

## **In the Name of Allah, Most Kind, Most Merciful Forgiveness in Islam**

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Allah (SWT), who named Himself Ar-Rahman (The Beneficent) and Ar-Rahim (The Merciful), is also Al-Ghafoor (The Forgiving).

His Mercy overtakes His punishment and anger.

He is more merciful to His creations than a mother can be to her infants.

He created "man with weakness"; thus He knows and we should know that "to err is human," and "no one is perfect." Iblis (Satan), the cursed one, out of envy to Adam, has promised to himself "to attack children of Adam on their way to their journey toward God, so that those who fall prey to his attack will also have the same fate as himself (I'll take you down with me!).

So he says, "I'll attack men from the front, behind and sides." (7:17) This means he will disguise himself as our friend, as our opponent, and side distractions of the world. He will then make us do wrong by presenting evil as good (poison candy in a nice wrapper), making us angry, jealous, envious, just "follow-the-leader" type, and we wrong ourselves and fall prey to his temptation. Iblis and his followers have a feast of joy and laugh at man's foolishness, until the man realizes his mistakes, repents and asks for forgiveness and he is forgiven, and then Iblis cries again.

Giving up Hope of the Mercy of Allah is a Crime in Itself "Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk): for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (39:53) "And it is He who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deed and knows what you do." (42:25) In order for forgiveness to be accepted, these conditions should be met:

(1) The crime is committed out of ignorance, not with the intention that, "Let us go ahead and commit this crime as Allah is forgiving, so He will forgive us.";

(2) Quickly turn into shame and repentance after committing a crime out of ignorance;

(3) After asking for forgiveness, make a promise or pledge to "mend his ways", and to stick to his promise.

Let us examine verses of Quran. "...if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (your conduct), lo! Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (6:54)

"Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah towards those who do evil out of ignorance and then turn quickly (in repentance) to Allah. Toward them will Allah turn in mercy; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." (4:17)

"Forgiveness is not for those who do ill until death faces one of them, who then says, 'Lo! I repent now, nor for those who die as disbelievers, for such was have prepared a painful doom.'" (4:18)

Is any crime or too many crimes too big to be forgiven?

Let us examine two Hadith.

1) Hadith Qudsi: Allah, the Almighty, has said: O Son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.

2) Prophet (SW) has said: A certain person had committed 99 murders. He went to a scholar and asked, is there any chance of my being forgiven? The scholar said no, you have committed too many crimes. The man killed the scholar too, but his heart was restless, so he went to another scholar and asked the same question. He was told yes, but you must leave this town of bad people and go live in the next town in the company of good people. So the man set out to the town he was told to go to. On the way he died. A man passing by saw two angels arguing over his dead body. The Angel from Hell said, 'His body belongs to me as he had not done any good in his life.' The Angel from Heaven said, 'His body belongs to me as he had repented and was set out to be with good people.' The man who was the passer-by said, 'Let us measure the distance of his body from the town he left and the town he was going to.' This was done. He was found to be nearer to the town he was going to. In another version, the earth was ordered by Allah to shrink and make the distance smaller, so that he was admitted to Heaven.

How does Allah forgive us? When we commit a sin, four (4) witnesses are established against us. a) The place we did the crime (i.e., scene of the murder). "On that day, the earth will reveal all its secrets." (99:4) b) The organ we used to commit the crime. "When their ears, their eyes, their skin will testify against

them." (41:21) "That day we seal up mouths, and hands speak out and feet bear witness to all that they did." (36:65) c) The Angels who record the deeds (Kiraman Katebeen). "The honored writers know what you do." (82:11) d) "We record that which they send before them, and their footprints, and all things we have kept in a clear register." (36:12)

Now, with four such strong witnesses, how can we present ourselves to Allah? So He (the Al-Wakeel--the Defender), like a smart lawyer, removes all the witnesses against those whose repentance has been accepted, so that we present ourselves with a clean record. Case dissolved due to lack of witnesses. Hadith is like this. "When Allah accepts repentance and forgives His servant, then recording angels erase their records, organs lose their memories, and earth removes its stains of evidence so that when that person appears before Allah, there is no one to be a witness against him. Subhan Allah.

How to Ask for Forgiveness When Adam and Eve realized they had done wrong but did not know how to ask for forgiveness: Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of forgiveness, and his Lord turned toward him, for He is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (2:37) What were those words taught to Adam? They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged our souls and if you forgive us not, and bestow not upon us your mercy, we shall be losers. (7:23) How did the Prophet Muhammad (AS) teach Aisha (RA) to ask for forgiveness in Ramadan? O my Lord, forgive me, because you love to forgive, thus forgive me, O you Merciful! Remember, asking for forgiveness is not just for our sins, but also for our needs as well. And I have said! Seek forgiveness from your Lord. Lo! He is oft-forgiving (if you ask for forgiveness). He will give you plenty of rain, He will give you wealth and sons, and assign you Heaven and Rivers in the Heaven. (Surah Nuh: 10-12)

Thus after repenting and asking for forgiveness, we must mend our ways and not go back to Kufr and fall prey to the tactics of Satan (Iblis) again. While we expect Allah to be kind and merciful and forgive our major and minor sins, we are unforgiving towards our fellow human beings!