

## Envy consumes good works

He also said: "I can swear on three matters: no wealth is undermined by giving for charity. The more a person is forgiving the more dignity they attain and the more a person is humble the higher their rank is raised."

Such are the features of the righteous: "Those who spend whether in prosperity or in adversity, who restrain anger, and who forgive people, for God loves those who do good." Quran (3:134)

Imagine this scenario. Someone kills your relative; but this gruesome act does not end there; they cut open the body and eat the liver. How would you respond? Be honest. Can you ever summon the strength to forgive such a brutal person?

Now consider one of the greatest acts in history. The Prophet (p) forgave a woman named Hind who caused the murder of his uncle Hamza. After killing him she had his body mutilated and chewed his liver. When she accepted Islam, the Prophet (p) forgave her. Anyone learning of such an act of forgiveness will be left dumbfounded. Practice forgiveness. It heals.

Islam emphasizes justice and punishment of the wrong doers, but it equally strongly emphasizes mercy, kindness and love. Justice, law and order are necessary for the maintenance of a social order, but there is also a need for forgiveness to heal the wounds and to restore good relations between people. We must know that as much as we need Allah's forgiveness for our own sins and mistakes, we must also practice forgiveness towards those who wrong us. No God, No Peace. Know God, Know Peace. This is the Truth; any other earthly message you receive is only trying to blunt the sharp edge of Divine Truth.

*If people only understood  
All the emptiness and acting  
Of the sleeping and the waking  
Of the souls they judge so blindly,  
Of the hearts they pierce so unkindly,  
They, with gentler words and feeling,  
Would apply the balm of healing-  
If they only understood.  
Kindness, nobler than revenge.  
Shakespeare*

**The remembering of injuries is spiritual darkness; the fostering of resentment is spiritual suicide.** To resort to the spirit and practice of forgiveness is the beginning of enlightenment; it is also the beginning of peace and happiness. There is no rest for the one who broods over slights and injuries and wrongs; no quiet repose of mind for the one who feels that they have been unjustly treated, and who schemes how best to act for the discomfiture of their enemy.

## Paradise Denied: Arrogance in your heart

How can happiness dwell in a heart that is so disturbed by ill-will? Do birds resort to a burning bush wherein to build and sing? Neither can happiness inhabit in that breast that is aflame with burning thoughts of resentment. Nor can wisdom come and dwell where such folly resides. Revenge seems sweet only to the mind that is unacquainted with the spirit of forgiveness; but when the sweetness of forgiveness is tasted then the extreme bitterness of revenge is known. Revenge seems to lead to happiness to those who are involved in the darkness of passion; but when the violence of passion is abandoned, and the mildness of forgiveness is restored to, then it is seen that revenge leads to suffering.

**Revenge is a virus which eats into the very vitals of the mind, and poisons the entire spiritual being. Anger is a ferocious creature. Resentment is a mental fever which burns up the wholesome energies of the mind.** "Taking offence" is a form of moral sickness which saps the healthy flow of kindness and goodwill, and from which men and women should seek to be delivered. The unforgiving and resentful spirit is a source of great suffering and sorrow, and the one who harbours & encourages it, who does not overcome and abandon it, forfeits much blessedness, and does not obtain any measure of true enlightenment. To be hard-hearted is to suffer, is to be deprived of light and comfort; to be tender-hearted is to be serenely glad, is to receive light and be well comforted.

It is not strange that the hard-hearted and unforgiving suffer most; it is profoundly true, for not only do they, by the law of attraction, draw to themselves the revengeful passions in other people, but their hardness of heart itself is a continual source of suffering. Every time persons harden their hearts against fellow-beings they inflict upon themselves five kinds of suffering – the suffering of loss of love; the suffering of lost communion and fellowship; the suffering of a troubled & confused mind; the suffering of wounded passion or pride; and the suffering of punishment inflicted by others.

Every act of unforgiveness entails upon the doer of that act these five sufferings; whereas every act of forgiveness brings to the doer five kinds of blessedness – the blessedness of love; the blessedness of increased communion & fellowship; the blessedness of a calm & peaceful mind; the blessedness of passion stilled & pride overcome; and the blessedness & kindness & goodwill bestowed by others.

Repeat: **The remembering of injuries is spiritual darkness; the fostering of resentment is spiritual suicide.**

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## Life is a long lesson in humility

# Forgiveness

is sweeter & more effective than  
**Revenge**

Forgiveness as an interhuman ethic is a **mandatory value & an important virtue.** Common sense tells us that the more people are guided by their forgiving nature the happier they are, whether at the individual, familial, social, national or international level. **Islam emphasizes forgiveness and enjoins on its followers to be forgiving for as much as they yearn to be forgiven.** Islam emphasizes that **justice is not the supreme target**, and that whoever can secure justice **but opts to transcend it to forgiveness is more virtuous, nobler & nearer to God:** "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto, **but whoever forgives & makes reconciliation**, their reward is due from God; God loves **not** evil-doers." (Quran: 42:40) People throw out advice on forgiveness as if dispensing aspirin. The practice of living a forgiving lifestyle can be a herculean task. There is **incredible freedom in living a life of mercy**, but it's **not** something that we just stumble into. It takes a **purposeful choice** to move beyond the **restrictive burdens** of bitterness, anger, and other unresolved emotions tied to a person or event. That choice must be based on the above Quranic verse...it will help you avoid the aspirins. Maybe you too are dealing with hurts of the past & forgiveness seems impossible. Forgiving doesn't mean that abuse can continue, or that what happened is okay. What it does mean is that you are ready to follow God's words, and to live a life free of entanglements to the past.

## Balm of Healing – Kind Words

**A**lbert Speer was interviewed about his last book on ABC's "Good Morning America" many years ago. Who was Speer? He was the Hitler confidante whose technological genius was credited with keeping Nazi factories humming throughout World War II. The only one of twenty-four war criminals tried in Nuremberg to admit his guilt, Speer spent twenty years in Spandau prison. Interviewer David Hartman referred to a passage in one of Speer's earlier writings: "You have said the guilt can never be forgiven, or shouldn't be. Do you still feel that way?"

There was a look of pathos on Speer's face as he responded: "I served a sentence of twenty years, and I could say 'I'm a free man, my conscience has been cleared by serving the whole time as punishment.' But I can't do that. I still carry the burden of what happened to millions of people during Hitler's lifetime, and I can't get rid of it. This book is part of my atoning, of clearing my conscience." Hartman pressed the point: "You really don't think you'll be able to clear it totally?" Speer shook his head, "I don't think it will be possible."

For thirty-five years Speer had accepted complete responsibility for the crime. His writings were filled with contrition and warnings to others to avoid his moral sin. He desperately sought expiation. All to no avail. His conscience tortured him. His soul burned. No prison walls could do to him what the gnawing memories of his deeds was doing. Did he gain God's forgiveness by his internal anguish? Only God knows. The interview was his last public statement; he died shortly after.

There are immense lessons to be gleaned from Speer's search for redemption. For those of us engaged in the stink of sin know that it will forever haunt our conscience. But God's forgiveness is vast and enveloping and capable of freeing the conscience for the task of glorifying God instead of worrying ceaselessly over past sins. The time for redemption is always NOW. Reclaim your life. For God is the only source of Peace: O Salaam.

Guilt and shame. We all wrestle with these demons; they are the most excruciating human dilemmas. Billions are caught in the web. We can change anything about our lives – jobs, homes, cars,

## Quran: Pardon us & Forgive us, O God

sometimes spouses – **but not moral reality.**

We are faced with two choices. Overwhelmed by the continuous thoughts of guilt, we are, like Albert Speer, driven obsessively to work for our own absolution. Or, in order to live with ourselves, we deny our own sin and guilt, **lying** to ourselves to keep on living.

The human being's wrenching desire to find inner peace accounts for the faddish popularity of the New Age/Consciousness movement. But that only makes matters worse because our real disillusionment sets in when we succeed in learning who we really are.

There is only one way out of the agonizing dilemma. It is not through ourselves. The relationship between humans and God is a two-way street. The corollary to man's repentance is God's grace, His loving forgiveness. He is Al-Ghafur, Al-Ghafar. Isn't it time you allow your mind to dwell deeply on The Forgiver. To soak up His Forgiveness. To find, at last, inner peace.

God's forgiveness to human beings is an axial issue in the relation between the two. Human beings were not programmed to respond in a certain way to the events within and around them. Uniquely, the human race is endowed with built-in perpetual knowledge. Its potential lies in its awareness of the idea of good and evil, in making choices between them and in being accountable for their choices. Human beings are not perfect nor were they meant to be. They lead a life of continuous decision making and choice between evil temptations and good that can be very taxing.

To pass the accountability test, no one could rely on a perfect record, as our full hope is in God's grace, mercy & forgiveness. Since Muslims do not subscribe to the idea of a chosen race, and since they believe that accountability is personal and therefore not atoned by vicarious sacrifice, salvation to them entirely focuses on the Forgiving God.

According to Prophet Muhammad (p), "If you were not a creature who would sin, repent, ask forgiveness and be granted it, God would have created another being who would sin, repent, seek forgiveness and is granted it." God says: "O child of Adam, while you call upon Me, and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O child 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 child of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth." If Albert Speer could only have

## To be tender-hearted is to be serenely glad

known such a philosophy his conscience could have come to rest.

In Islam God is the absolutely Just, also He is the absolutely Merciful and Forgiving. A Muslim asks of God to deal with him with His forgiveness and not His justice, a hope that is supported by the saying of Prophet Muhammad (p): "When God decreed the creation, He pledged Himself by writing in His book: **My mercy prevails over My wrath.**"

God said: "Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their family, those in want, and those who have left their homes in God's cause. **Let them forgive and overlook...** Do you not wish that God should forgive you? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful." Quran (24:22)

The years in Mecca saw persecution and the killing of Muslims and a plot over the life of the Prophet (p), making it necessary to migrate to Medina where Islam was fulfilled as a Muslim community and a state. After a lengthy conflict it was then the turn of the Muslims to enter Mecca with an overwhelming army to purify the Mosque of Abraham from the idols. As his staunch enemies stood in surrender awaiting his verdict over them, Muhammad (p) declared general amnesty and addressed them saying: "You may go. You are a free people!"

It was this behavior of forgiveness that won all that community to Islam, a feat that could have never been achieved by pressure or coercion, which in anyway would have conflicted with the Quranic injunction: "There is no compulsion in religion." (Quran 2: 256). Muslims are incessantly reminded of the importance of forgiveness. "Those who avoid the greater sins and indecencies; and when they are **angry even then forgive**" is one description of the truly faithful. "Kind words and **forgiving of faults** are better than charity followed by insult." (Quran 2:263)

The Prophet (p) was told by angel Gabriel: "Your Lord commands you to forgive those who harm you, pardon those who deny you and visit those who sever their relations with you." The Prophet (p) taught: "Whoever would be happy to have an honourable abode and a superior rating, let them forgive those who harmed them, pardon those who ostracized them and give to those who denied them."

# Kind words

and **forgiving of faults** are better than charity followed by **Insult**

The Quran: 2:263