allah (S) decided that there was no solution to this problem except to attack and destroy them. During the siege Banu Qurayza requested that Abu Lubaba be allowed to meet them so that they can seek his counsel. Abu Lubaba was acquainted with the Jews before this. Abu Lubaba was commanded by the Holy Prophet (S) to go to Banu Qurayza. When he went to them, they asked him if it was advisable for them to obey the orders of the Messenger of Allah (S). He told them to accept the orders of the Messenger (S) without any delay because he had arrived to destroy them. Saying this, Abu Lubaba made a gesture towards his neck. However, immediately after this he began to regret the act and thought that he had committed Khayanat with the Messenger of Allah (S) and exposed his secret. Deep in thought he exited from the Fort but due to shame he could not face the Holy Prophet (S). He went straight away to the Masjidun Nabawi and tied his neck to a pillar. Today the same pillar stands near the tomb of the Prophet (S) and is referred to as the Pillar of Tawba. Abu Lubaba said that he would not release himself from the pillar till he died or the Almighty forgave him. The companions informed the Holy Prophet (S) about this. The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "If he had come to me I would have requested Allah for his forgiveness but since he has directly referred to Allah, He knows better what to decide. Abu Lubaba fasted during the day and in the evening his daughter brought him some food just enough to sustain him. She used to untie him for necessary needs and then tied him up again. This continued for sometime. One day while the Messenger of Allah (S) was present in the house of Umm Salama the verses of Abu Lubaba's exoneration were revealed. The Holy Prophet (S) told Umm Salama that the Tawba of Abu Lubaba has been accepted by Allah.

Umm Salama asked him if she was permitted to inform Abu Lubaba for the same? "Yes! Why not?" replied the Prophet (S). Umm Salama went to her door and informed Abu Lubaba.

"Alhamdulillah", said Abu Lubaba. When the people offered to untie him he restrained them saying that only the Holy Prophet (S) could release him. The Messenger of Allah (S) arrived and said, "The Almighty Allah has accepted your repentance. Now you are free of sins as a newborn child."

He asked, "Do you permit me to give all my wealth in Sadaqah as a token of thankfulness?"

'No!' said the Prophet (S).

'Then 2/3 of my wealth?'

"No!"

"One third?" persisted Abu Lubaba.

Finally the Messenger of Allah (S) allowed him to donate one-third of his wealth and then recited the following ayat, And others have confessed their faults, they have mingled a good deed and an evil one; may be Allah will turn to them (mercifully); surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them; surely your prayer is a relief to them; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from His servants and takes the alms, and that Allah is the

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Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful? (Surah at-Tawba 9:102-104)

The above two incidents tell us that a person who does Tawba must keep in mind two things. First of all he must not consider his sin insignificant. He should be absolutely ashamed of it and he must implore the Lord's forgiveness. He must feel the compelling need of divine forgiveness and strive to achieve this with sincerity and continue in this pursuit till he is certain that Allah (S.w.T.) has forgiven him. Generally, this certainty is not achieved even till the time of his death. So he must continue to dread Allah (S.w.T.)'s chastisement and implore His forgiveness till the Angels of death will Insha'Allah give one the good news of divine forgiveness and bounties of the Hereafter. Secondly, as we already mentioned, it is incumbent on us to have hope and fear with regard to the acceptance of Tawba.

### 7. Controlling ones carnal desires causes salvation

Sayyidul Ulamah Mir Damad's grandson Fakhru'l Muhaqqiq quotes Shahid al-Thani in his book, *Fazail-us-Sadat* that a man arrived in Egypt. There he saw a blacksmith extracting red-hot iron from the kiln with his bare hands. The hot iron did not affect his skin. Certain that he must be some holy personality he came near and saluted him and said, "By the one who has gifted you this ability, please pray for me."

Upon hearing this request the black smith began to weep. Then he said, "O Slave of Allah! I am not as you think and I do not count myself among the righteous."

The visitor said, "But the gift that you have is not possible for anyone except a righteous personality?"

"It is due to another person," explained the blacksmith.

The visitor implored him for further enlightenment.

The Blacksmith said, "One day I was busy in my workshop when a most beautiful woman came to me and complained of her poverty and difficulties. I was stunned by her beauty. I told her to satisfy my needs and in return I shall solve her problems. She told me to fear Allah and said that she was not of loose character. "Okay!" said I, "You can go!" The woman went away dejected. After a while she returned and said that her need had compelled her to return to me. I took her to a house. We went inside and I locked the door. She asked me why I have locked the door? "So that people may not know about us" I said. She asked me why I did not fear Allah and I replied, "because He is Forgiving and Merciful." When I approached her I found her trembling like a thin twig in gusty wind. She was weeping profusely. "What is the matter with you", I asked.

She said that she was fearful of Allah Who was a witness over them. "If you leave me alone, I can guarantee that Allah shall make you immune to the fire of this world and Hell-fire," the woman said. The words had the desired effect and I gave up my evil intention. I gave her whatever I had and said that I was releasing her due to the fear of Allah (S.w.T.). The woman returned home satisfied. That night, I dreamt of a lady wearing a crown of rubies. She was telling me, "May Allah give you a goodly reward," When I asked her who she was, she said that she was the mother of that poor woman. "May Allah keep you safe from the fire of this world and the Hereafter," she prayed. I asked her to which family she belonged and she told me that they were from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S). I thanked Allah. From that day fire does not affect me. I also hope that the fire of Hell would cause me no harm.

We conclude that Allah (S.w.T.) cools the fire for one who controls his carnal desires and abstains from indecencies despite having all the means. Allah shall accommodate such people

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in His Mercy. Thus, the Holy Qur'an says, And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires, Then surely the garden — that is the abode. (Surah an-N?zi'?t 79:40-41)

### 8. Leaving Sins and respecting the Sayyids cause Salvation

The same book mentions another incident wherein Ishaq bin Yaq?b Tahiri had a dream in which he saw the Messenger of Allah (S) saying to him, "Release the killer!" He awoke with a start and summoned his servants and asked them who the killer was and where he was at the moment. The killer was presented at once. He had himself confessed to the murder. Ishaq told him to explain everything truthfully and that he shall be released. He said, "I belonged to a group of people with bad morals and we committed fornication in Baghdad where an old woman supplied us with girls. One day the old woman brought a very charming and beautiful girl. As the transaction neared completion the girl screamed and fell down unconscious. When she regained consciousness she implored us to fear Allah (S.w.T.) and leave her alone. "This old woman had lied to me that she was taking me to see a play," She explained. "She has cheated me. Please fear Allah, I am from the Progeny of 'Ali (a.s.) and Fatimah Zahra (S)."

The prisoner said, "My companions did not heed the entreaties of the girl and began to force her into submission. The status of Hazrat Fatima (S) made me feel ashamed of myself and I began to prevent them. They attacked me in return and the wounds are still visible. Finally I struck the head of the rapist and he died, and I succeeded in saving the girl. I sent her home. She prayed for me saying, 'Allah will save you just as you have saved me.' Presently there was a lot of commotion and my companions caught me as I held the blood-smeared sword. The person whom I had hit was writhing in blood. The bystanders caught me and brought me here. Ishaq said, 'I forgive you for Allah and for the sake of the Messenger of Allah (S).' The murderer said, 'I too repent of my deeds. By the Holy Personalities who saved me, I shall never commit such indecent acts again.'"

Allah (S.w.T.) helps those who help the oppressed and give up sinful acts. This man was saved because he had saved the honour of the Messenger of Allah (S). Allah (S.w.T.) rewarded him not only by saving his life but also by giving him the Tawf?q to do Tawba.

### 9. Do not Consider a Small thing insignificant

The late H?j Shaykh Abbas Qummi (a.r.) writes in his book Manazel ?khera that a person name Ibn Samad used to take account of himself many times during the day and night. One day when he was calculating the number of days he had lived, he realized that sixty years of his age have passed. He calculated the number of days in sixty years to be 21500. "Woe upon me!" he said, "Even if I have not committed more than one sin everyday, I would still meet Allah with the burden of 21500 sins." As soon as he realized this he fell down unconscious and died within a short time.

Narrations state that once the Holy Prophet (S) during a journey camped at a place absolutely bereft of any vegetation. He told the companions to collect sticks. All of them said that they were in such a desolate place that it was not possible to find any sticks. The Messenger of Allah (S) ordered each of them to collect as many twigs as he can. In the due course each companion brought some sticks and put them before the Prophet (S). When all of them had

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made a pile of sticks, the Holy Prophet (S) said, "Sins also accumulate in this way." The Messenger of Allah (S) wanted to show by this example that even though we may be unaware of our sins when they accumulate they could make a big heap. If we calculate the sins we commit in our life they shall reach a staggering figure. Thus when Ibn Samad assumed one sin for each day of his life he found 21500 sins in his scroll of deeds. In the words of Sa'di the Persian Poet, "An increase of drop on a drop makes a stream An increase of a stream upon a stream makes an ocean."

### 10. The Bounties of Allah (S.w.T.) cannot be computed

Fazil Naraqji writes in Mer'jus Sad't that a wanton lady named Shauna lived in Basra. She did not miss a single sinful gathering in the town. One day she was passing through the streets of Basra with her maids. She passed by a house from where there was a lot of weeping and wailing. The wanton said, "Subhan Allah, what a commotion!"

Then she sent one of her maids to find the reason behind the commotion. The maid went inside but did not return. The second maidservant was dispatched but she too did not return. Finally a third one was deputed inside with express orders to return soon. The third maid went inside as in compliance to the order returned soon. She said, "O Lady! The weeping and wailing is not for the dead. It is for the living ones. It is the mourning of the evil-doers, the oppressors and the wretched sinners." Shauna became more interested. She said, "I am going to see for myself." When she entered the house she saw a speaker delivering a sermon. People had gathered around him. He was warning them of divine retribution and they all were weeping. Shauna had entered when the speaker was explaining the tafs'r of the following ayat.

When it shall come into their sight from a distant place, they shall hear its vehement raging and roaring. And when they are cast into a narrow place in it, bound, they shall there call out for destruction. (Surah al-Furq'n 25: 12-13)

The ayats had profound effect on Shauna. She said to the speaker, "I am one of the evil doers and sinners. Would my Lord forgive me if I repent for my deeds?" "Certainly!" said the speaker, "Even if your deeds equal that of Shauna". "I am Shauna, myself," said Shauna, "and I promise that I shall never commit a sin again." The speaker said, "Allah is beneficent and Merciful, if you do good, He shall certainly forgive you." Shauna did Tawba, released all her slaves and started worshipping. She kept trying to compensate for her sins.

At last her flesh sagged and she became extremely weak and thin. One day she noticed her melting flesh and said, "O how much my flesh has melted. If this is the condition in this life, what would happen in the hereafter?" A voice from the unseen said, "Be patient! And keep serving Us like this till you are rewarded on the day of Qiy'ma."

A couplet: "No repentant sinner comes to Our door, Whose sins are not washed away in the flood of his regret."