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The author of this book has adopted a new technique in tackling the subject of repentance, which is part of the general field of behavioral science. Repentance is practiced more often by worshippers than sinners.

Repentance has its own rules and principles. The first is to hate and give up the particular sin that one has done. The second is to decide not to commit the sin again, and the third is to give people that one has wronged their rights back as soon as possible. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was the most frequent in asking for Allah’s forgiveness. He said in this context: “O people, seek repentance from Allah, verily, I seek repentance from Him a hundred times a day”

The subject of repentance is not new, but what is novel about it in this book is that it renders
the real experience of the author. Thus the book may be a practical guide to young Muslims who are normally either advisors or advised.

The credibility of this book comes from the fact that all the characters in it are portraits of youth living in the society we know today. It is hoped that this book may enrich the collection of books on Islamic *da`wah* with its academic research.

The journey of the repentants to their destination of Allah’s forgiveness is a long one. It is a true expression of the course of young Muslims to their sublime destination. This is in contrast to the ill-fated sinners who continue on the wrong path in quest of their desires. Happiness and contentment come from within rather than from without.
Allah says: (Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.)

Hence, happiness is attained by obeying Allah and conquering both the devil and the evil in the soul.

O my soul, awake and repent
Before it’s too late.
If you ask God’s forgiveness,
He will open the gate.
Winds always blow hard
And so does the fate.

(Arabic poem)

This book calls you to “Take advantage of your youth before you become old, your health before you become ill, your free time before you
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

become busy, your wealth before you become poor, and your life before you die.”

Finally, my dear brothers and sisters, if you find any ambiguity in this book, please take it for its good intention, as the author has made a great effort to select his words to the extent that he had to change it many times. This is very difficult. No one except those who are experienced in writing can explain how difficult it is to constantly change ideas and words after they are already written. This is proof of the author’s flexibility and desire to develop his skills.

Praise be to Allah

Sheikh Jasim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhalhal
Al-Yassin

1 Sahih Muslim, no. 6523.
2 Surat Ar-Ra`d: verse 11.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Introduction

Praise be to Allah. In Him we seek guidance, and in Him we seek refuge from the evil of our souls and the mischief of our deeds. Whoever is guided by Allah, will never be misled by anyone, and whoever is misled by Him will never be guided by anyone. I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

When I started to write this book I was sitting beside the Holy Ka`bah opposite the Yamani Corner, looking at the people making tawaf, bowing and prostrating around the Ka`bah.

For those who need to repent, the Ka`bah is not only a physical point of direction or Qiblah, but also a place in which they shed their tears and ask Allah’s forgiveness.
Looking at the pilgrims revolving around the Ka`bah while making dhikr (remembering Allah by saying special invocations), asking forgiveness and being sincerely repentant, it prompted me to reflect that all Muslims should practice this act of remembrance and asking forgiveness in their daily life.

The first step towards Allah is repentance. This is why I was keen to write on this subject, as it is the first and last point in man’s life.

But considering that many books have been written on the same subject, I decided to write on it from a different perspective: a narrative on the spiritual crisis in our lives, which is more serious than the materialistic one. May Allah bless us with strong faith and good deeds.
The central character is a man whom I give a symbolic name—Shaqi. ‘Shaqi’ in Arabic means the miserable one who lives a confused and perplexed life. He runs after his carnal desires and leaves Satan to plan his life. Such a person exists at all times and in all places. This is why I call him the miserable one: ‘Ash-Shaqi.’

I decided to write this in drama form, as it is easier for the reader to grasp and take interest.

We ask Allah to accept our sincere repentance that may benefit us in this life and in the life to come in the same way Prophet Noah expressed to his people on the advantages of repentance.

(Saying, ‘Ask forgiveness from your Lord, for He is Oft-Forgiving: He will send rain to you in abundance, give you increase in wealth and
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sons, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers.’  

I ask my reader not to be distracted by the story from the spiritual context and I ask him to try to contemplate over the words.

Permit me to offer some advice to the dear reader. We often ask people to try to be better but we forget to ask ourselves to do the same, and this is the intended message of the book.

I pray to Allah to reward me for this book on the Day of Judgement.

Jasim Al-Mutawwa'

6 Rajab 1409/11 February 1989

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1 Surat Nuh: verse 10-11.
Chapter One

Psychological Unrest

O you who are yearning to enter Paradise without an atom of strong will to enable you to attain your goal. Open your eyes to the example of others and see where you stand. If you find discouragement from within you, seek the help of Allah, The Kind, and wake up after midnight to pray in order to envisage where the winning party is. Attach yourself to those who seek Allah's forgiveness and place yourself among those who spare no effort in satisfying Him.
Shaqiy is a guilty sinner and unaware of even the essence and aim of his existence. He is a miserable man. Sometimes names hold the key to the personality of their holders. He knows nothing about prayer, fasting, or even the rights of his neighbors, his wife and his children.

Marital Status: Married with one child

Academic Qualification: Bachelor degree in economics

Occupation: Manager in a private company

One day his son becomes seriously ill. He takes him abroad and stays by his side during his medical treatment. Realizing that his son’s prognosis is bleak, he brings him home in the
hope that he’ll improve by himself. But his life seems to be a series of difficult trials. His second test is when he becomes chronically ill rendering him bedridden.

Shaqiy starts to reflect over what is happening to him. He remembers his youth and how he lived far from Allah. He decides to repent. But the pleasure of sins outweighs his desire to repent. It seems that he doesn’t really want to change.

Then he receives news that his father has died in a car accident on his way to Friday prayer. Shaqiy is in shock. His heart palpitates furiously. The voice of his conscience is calling him to return to the way of Allah, Who created and sustained him. Again he starts considering what he has done in his life. This excerpt of a poem brings it all home to him:

3
Nothing is more useful
To a soul that goes astray
Than taking it from its gentle
Road to a harsher way
Beware to let life always
Its tricks on you play
Haven’t you seen its agonies
On every face display?2

It is at this moment that his heart gains vigor as he starts to wakes up from the deception. He realizes that souls sometimes need to be shocked into order to redirect them to the right way and recognize their Creator.

The voice of his conscience asks him:

How long are you going to remain miserable?
How long are you going to worship your God absently for?

Why do you only listen to the call of Allah when you are in trouble?

(Or, who listens to the distressed when he calls on Him, and Who relieves His suffering, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Little it is that he heeds!) 3

How many people called you to faith but you never listened?

And how much of what you gained have you been dissatisfied with?

Why should you run after money while Allah has given you plenty?
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Why should you be deaf to sounds of the revealed Qur’an, but listen to love songs?

Why should you slowly limp to your rescue and go to war disarmed?

At last Shaqiy is disillusioned. He knows that Allah’s tests are sometimes meant to remedy souls that are diseased. Shaqiy hears the voice of faith calling him: “Disaster can be important to the soul in the same way the eggshell is to the egg. It protects it until it matures and reaches the world in its new shape. The one who doesn’t endure pain will not return to the right way.”

How many souls believe after disbelieving, and how many souls reach the true path after straying? How many souls increase in faith even after the disaster has elapsed. The Prophet (peace
and blessings be upon him) said: “The believer is like a wheat plant; sometimes it is straight and sometimes it is bent. Whereas the disbeliever is like the rice plant; it keeps erect till it bends all of a sudden.”

Feeling agitated, Shaqiy decides to repent. But he doesn’t know where to start. He consults his friend Mahroum (meaning the one who is suffering deprivation) and tells him everything. He also confesses that he has made up his mind to repent.

Mahroum: (in surprise) Are you crazy? You are much better than most other Muslims. What are those big sins
that you imagine yourself to have done?

Shaggy: Don’t you remember last summer in Europe? All those things we got up to! Don’t you remember the nights we got drunk and high on cannabis? Don’t you remember all the religious duties that we neglected?

Mahroum: *(furious)* Stop it, Shaqi. A man has his needs. It is enough while you’re young just to observe some of the obligatory religious duties. Remember Allah is the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful.*

*The two friends separate. Shaqi ponders deeply over his destiny. He is clueless of how to repent, where to find help and with whom*
he should accompany in this decision. Melancholy looms over him. A loud voice in his mind calls him to pray and put an end to the struggle, which the devil has concocted in his mind. Shaqiy hesitates whether to go to the mosque or not, but he goes anyway. The imam is reading from Surat Al-Furqan.

(Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, and whoever repents and does good has truly turned to Allah in repentance.)*

Shaqiy sits down with his head lowered ruminating over the words of Allah and the words of Mahroum. He is torn between good and evil. A battle is taking place in his heart between the army of Ar-Rahman (The
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Merciful) and the army of Satan. He is interrupted from his terror by a voice greeting him. This person has a bright face.

Man : Assalamu alaykum.

Shaqiy : (gazing at him) Wa alaykumus-salam.

Man : Don’t you remember me?

Shaqiy : No!

Man : I’m Salih (meaning a good person). We were at high school together. (He reminds him of school days.)

Shaqiy : Yes, yes, I remember you now. Oh God, you’ve changed a lot!

Salih : But you look really down. Is there anything I can do to help?
Shaqiy senses help coming from nowhere like a drowning person finding a life buoy. In no time, he begins to open up to him, shedding tears as he relieves all his troubles. He feels sorry that he regretted being hesitant to repent in the first place, but Salih calms him down and tells him that Allah gives a hand to whoever returns to Him and then He leads him to the straight path. Shaqiy speaks about Mahroum telling him to postpone his decision to repent.

Salih: Beware of procrastination. The soul is like a piece of iron that can’t be shaped unless the smith beats it while it is hot. Clutch at this chance of enthusiasm. If your soul cools, you won’t be able to mould it. I am warning you against this word “will”
because this word is one of the devil’s weapons. It is “will” that induced your friend Mahroum to be deprived of repentance till now. Haven’t you read what Sheikh Al-Dreini said?

*And he recites the following lines of poetry*

If you waste your life in saying “will”

“May” is the only thing you’ll win

Delay will make you like the one

Who is hanging in the air until

You find your days quickly run

And your time is passed and gone.8

*When Shaqiy hears this advice, he is shaken and decides to sincerely repent. Then*
Salih continues to recite more poetry which reflect Shaqiy's state of mind and spirit:

When God destines a thing that might,
Be sad on someone smart and bright,
Who seems he can with his insight
Defy his fate and destiny fight,
Allah covers his brain and eyesight,
Until His fate descends overnight
Then turns back to the eyes the light.
To see how God has all the might.

Shaqiy looks at the sky.

Shaqiy: Will Allah accept my repentance while I sin so much?
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Salih: Sure, haven’t you heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) speaking about this?

There was a person before you who had killed ninety-nine persons and then made an inquiry about the learned persons of the world (who could show him the way of salvation). He was directed to a monk. He came to him and told him that he had killed ninety-nine persons and asked him whether there was any scope for his repentance to be accepted. He said: No. So, he killed him too and thus the number completed one hundred. He then asked about the learned persons of the earth and he was directed to a
scholar, and he told him that he had killed one hundred persons. He asked him whether there was any scope for his repentance to be accepted. He said: Yes, what stands between you and the repentance? You'd better go to such-and-such land; there are people devoted to prayer and worship and you should also worship along with them and do not come to this land of yours since it was an evil land (for you). So he went away and he had hardly covered half the distance when death came to him and there was a dispute between the angels of mercy and the angels of punishment. The angels of mercy said: This man has come as penitent
and remorseful to Allah. And the angles of punishment said: He has done no good at all. Then there came another angel in the form of a human being in order to decide between them. He said: You measure the land to which he has drawn nearer. They measured it and found him nearer to the land where he intended to go (the land of piety), and so the angels of mercy took possession of his soul. Qatada said that Hasan told him that it was said to them that as death approached him, he crawled upon his chest (and managed) to slip into the land of mercy. ¹⁰

Salih added, “That man took one step only towards Allah but he
was rewarded for his sincerity. Had he walked all around the world with an insincere heart, he wouldn’t have been accepted. It is normal that people judge a person by his physical appearance, but Allah judges a person by his true self, the purity of his heart and the way he approaches Him.”

Shaqiy : Does this mean that man is to be evaluated by his heart and faith rather than his appearance?

Salih : Yes. Haven’t you heard the saying: “Worldly gains are reached by one’s feet, while gains in the life to come are reached by hearts”?
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Shaqiy: I don’t understand what you are saying!

Salih: It means that to reach a worldly benefit you use your feet, but to gain in the Hereafter you will only need to make your heart hastening towards Allah. Thus, purify your heart first and then approach Allah. Start by the detachment and end by the attachment.

Shaqiy: How shall I start to repent?

Salih: By the detachment from all glamour of life and by overcoming all the obstacles in this world. Turn your back on it completely and remember the words: “You’d better go to such-and-such land. There are people
devoted to prayer and worship...and do not come to this land of yours since it was an evil land.” Such an idea was later confirmed by Imam Sahnun when he said, “The first step of man towards Allah is by deserting himself.”

So you have to give up hanging around with bad friends and pretty girls, and all the sins your heart is prone to. This is what is meant by “deserting one’s self.”

Shaqiy: That’s difficult.

Salih: Don’t say that. If you are strong willed, you will improve gradually, and with patience in worship you will attain the same level as the
righteous and truthful people. The mountain is only a pile of small stones and the orchard is only a field of apple trees. Do what you can.

(On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns and suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray) Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have the strength to bear. Blot out our sins. And grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector. Grant us victory over the unbelievers.) 14
And remember that you have to struggle with the evil in your own self in order to stop bad deeds and start the good deeds. Mahmoud Al-Warraq said:

The person who is most perfect is who that says, “I’m imperfect”

His heart’s desires he can conquer

And in charity he’s not miser.\(^{15}\)

Shaqiy : My problem is that I might sin again after repenting. I really enjoy sins! I’m happy when I commit them.

Salih : Shaqiy, live in the real world, not in illusions. True happiness and pleasure is when you obey Allah, not when you disobey Him. “Everyone seeks the enjoyment of their bodies
rather than their souls. They are like the dead in their graves: the outside is wrapped in silk and velvet but the inside is covered with worms and insects.”\textsuperscript{16}

Shaqiy: I have decided to repent but I’m afraid that I’ll start sinning again.

Salih: Repentance is always accepted whether you are consistent or not. Any sinner’s repentance is accepted even if he breaks it seventy times. This is on condition that when he made it at the beginning, he did not mean to break it and, moreover, he should be sorry for what he did.\textsuperscript{17}

Shaqiy: Is that true?
Salih: Yes. I’ll recite you another Hadith Qudsi. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) reported that his Lord, the Exalted and Glorious, said: “A servant committed a sin and he said: O Allah, forgive me my sin. Allah (The Exalted and High) said: My servant committed a sin and then came to realize that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and takes to account (the sinner) for the sin. He then again committed a sin and said: My Lord, forgive me my sin. Allah (The Exalted and High) said: My servant committed a sin and then came to realize that he has a Lord Who would forgive his sin or would take (him) to account for a sin. He
again committed a sin and said: My Lord, forgive me for my sin. Allah (The Exalted and High) said: My servant has committed a sin and then came to realize that he has a Lord Who forgives sins or calls (him) to account for sin. O servant, do what you like. I have granted you forgiveness.”¹⁸

What Allah means by “Do whatever you like. I have granted you forgiveness” is that as long as you follow your sin with repentance, He will forgive you.

Shaqiy: (happily) I’ve made up my mind to repent. What are the steps, Salih?
Salih : First, to give up the sins immediately and intend not to commit them again. Second, to turn your back on worldly gains and devote yourself to the fruits of the Hereafter.

Shaqiy : How do I take the first step?

Salih : Allah accepts His servant’s repentance on three conditions: regretting that he sinned, refraining from sinning, and resolving oneself not to return to it.19

Shaqiy : That is easy. Islam is the greatest bounty bestowed by Allah on us. I’ve read about the difficulty of repenting in other religions. For example, the sinner amongst the Children of Israel had to kill himself to repent.20
Moreover, the pagans used to sacrifice human beings—mainly slaves and captives—to purify themselves from the sin.\textsuperscript{21} Again, the Christians assume that God will forgive their sinners if they confess to the priest for absolution.\textsuperscript{22}

Salih : Brilliant! So you are very knowledgeable in this subject of repentance then!

Shaqiy : No, it's just the remainder of past readings.

Salih : Do you want me to tell you more about the rituals of repentance in Brahmanism, Confucianism, and with the Pharaohs?
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Shaqiy: (astonished) What are these, Salih? Do these philosophies hold repentance?

Salih: Why not? The Confucianist, for example, puts music as a priority and considers the good person as the one who is more responsive to it. Thus, the only way to turn away from materialism and go back to man’s instinctive spirituality is to listen to music. The more one listens to music, the more he is elevated in status by his lord. As for Brahmanism, repentance is only achieved by asceticism, exaggerated fasting, staying up at night, self-torture and enduring pain to the extent that one starts to wish for
death. The Pharaohs believed that in order to repent, all the priests had to shave their heads and all body hair, including their eyelashes and eyebrows. Moreover, they were forbidden to have any sexual relations with their wives at that time. That was their method of worship and purification from sins.

Shaqiy: Rituals like that are hard to follow!

Salih: Al-hamdulillah that He has made you a Muslim, and al-hamdulillah He has inspired you to repent. These are all His bounties, but most people forget to thank Him for that.

Allah says: (Yet no faith will the greater part of mankind have,
however ardently thou does desire it.)

Shaqiy starts to go over in his mind, "Al-hamdu lillah, thanks be to Allah." Then he raises his voice, "Praise be to Allah the Lord of Mankind."

Salih: I suppose you now know the benefit of reading Al-Fatihah more than seventeen times a day as you recite in each rak`ah. "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds," "Allah listens to him who praises Him" and "O Allah our Lord, for Thee is thy praise." What you've just learned now are but a little of Allah's bounties on His servants. So
what should our duties be towards His other bounties?

*Shaqiy thinks about the other bounties and becomes oblivious to everything around him. He then speaks:*

**Shaqiy:** After I do the first step, will you explain to me the second, which is the detachment from worldly gains and the attachment to Allah and the Hereafter.

**Salih:** Well, I’m not going to tell you till you know this by heart!

**Shaqiy:** I will, even if it is the whole Qur’an.

**Salih:** *(smiling)* Sure, you’ll know the Qur’an by heart one day! But now I
want you to know the words that led me to my repentance.

Shaqiy : Why? Did you sin like me?

Salih : Is there any infallible man on earth?

"All the sons of Adam are sinners, and the best of all sinners are those who seek repentance."^{28}

Shaqiy : Speak up! What do you mean?

Salih : "The one who had a bright beginning will have a bright end."

Shaqiy : What does this mean?

Salih : It means that if one was sincere at the beginning of his repentance, Allah will grant him a good end.

Shaqiy : That’s wonderful.
Salih: Didn’t I tell you? These words changed my life from darkness into light.

Shaqiy: And now, Salih, what about the second step?

Salih: The one who needs to repent should free his heart from any worldly attachments, such as love for women or for fame in case they distract him from worshipping Allah. He should devote himself to pleasing Allah and only care about how to attain paradise.

Shaqiy: Does this mean that I should give up my home and my friends?

Salih: Don’t you remember the wise man’s advice to the killer in the Hadith
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Qudsi? “You had better go to such-and-such land; there are people devoted to prayer and worship and you also worship along with them and do not come to this land of yours since it was an evil land (for you).” This means that deserting the worldly attainments should include the land and friends.

Shaqiy : (astonished) You are asking me for the impossible! How can anyone leave his country and people? What I know about Islam is that it doesn’t order its followers to live in isolation like monks for the sake of worshipping.

Salih : You don’t understand. Don’t be too hasty.

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Shaqiy : How then?

Salih : I only mean what the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Each one is on the Din (way of life) of his intimate friend, so one should be aware of who to take as an intimate friend.” Therefore, if your friends are bad, you’ve got to leave them till you manage to repent because a bad friend is like the worms that make cavities in your bones - you only feel it when it is too late. You can only mix with such friends if you’ll help in guiding them to the right path.

Shaqiy : That’s fair enough, but what about leaving my country?
Salih : For each one of the Children of Adam, there are two homes, one for his body and one for his heart. If you can’t desert the land of sin with your body, at least do it with your heart.

Shaqiy : You’re starting to philosophize again?

Salih : No, if you happen to sit in a place full of sins where for example there is alcohol, gambling, or backbiting taking place, you have to leave it physically. But if you stay in a place where no sins are committed then leave it with your heart and try to mention Allah and ask His forgiveness in private.

Shaqiy : That’s good.
Salih : Well I think that’s enough, and now it’s time for action, as action is the main character of a believer.

Shaqiy : In Allah we place our trust.

Salih : How about starting our plan of desertion from now?

Shaqiy : Where shall we go?

Salih : To ‘The Land of Repentance and Repentant.’

Shaqiy : How do we do that?

Salih : By train, of course. ‘The Train of the Seekers of Forgiveness!’

Shaqiy : Let’s go!

They let their families know about their journey and they meet at the train station.
Abu 'Amr Ibn 'Alaa' narrated that one day Al-Farazdaq was sitting with others making du'a' and asking Allah for forgiveness. He was the most fervent in making du'a'. He was asked, "Why do you commit the sin of falsely accusing women of fornication?" Al-Farazdaq replied, "Tell me, what if I wronged my two sons, would they be happy to throw me in hell fire?" "No," said the man, "they would have mercy on you." Al-Farazdaq said, "I believe that my God is more merciful to me than my sons."

Ibn Al-Jawzi commented on this situation: This is pure ignorance. Allah's mercy does not mean mildness or delicacy. Had it been so, Allah wouldn't have allowed a bird to be eaten, a child to die, or a sinner to enter the hell fire. Al-Farazdaq made two mistakes in this situation. The first is that he considered the aspect of mercy and not the aspect of punishment. The second is that he forgot that Allah forgives only those who repent.
7 Surat Al-Furqan: verses 70-71.
8 Tabaqat Ash-Shafi‘iyah, As-Subki, volume 5, page 77.
9 Tafseer Al-Qurtubi, volume 13, page 178.
10 Sahih Muslim no. 6662.
11 Wahiy Al-Qalam, Ar-Rafi‘i, volume 1, page 238.
12 Shadharat Adh-Dhahab, Al-Hanbali, volume 2, page 326.
14 Surat Al-Baqarah: verse 286.
15 Jami‘ Baiyan Al-‘Ilm, volume 1, page 131.
18 Muslim, no. 6642.
19 These conditions are only if the sin is related to Allah. But if it is related to a person, there is a fourth condition, which is to return the due rights to the person wronged. Tahdheeb Madarij As-Salikeen, page 123.
20 (And remember Moses said to his people: “O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrong-doers);”)(Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 54). Tafseer Al-Qurtubi, volume 1, page 400.


23 Confucius was born 551 B.C. and died 478 B.C. in China. He established Confucianism.

24 *Ad-Din wa Ad-Dameer*, Mahmoud Al-Sharqawy, pages 45-47.

25 *Bayulujiyah Al-Iman*, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Qadir, page 39.

26 *Al-Qariyah Al-Far`uniyah*, Hassan Ragab, page 34.

27 Surat Yusuf: verse 103.

28 *Sahih Jam‘i As-Saghir*, 4391.

29 At-Tirmidhi, volume 1, page 278.
Chapter Two

The Train of Repentance Seekers

Al-Hasan Al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on his soul) said:

"O son of Adam, to forsake sins is easier than to ask for forgiveness."
Salih and Shaqiy reach the station. The sign on the door says: 'The Station of Repentance.' Under it was a poster, which reads:

| Repentance - to abandon the sin |
| Repented - changed from a state of sin to that of obedience to Allah. |
| Allah grants one repentance – to guide one to repent. |
| An ever repenting man – a man who always turns to Allah in repentance. |
| Allah The Most Relenting – The Most Forgiving.² |

Salih enters the station and buys the tickets: four tickets in all and he gives them to Shaqiy. Each ticket has the name of the station they will pass by on their way to 'The Land of
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Repentance.’ But, the tickets are only to be opened by the ticket inspector.

They arrive at their first destination and the inspector punches the first ticket. He tells them that they can open it now. It reads:

The door to repentance is open, but.... my brother repentant, you have to know that Allah is the Most Forgiving, and He accepts out of His grace the repentance of His servant unconditionally.

(Allah does accept their gifts of charity and Allah is verily Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful)³

The door to repentance is open day and night, winter and summer. No guards ever stand at the door.
“It is an open door to everyone who has a clear conscience. As long as he is willing to return and no matter who he is or what sins he has done, no one can prevent him from entering, nor can anyone shut the door in his face.”

This door has two locks and when they are locked, repentance cannot be accepted. The first lock is what the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) expressed as “He who seeks repentance (from the Lord) before the rising of the sun in the west (the Day of Resurrection) Allah turns to him with mercy.”

The second lock is what the Prophet expressed in his hadith as ‘Allah accepts the repentance of His servant as long as he does not rattle.’
Therefore it is understood from the hadith that the two conditions of repentance are to be made before the sun rises in the west and before the death rattle.

Shaqiy : I know what this means. When the sun rises in the west means the Day of Judgement, but what does it mean rattling?

Salih : A symptom of death because when one’s soul reaches the throat, he rattles. This is the moment of death.

Shaqiy : Al-hamdulillah He guided me to repent before that.
The train reaches the next station and the inspector punches his ticket. Likewise, they read the following:

Repentance is a Blessing from Allah.

Dear Brother Repentant! You must know that Allah offers worldly gains to those who like and those who don’t like. But He gives faith and accepts repentance only from those who like and make the effort to achieve them.

Be among those who love Allah and have faith in Him. Ask Him to bless you with true repentance. Take Ibrahim (peace be upon him) as your model as he said:

*(Our Lord! Make of us Muslims, bowing to thy (will) and of our progeny, Muslim people, bowing to thy (will); and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn*
Al-Maraghi said in his interpretation of this verse that “return unto us in mercy” means bless us with repentance and help us forsake any deed that may busy us and keep us away from you.

Repentance is a blessing from Allah. Therefore one should ask Allah to be guided to it. You should not forget the example of the Prophet who returned to Allah in repentance and forgiveness. He said: “O people, seek repentance from Allah, Verily, I seek repentance from Him a hundred times a day.”

My brother repentant! Be keen to ask Allah to guide you to the true repentance.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Gazing out of the window, Shaqiq contemplates the meaning of the words on the second ticket. He reflects:

Shaqiq : (to himself) I have always thought that repenting was a personal decision and not a blessing from Allah.

He recites the following lines of poetry:

Praise be to thee for each bounty,
Like that bounty of enabling me,
To tell You,
Praise, my Lord be to thee.¹⁰

It starts to rain.

Salih : Pray to Allah that He blesses you with true repentance.

Shaqiq : Why?

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JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Salih : Don’t you know that when the rain comes down, Allah reveals His mercy and accepts prayers and supplication?

Shaqiy : (in astonishment) Is this true?

Salih : Yes.

Shaqiy begins to supplicate in quiet. The train reaches the third station and the inspector punches the ticket. He is allowed to read it.

Allah's Delight for His Servant's Repentance.

Dear Brother Repentant! Always remember the hadith of the Prophet. “Allah is more pleased with the repentance of a servant as he turns towards Him for repentance than the one who is riding a camel in a dry desert, which has his provision on its back. But he loses the camel and all hope of finding it, so
he lies down in the shade in disappointment. There, he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of his nose-string and then out of boundless joy he says: ‘O Lord! Thou art my servant and I am Thine Lord. He commits this mistake out of extreme delight.’

Imagine my dear reader how Allah is pleased with the repentance of his servant, although he – the servant - is not capable of benefiting Him or harming Him. On the contrary, it is Allah who creates the servant, provides him with sustenance, makes him live and makes him die.

Ibn Al-Jawzi said concerning this: “Think of how you find your heart leaping out for joy, yet you don’t know the reason for it. This is something to be felt by only those whose
hearts are living. But those whose hearts are dead, they feel happy only when they commit sins. Weigh up the two kinds of joy.”

Two types of joy! Shaqiy’s heart bounds as he thinks of it. He feels his heart dance within as if it had gone to war to fight all sins and bad deeds. Drenched in his thoughts, he is scarcely shaken to hear the inspector interrupt for the fourth ticket. Intrigued, Salih asks the inspector his name.

Inspector: Farhan Ibn Khashi`. (Farhan means happy and Khashi` means the one who humbles himself to Allah)

Shaqiy: (interrupting) Farhan is a beautiful name.

Farhan: Thank you. There is actually a story behind it.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Shaqiq : Please, tell us.

Farhan : Well my name used to be Haznan (which means sad) but I changed it after repenting. As you know, names refer to their holders.

Shaqiq : How did you actually repent?

Farhan : I was the type of man who used to commit sins. I was tempted by my love for women. I loved looking at them, sitting with and listening to them. Then, one day when I prayed Tarawih prayer, I heard the imam say: \(\text{In them will be (maidens) chaste, restraining their glances, whom no man or Jinn has touched.}\)\textsuperscript{13}

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Then I started thinking of the women of Paradise – Hur al-`ayn – and I could imagine then the beauty in their faces, clothes and scent.

Ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If a woman of Paradise looked down on earth, she would fill the space between them with fragrance and light. The crown on her head is better than this world and everything in it."\(^1^4\)

Only then did I cease to admire the women of this world, and I gave a pledge to Allah to repent and go on the straight path. Because I took the first step towards Allah, He
strenthened my faith and made it blossom in my heart.

Shaqiy : Why did you change your name?

Farhan : As I said, names can indicate the characters of their holders. I am now happy to be obedient to Allah.

*Farhan asks if he can be excused as he has work to get back to. Salih asks Shaqiy if he wants to open his ticket. This time Salih opens it and it reads:*
Ignoring the Desires of the Heart

Brother Repentant! Beware of lust, as it takes you to the depths of Hell. Ibn Al-Jazri said: “Iblis said, ‘I destroyed the sons of Adam with sins and they destroyed me by asking forgiveness and saying la ilaha illallah. When I realized that, I started to spread lust among them, I tempted them so that now they commit sins and don’t repent because they think that what they are doing is good.”

Imagine my brother repentant, that someone followed the desires of his heart and didn’t repent. His sins will accumulate until they destroy him as long as he insists on doing them and regarding them as minor sins. Look at this table and think about it.
Look at the magnitude of these sins. If they are accompanied by following your lusts, then your deeds written before Allah will be dark and black. But if they are accompanied by repentance and asking forgiveness, then the paper will be white and pure. Bakr Ibn Abdullah Al-Mazni said, “The deeds of the sons of Adam ascend to Allah. If the paper ascends with forgiveness on, it will be white;
and if it ascends with no forgiveness on, it will be black.”¹⁷

Shaqiy : Glory be to Allah!

Salih : Why are you astonished Shaqiy?

Shaqiy : It is the statistics. I pity us. Suppose I commit four sins a day, then the total will be 33,000 when I reach 40. We all commit a sin every hour, so what will our total be now?

Salih : Don’t lose hope, even if you commit a sin every second. Have you heard Allah say in the Qur’an: (Say: O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.)¹⁸
And haven’t you heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saying? “Allah created mercy in one hundred parts and He retained with Him ninety-nine parts. He sent down upon the earth one part, and it’s because of this one part that there is mutual love among His creation, so much so that the animal lifts up its hoof from its young one, fearing that it might harm it.”

Shaqiy : Is what you say true? I feel as if my soul has come back to me. But I still don’t understand “follow the desires of the heart” that was written on the ticket.

Salih : The desires of the heart are that of love and hatred that one keeps in
himself and can’t be to blame for as it is out of his hands. But one is to blame if one follows their orders. “And who is more astray than one who follows his own lust, devoid of guidance from Allah.”

If any servant of Allah gets involved in a prohibited act of lust, such as fornication, drinking alcohol, backbiting or riba [taking accumulative interest] and is happy to do so, then he is a follower of the desires of his heart. We ask Allah to protect us.

3 At-Tawbah: verse 104.
4 Sayid Qutb, *Fi Dhilal Al-Qur’an*, page 2580
5 Sahih Muslim, no. 6525.
6 At-Tirmidhi, no. 3531.
7 Surat Al-Baqarah: verse 128.
8 *Tafseer Al-Maraghi*, volume 1, page 216
9 Sahih Muslim, no. 6523
10 *Zad Al-Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 219.
11 Sahih Muslim, no. 6618
12 *Mustah Dar As-Sa’adah*, volume 1, page 365.
13 Surat Ar-Rahman: verse 56-58.
14 At-Tabarani
15 *Mustah Dar As-Sa’adah*, Ibn Qayyim, volume I, page 142
16 Assuming the person reaches puberty at the age of 15.
18 Surat Az-Zumar: verse 53
19 Sahih Muslim, no. 6629
Chapter Three

The Land of Repentance

Al-Hasan Al-Basri, may Allah have mercy on his soul, used to say:

“If you find yourself unable to do the night prayers or fasts, then you are chained to your sins and wrong doings.”

1
The train approaches the station. Salih and Shaqiy get the train and notice a sign hanging on the station door. It says:

The Land of Repentance and Repentants

Dear Brother Visitor to our land! “Take heed! If the one who swallows up poison regrets doing so and then throws it up straight away, then the one who swallows the poison of religion, namely sins, is in more need to give up those sins and return to Allah as soon as possible.” To abandon the sin is the best medicine in curing its evils.

Shaqiy: It’s true that sins are poisonous.

Salih: Yes, every word in this Land of Repentance raises the faith in the hearts of its visitors. Try to benefit from these words.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Salih hails a taxi to the hotel where they are going to have a rest. They speak about their destination while they gaze out the window.

Shaqiy : Look at the people’s faces in this place.

Salih : What about them?

Shaqiy : They reflect the light in their hearts. All of them have the sign of repentance on them.

Salih : This is because they ask forgiveness and are sincere in worship. You will be even more pleased when you see the people of faith and piety. One of them said: “By Allah, our joy extends for days when we see a good brother of ours.”
The taxi driver interrupts.

Driver : You’re new here, aren’t you?

Salih : Yes, I’m Salih. What’s your name?

Driver : Abdul Tawwab al-Baka’.

Shaqiy : (interrupting) What does Al-Baka’ mean?

Abdul Tawwab: The one who cries a lot.

Shaqiy : And do you cry a lot?

Abdul Tawwab: Yes! This is why I was given this name.

Shaqiy : Why do you cry?

Abdul Tawwab: Well, because I was not good to Allah. I committed so many sins so that every time I remember how I wasted my life, I cry. But I am relived when I remember what Al-Hasan
said: "The servant's concern about his sin, his yearning to abandon it, and his feeling of regret for having done it are the keys to his repentance. This growing concern is more useful to the servant than some of his good deeds."

Shaqiy: Does he mean that man's concern about his sin is better for him than some of his good deeds?

Abdul Tawwab: Yes, the sin must always be before the eyes of the sinner to induce him to try, with his good deeds, to remove it. The sin acts like an electric charger that keeps the sinner charged all the time so as to repent. Whenever a sinner finishes doing a good deed, he remembers the sin and moves to
start another good deed in order to erase away the sin and so on.

Shaqiy: Everyone commits sins but I don’t think they understand the concept clearly. Why?

Abdul Tawwab: Don’t forget! Repentance is a blessing from Allah. So the one who understands this concept is the one who has a true and clear heart.

Shaqiy: But everyone has faith and the hearts are not very black.

Abdul Tawwab: Yes they do have faith. However listen to this. "When a believer says to a pious person, ‘I am the same believer as you,’ then he is like the ground pumpkin tree that said to the pine nut tree: ‘I am the same
tree as you.' The pine nut tree’s answer is worth contemplating. 'You are too proud because you think you have the same qualities as me. When autumn comes, and the wind plucks out your roots and blows your foliage away, you will realize how proud you have been for sharing the characteristics of a tree when you are unaware of the ways trees are fixed to the ground.'

He reads some poetry:

When the clouds of dust are cleared from the air,

Whether a horse or a donkey will appear over there.
My brother, you have to consider your heart. You will have it at the moment of death when life as you know it is retreating and the life to come is approaching. Is it a heart that has been attached to his God or a heart that has abandoned Him?

Shaqiy: These are profound words.

Salih: (whispering to Shaqiy) Didn’t I tell you that you’d benefit in the knowledge of faith from this land? You have to listen and act upon it. Don’t be like so many of the other Muslims today, who listen but don’t act upon what they hear.

Abdul Tawwab: I have a very special magazine that is only given to the one who repents.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Shaqiy: Can I read it?

Abdul Tawwab: All right, but you have to bring it back.

Shaqiy: May Allah reward you for that. What is the name of this magazine?

Abdul Tawwab: ‘Salvation is Through Asking Forgiveness and not Through Recklessness.’

Shaqiy: That’s an unusual title.

He takes the magazine and it reads the following:

The Reason for Sin

Dear Brother Repentant! You have to learn that Satan runs through your veins like blood. Seek the help of Allah in order to drive him out of your veins. Don’t let him take hold of your thoughts. Beware, beware, “Lest Satan

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should control your thoughts and will. He will destroy them by his devilish whispering and harmful thoughts. It will be difficult to resume what they used to be.”

You have to safeguard your mind by making faith your guard. Let this guard be armed with Istighfar (forgiveness seeking). In this way, Satan will not throw any devilish thoughts into your mind. Take care, as thoughts always develop into ideas, and ideas always develop into desires, which in turn develop into one’s will. That will manifest into an evil act. Then a person becomes what Allah has expressed as:

(Like the one whom the Satans have made into a fool, wandering bewildered through the earth.)
Don’t ever underestimate the role of that guard of faith. If you are not careful in selecting it, Satan will steal into your thoughts and wind his silk thread around them until you cease to practice your obligatory and voluntary acts of worship. Ibn Al-Mubarak, may Allah have mercy on his soul, said: “Whoever becomes careless in his manners will be punished by depriving him from practicing voluntary acts of worship. And, whoever is careless in practicing this, will be punished by depriving him from practicing the obligatory acts of worship. Whoever is careless in practicing this, will be punished by depriving him of knowledge,”⁸

Therefore, don’t look at how small your sin is. Consider how great the One you sinned against is.
Kinds of People

Dear Brother Repentant! There are four kinds of people according to their good and evil deeds:

Some of them respond to the good and shun evil. They are the righteous, religious people who have great piety.

Some of them don’t do good things and commit sins. They are the most impure kind of people who have the most evil qualities.

Some of them respond to the good, but also commit sins. They deserve the torture appropriate to the wrongdoers who follow vain desires.
Some of them neither do good nor evil. They deserve the punishment of the people who are careless.”

Dear Brother Repentant! It should be your priority to raise yourself to the first category of the most righteous people. Don’t lose hope in Allah’s mercy if you have plenty of sins. Ask Allah to rescue you from the sins and their effects both in this life and the life to come. You should know that the reason behind committing sins is man’s carelessness in committing his first sin, as one sin generates another.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, may Allah have mercy on his soul, was walking carefully in the mud, but his foot sank into it. Then he said to his friends: “A servant of Allah always strives
to protect himself from sins - but just as he steps into them, he sinks into them.”
Therefore be very careful and aware of the first sin.

_Shaqiy begins to classify himself according to the four categories. Then he turns to page three and reads:_

_Beware of Small Sins_

Dear Brother Repentant! Keep your tongue in the habit of asking forgiveness and don’t be careless. You must repent constantly, and repeat _dhikr_ often. Beware of small sins because when they grow large in number, they become destructive.

“One great mistake which is not followed by another is easier to forgive than a small sin that is repeatedly committed. It is like the small

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drops of water when they fall constantly on a rock. They will affect it more than a large quantity of water spilled at one time. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “The most regular constant deeds are loved by Allah even though they may be few.”

The most useful kind of work is work that is constant, even if it is a little at a time. So don’t say it is a small sin. It is small in your eyes but not so in Allah’s eyes.

Don’t underestimate the small acts that show your obedience to Allah.

Don’t be like the woman who was too lazy to weave and said she was only able to weave one strand an hour. She said doing that would be useless. But she
didn’t realize that all clothes are but one thread added to another.

Prayer and asking forgiveness are two good deeds that Allah will never ignore or refrain from rewarding.\textsuperscript{13}

Read this page with your heart as well as your eyes and think of your present condition. “Be aware that insisting on committing a sin is a sin in itself, and carelessness in correcting this sin is considered as insisting on committing it. Being satisfied with a sin and feeling comfort when one does it is a sign of one’s own destruction.”(The meaning of insisting is when one feels the sweetness of the sin in one’s heart after doing it.)\textsuperscript{14}
It has also been said: "Insisting does not make any sin small whereas asking forgiveness does not make any sin big."\(^{15}\)

Shaqiy contemplates these words. He turns to Salih.

Shaqiy: (in astonishment) Is insisting on committing a sin really a sin in itself?

Salih: Yes!

Shaqiy: Why?

Salih: Because the one who insists on sinning is as if he is saying to Allah: I understand what makes me happy better than You. He doesn’t obey the commands of Allah.

Shaqiy: Many people don’t understand that.
Salih: I don’t think it is right that they “don’t understand” as such. If they try to understand, they will.

Shaqiy: *(looking up towards Heaven)* O Allah! Praise be to You, for You guided me to repent.

*He turns to page four of the magazine.*

**Seven Ways and Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dear Repentant! You must learn that each breath you take may be the last one. Your deeds will reach Allah before you will. So as not to be shocked when you see them on the Day of Judgement, I suggest seven ways to allow for Allah to remit your bad deeds. Be alert and don’t postpone this any longer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Repent sincerely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Ask Allah’s forgiveness and He will forgive you.

3 Keep to the good because the things that are good remove the things that are bad.

4 One’s fellow believers should ask Allah to forgive him.

5 Ask Allah to allow the Prophet to intercede for him.

6 While passing through trials one should be patient.

7 Pray to Him, the Most Merciful, to have mercy on you.

Whoever does not follow these seven means in removing bad deeds from his record can only blame himself. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) narrated in the
Hadith Qudsi: “These are your deeds. I take account of them for you and then I pay for them. Whoever finds good [payment] should praise. Allah and whoever finds otherwise should only reproach his own soul.”

*Shaqiy contemplates the seven means to absolution and how to make use of them. He reads the page many times until he knows it almost by heart. He turns to page five.*

**Benefits of Abandoning Sins**

Dear Repentant! Any intelligent person must know that there are benefits in abandoning sins. Wahb Ibn Malik was once asked: “Will the sinner taste the sweetness of any good deed he does?”
He answered: “No and neither can the one who intends to sin and hasn’t yet done it.”

Some of the benefits are:

They establish in one’s life maturity and generosity • sense of honor • love of people • respect among people • relaxation of one’s body • strength of the heart • relief in one’s heart • expanse of one’s chest • dignity • light in one’s heart • ease in doing good deeds • ease in gaining knowledge • others praying for him • sweet feelings • people supporting him in his presence and absence • acquaintance with Allah • closeness to the angels • others competing to serve him and satisfy his needs • underestimating worldly gains • greatly estimating the gains of the life to come • high status • among people • good living standard
self satisfaction • minimizing one’s agonies • ability to earn money easily • being praised by others • swift answer for his prayers • remoteness from the devils • feeling the sweetness of good deeds • feeling the sweetness of faith • the angels carrying Allah’s throne and the angels who write down the deeds of people praying for him all the time • maturity of mind and faith • winning Allah’s love and happiness for his repentance • not fearing death.

When that person dies, the angels take his soul with the good tidings that Allah blessed him with Paradise. He should not be afraid or be distressed because he will be moving from the narrow prison of life to the gardens of Paradise. On the Day of Judgement he will be protected under the shade of Allah’s throne,
while other people will be sweating from the intense heat. When everyone is dismissed from Allah’s presence, he will be taken by his right hand, together with the good company he kept in this life.”¹⁸

Think my dear reader! Is it acceptable that any person of judgement can sacrifice these benefits for ephemeral lusts or devilish desires? Seek the help of Allah.

“If anyone puts his trust in Allah, Sufficient is Allah for him.”

Shaqiy: Subhanah Allah. There are so many benefits in abandoning sins.

Salih: *(in amazement)* Have you been reading them?

Shaqiy: Yes! Anyone who reads them cannot delay in repenting.
The driver interrupts.

Abdul Tawwab: Don't forget that these are only some examples and not all of them.

The other benefits will be published in the following issue.

Shaqiy: (anxiously) Please give me a copy of the next issue.

Abdul Tawwab: When it comes out, in sha Allah.

The taxi slows down. It stops in front of a huge hotel. Both passengers thank the driver and approach the hotel. It has engraved on the doorway: The place of Khashi`in “those who humble themselves to Allah”

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2 Ihiya’ `Urum Ad-Din, Al-Ghazali, volume 4, page 155.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

5 Al-Qasimi, Tahthib Maw‘dhat Al-Mu‘minin, volume 2, page 151.
6 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Al-Fawa‘id, page 175.
7 Surat Al-An`am, verse 71.
8 Al-Kinani, Tathkirah, page 68.
9 Al-Mawardi, Adab Ad-Dunya wad-Din, page 104.
10 Al-Maqdisi, Al-Adab Ash-Shar‘iyah, volume 1, page 97.
11 Sahih Bukhari, 2105
12 Al-Ghazali, Ihya’ Ulum Ad-Din, volume 4, page 195.
14 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen, page 123.
15 Ibn Nujaym Al-Masri, Sharh Risalat As-Saghir Wal-Kaba‘ir, page 98. The scholars have different opinions concerning the limit of insistence. The majority says that it means committing a large number of sins. Others say that it means constancy in committing one particular sin or different sins.
16 Tasliat Ahl Al-Masa‘ib, Al-Hanbali, p. 150.
18 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Al-Fawa‘id, page 151-152.
Chapter Four

Declaration of Repentance

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "When you see Allah, The Most High, giving His servant what he likes of worldly gains, while this servant is insistent on committing sins, then you should realize that it is only a trap from Allah."
They enter the hotel and reserve a room by the sea. A porter takes them to their room upstairs on the fifth floor. Shaqiyy is obsessed with his spiritual thoughts. Turning to the magazine again, he goes to his room contemplating his past and his previous travels. He utters to himself:

Shaqiy: What is the benefit of travelling from one country to another unless the soul also moves from one mood to another? If you travel in such a depressed state then you might as well consider yourself not having traveled.²

Salih unpacks while Shaqiyy lies on his bed gazing at the ceiling. Sounds of waves reach him and he goes out to the balcony to watch the
sunset as it meets the sea. He recalls his miserable past.

Shaqiy: O my soul! How many days did you spend on the beach committing sins? How many waves used to hit the naked bodies before you while you enjoyed it all? The dust, the waves, and even all the parts of your body will bear testimony to your evils on the Day of Judgement.³ O soul! How long will you be so unmindful? You seem as if the devil has tied thousands of knots around you. You no longer think of your desires, as if you have only been created for them.

He recites these lines of poetry to himself:

O you! Who are going astray,
With sins and evil are you pleased?,
Have you Forgotten the Day,
When people’s forelocks are seized,
You deliberately all the wrong things do,
And the Lord of the Worlds counts them upon you.⁴

O soul, think of your present situation and how you’ve lost your way of guidance. Stop and ask yourself as this poet did:

O my soul is like a torturing fire,
 Doesn’t it want to set me free?
It is following every desire,
Doesn’t it know this destroys me?
I’m striving to make its place higher,
But to kill me is my soul’s decree.⁵
O my soul! Every morning you are busy with livelihood, and every evening you hurry to the bed of forgetfulness. Who are you if comparing to those striving for a better life to come? 

He laments:

Shaqiy: I swear by Allah that every animal has a different style. When the spider is born, he makes his own web and refuses his mother's. Whereas the serpent—with its unfair nature—occupies what others have dug out for themselves. The crow follows the dead, while the lion never eats carrion. The elephant flatters people to get fed and the beetle returns to wherever it was sent away. Tests always reveal people's true state.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, once sent a present to King Solomon to examine the strength of his will. If she had found it weak, she would not have had any interest in him. But as she found him strong willed, she felt he was worthy to befriend.

O soul! This life is like the gift of the Queen of Sheba. Will you accept it or will you ask for something worthier?

Suddenly shouting:

No! No! I don’t accept the gift of Bilqis.

Salih: (hurrying towards him) What’s the matter? What are you saying? Who is this Bilqis? Are you in love with her?

Shaqiq: I mean that this life is like the gift Bilqis gave to Solomon. Whoever has

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taken it should satisfy himself with the lowest of things. Whoever used it in doing good is the one who saw Solomon as his example.

Salih : What do you mean?

Shaqiy : What I mean is that I have to hurry in repenting so that Allah changes my evil deeds into good deeds.

The sun sets and the adhan for maghrib prayer is heard. Allahu Akbar....Allahu Akbar. They both prepare themselves for prayer and they walk towards a mosque. On arriving they read the sign above the doorway: “The Mosque of the Ever-Penitent.” They pray two ra’kats and join in the congregational prayer. After Al-Fatiha, the imam reads: (O you who believe! Turn to Allah in severe repentance in the hope
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

that your Lord will remove your evil deeds, and admit you to gardens which beneath rivers flow. 8

In the second ra'kah he reads: (Without doubt, I am (also) He Who forgives again and again to those who repent, believe and do the right, who in fine are on true guidance.) 9

The people finish praying their voluntary prayers and one of them prepares a table, chair and microphone.

Shaqiy : (whispering) What is he doing?

Salih : It's probably a lecture. Look, here comes the Sheikh.

The Sheikh sits at the table. He is tall, thin, dark, with a heavy beard, in a white turban and a long black garment. He is in his forties.

Shaqiy : Who is that?
Salih: I don’t know. Maybe one of the scholars of ‘The Land of Repentance.’

*Soon the mosque is packed with people ready to listen to the speaker and Salih and Shaqiy are among them.*

Sheikh: In the Name of Allah, The Merciful, The Beneficent. Praise be to Allah. We thank Him and seek His help and guidance. We seek His refuge from the evil of our souls and the mischief of our deeds. I testify that there is no god but the one true God, Who has no partner and that Muhammad is his Messenger. O Allah! You Who turn about the hearts and eyes on Your religion and on obeying You. O Allah! Keep our sins distant from us.
as wide as the east is from the west. O Allah! Wash away my sins with snow and hail. O Most Merciful.

Servants of Allah! Repentance is a sign of faith. Whoever sticks to it, will be raised to a higher level. It purifies the soul from dirt till the soul connects with Allah in a pristine form. Allah the Most High says:

(Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails who corrupts it.)\(^{10}\)

Souls are purified by sincere repentance. Therefore every person who takes head who breathes on this earth needs it. And every dead person under this earth hopes to have done it. My brothers and sisters in Islam; don't become conceited with your deeds if they are many so that you
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forget to repent and become too busy with your life. Abu `Ali Ar-Rudhbari said: “It is self-deception to think that because you once did something wrong and Allah was merciful to you, that you omit repenting with the illusion that He will always forgive your small sins." Beware of delaying repentance, O servants of Allah, even for one moment. By Allah, death comes in a moment. When the angel of death decides to take one soul, it does so in a moment.

My dear brothers and sisters! “It is your minds that urge you to repent, but your hearts are stopping you. There is a battle between them. If you prepare an army for the enemy, it will run away. While you intend to pray during the night, you end up sleeping. You attend religious classes, but
you don’t cry for what is said in them. Then you ask why. It is from your own selves. You sinned in the morning, therefore slept at night. You ate unlawful food. Therefore your hearts became dark. When the door opened for those accepted in the mercy of Allah, you were not among them.”  

“Whoever likes his state of mind to be pure should do his utmost to make his deeds pure. Allah the Most High says:

\[(\text{If they (the pagans) had only remained on the (right) way, We should certainly have bestowed on them rain in abundance.})\]  

Ad-Darni said: “Whoever purifies himself will become pure and whoever stains himself (with sins) will become
stained. Whoever does something good in the morning will be rewarded in the evening, and whoever does something good in the evening will be rewarded in the morning.”

These facts should be understood well and remembered. We should remind our friends and relatives, so that we don’t fall into the trap which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, described in the hadith: “When you see Allah Most High giving His servant what he likes from the worldly gains while this servant insists on committing sins, then realize that it is only a trap from Allah.”

Our sins should always be in front of us, otherwise we will fall into the trap.
Servants of Allah! You must understand that if one remembered his wrong doings, he will regret having done them and in this way he will be nearer to Allah. Sa`id Ibn Jubayr was once asked: “What kind of person worships the most?” He answered: “A man who is hurt by his sins and whenever he remembers them, he despises his deeds.” When one looks upon his good deeds with dissatisfaction, he will want to improve them until he makes up for his sins. Moreover, he will always be renewing his repentance.

Dear brothers and sisters! You who utter the two testimonies, understand them and observe the prayer, how can you swim in this ocean of life without a life jacket? How can you drown yourself in sins?
without asking forgiveness or repentance? I don’t think that any of you will have peace of mind while the following is in front of him: death and its agony; the grave and its pain; Resurrection and its horror; the Gathering and what follows it; the Scale and its accuracy, the Judgement and its hardness; the Path and its obstacles; and the Hell Fire.

(The Day we will ask Hell, ‘Art thou filled to the full? It will say ‘Are there anymore (to come).’\textsuperscript{16}

Thank our Lord that He has extended our lives so that we are able to hear this. If we were to die now, how are we going to face Allah and what are we going to tell Him?

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O self deluded, wake up and be conscious
Before it's too late and the travelers pass away.
If you have sinned, ask the Generous
To pardon you for having been astray.
Hurry to your Lord the Most Gracious,
Who forgives by night what you do by day.\textsuperscript{17}

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Allah stretches out His hands during the night so that the people repent for the faults they committed from dawn till dusk. He stretches out His Hand during the day so that the people repent for
the faults they committed from dusk to dawn. This is until the sun rises in the west.”\(^{18}\)

O servants of Allah! Understand that the most outstanding character of those who are destined to go to Paradise is that they returned to Allah in repentance at all times. This is why Allah has counted them among the righteous when He said:

\begin{quote}
(And the Garden will be brought nigh to the Righteous – no more a thing distant.” A voice will say: “This is what was promised to every penitent, heedful one who feared Allah and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him). Enter you, there in peace and security, this is a day of eternal life.)\(^{19}\)
\end{quote}
This is the reward of true repentance as it is practiced in the right way and not the wrong repentance as is practiced by ignorant people.

“Repentance is not for bad deeds only. Those who are ignorant believe that repentance is only for forbidden acts of evil and oppression. But it is more important for the good deeds which have not been done.”

Repentance is the beginning and the end of each person. One needs it at the beginning and the end. Allah says:

\textit{(O Believers! Turn altogether towards Allah in repentance, that you may be successful.)}
This verse was revealed in Madinah when Allah addressed the believers who are the best of his creation. He asked them to repent even after they had believed, migrated and fought for His cause. In that He made the link between success and repentance to be the cause and effect.”

Servants of Allah! People buy happiness for money and gold, but Allah promises to give it to you in return for sincere repentance. Return to Allah in repentance, as it is as important to one’s body as water is to fish. Without repentance the body degenerates and with it, it lives and progresses.

To conclude, I ask Allah’s forgiveness for both you and I, and may Allah reward you for listening to me.
He pauses.

Sheikh : Any questions?

_Shaqiya turns to Salih and asks him for a piece of paper. After searching his pocket he gives a scrap of paper to Shaqiya._

Salih : There will be a blessing in it.

_Shaqiya writes: Dear Honorable Sheikh; what do you mean by ‘trap?’ He sends it to the Sheikh who picks each question one by one._

Sheikh : In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful. The first questions is: “You mentioned in the beginning a prayer that says – ‘O Allah! Wash away my sins with snow and hail.’ Why use cold water when hot water is better at cleaning?”
Sins bring a fire of desires and lust, which stain the heart. Each stain is like the wood that is added as fuel to the fire. The more sins one has the more the fire will blaze in his heart. Hence, water being an adequate method of putting out the fire. The colder the water – especially if mixed with snow – the more capable it is of cooling and strengthening the body and erasing the traces of sins. And Allah knows better.\(^{23}\)

Sheikh: *reading out a question* Does one’s faith return to its normal level after repentance, and can one be even better than what he used to be before?

Some repentants do not go back to their previous level of faith.
For example, suppose someone goes to pray in the first line, then he meets a person who tries to pull him by his clothes to stop him from going to the prayer. The first person will do any of the following:

1. Keep busy with him until he misses the prayer.

2. Try to escape. If he manages to do the second, then he will do any of the following:
   
   i. Hurry to make up for the time missed.

   ii. Walk to the prayer in the same speed he was walking before he met this person.
iii. As the delay makes him lose heart, he slows down and misses the first line. The same thing applies to the repentants.  

In general one can retain his previous level of faith after repenting, develop a better level of faith, or retreat and lose heart. Allah knows better.

Reading the next question:

What is meant by the ‘trap?’

The ‘trap’ mentioned in the hadith means: “To take the servant gradually to the punishment he deserves. The ‘trap.’ means when a person commits a new sin, Allah gives him a new gift to induce him to forget
asking forgiveness. Thus he grows more and more evil and ungrateful till he falls into more sins. The person may assume by mistake that Allah is giving him those gifts because He loves him, not knowing that Allah really means to let him down.  

Reading the following question:

"We all know that the sinner must be punished. When does he receive his punishment – straight away or in the future? I notice that many people commit a lot of sins but I don’t see them suffering from poverty or deprivation and so forth. Why?"

This is a very important question. So many people are ignorant of the implications. If someone was to commit a sin at night, he would expect the
punishment to follow by the next morning. But I say that the punishment for a sin neither comes immediately or in the future. Sulayman At-Tamimi says that probably the punishment happens immediately. “If one committed a sin secretly by night, he will wake up in the morning to find himself covered in shame and humility.” Sometimes people become confused when they don’t see the effect of the sin straight away. Sometimes the effect of the sin is delayed so much that the sin is forgotten. The sinner thinks that there will be no punishment if it doesn’t come immediately, exactly like the meaning of the following lines of poetry.

He recites:

No dust will come out of the falling wall,
If not come out immediately after the fall.

Glory be to Allah! How many people were destroyed because they forgot this small detail. How many blessings did it take away? How many punishments did it bring? Someone who is conceited may not know that the consequence of the sin can come after a long time. This happened to Muhammad Ibn Sireen when he was depressed because of a debt he incurred. He said: "I know this is the result of a sin I committed 40 years ago."26

The answer to the second question is clear in the following verses.

(But when he forgot the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all good things until in the midst of their
enjoyment of our gifts, on a sudden, We called them to account. When lo! They were plunged in to despair. Of the wrongdoers the last remnant was cut off. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds.  

Reading another question:

"Is there any advise to give to the repenting audience?"

Well concerning repentance, I intended to tell you all something important about it. Sorry for taking so much of your time.

The Sheikh looks around him as if he is looking for something.

Shaqiy: (whispering to Salih) Look! He is bringing out a piece of paper. It looks like a map.
Salih : A map! No! This is a chart.

*The Sheikh hangs the paper on the wall, turns to the attendants and asks them to draw closer to see it.*

The Bad Effects of Sins:

- Depriving the person of knowledge.
- Depriving the person of sustenance.
- Melancholy in the heart.
- Making one’s life difficult.
- Estrangement from others.
- Leaving darkness in the heart.
- Weakening the heart and body.
- Depriving the person of being obedient.
- Taking away any blessings from one’s life.
- Sins generate other sins.
Committing many sins makes it habitual.

Makes Allah look down upon one with contempt.

Bring about shame and humiliation.

Take away shyness.

Put out the light in one's mind.

The Prophet will not pray for the sinner.

Too many sins makes one heedless.

Take away bounties and bring about punishment.

Weaken the glorious image of Allah in one's heart.

Lead the heart astray.
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Everyone reads the paper.

Shaqiy : (whispering to Salih) Sins have many harmful effects, don’t they.

Salih : If you read carefully, you’ll realize that some have physical consequences, others have spiritual ones, and some effect their life, the lives of others and the life to come.

Shaqiy : But there is something I don’t quite understand.

Salih : What is that?

Shaqiy : That sins deprive someone from the prayer of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the angels. What does this mean?

Salih : Well, this is explained in the verse:
Those who bear the Throne of Allah and those around it sing Glory and Praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and implore forgiveness for those who believe—‘Our Lord! Thou embrace all things in Mercy and knowledge. Forgive then those who return in repentance, and follow thy path; and persevere with them from the chastisement of the Blazing Fire. And grant our Lord that they enter the Gardens of Eternity, which thou hast promised to them, and to the religious among their fathers, their wives, and their posterity. For thou art (He) the Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom,\(^{29}\)

Sheikh: My dear brothers and sisters! Recognizing sins and their harmful effects is imperative according to the
shari'a. Instant repentance is a must according to the scholars. “Whatever is necessary for implementing an obligation is an obligation in itself.”

Dear brothers and sisters! Do you know how great it is to stand between the hands of Allah in regret, lowering ones head, raising ones hands and praying to Allah, saying with tears running down ones face:

Except for Your mercy,

I have no other door.

So (Allah) don’t dismiss me,

For all the sins I bore.

You know best my misery,

Your pardon I implore.
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My sins are chaining me,
Your mercy I pray for.
I’m wretched and I ask thee,
To quench my thirst from Your
River of Grace, so give me
From its water more and more. 30

My dear brothers, don’t think that if Allah
closes His door of mercy in front of you,
you will find another. Therefore, expect that
anything can happen to you.

“If you haven’t purified yourselves
from evil, and you haven’t denied that any
evil has occurred, then wait for punishment
as you deserve no pardon.” 31 Let’s declare
war against evil and sins as we have to
announce our sincere repentance. Don’t
delay this. If it is the love of life that hinders you, then listen to this: “O you lovers of life! Think about how many hearts were broken in their love for it.”\textsuperscript{32}

We must return to Allah in repentance.

See how disappointed is the one who lost his days and nights, and how unfortunate the one is who covered himself with sins. Look at the one who has failed because he traded dishonestly and the one who regrets not repenting to the Lord of the Worlds! What sort of state will he be in when the true believers are brought before their Lord’s presence?\textsuperscript{33} We should be in competition with one another to do the most repentance so we reap the rewards of Paradise.
(Be ye foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, And a Garden of Bliss the width whereof is as the width of Heaven and earth prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messenger. That is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.)

How great it will be to be one of those who are resurrected with faces beaming with light. How great it will be to stand under the protection of Allah’s Throne, and to be one of those who journeys along as-sirat, the path, as quick as a flash. How glorious it will be to go to Paradise where no one sleeps or dies. How I yearn for that day, when one will have the
pleasure of looking at the face of Allah’s Grace that day.

The Sheikh repeats these words till the tears roll down his cheeks.

Sheikh : We have been warned so many times, but still, we don’t listen.

Lowering his head and continuing to cry and raising it again.

Think of those who passed away – where are they now? They have already been asked in their graves. You will be just like them.

I asked my dears’ house “Where can they be found?

Why aren’t they there and what have they done?”
It answered: "They stayed just a little
time around.

But after a short while they all have
gone!"

I asked: "Is there a place for them to
be found?"

It answered: "To their graves they
have all run."

How often they had hopes of life
when the sound

Of their fate announced 'no more
fun'!

Except for what they said nothing on
the ground,

Was left about them to tell what they
had done.
In the graves of sorrow and regret they are bound.

They once had wealth, but now they have none.³⁵

By God! If anyone of them had repented and asked forgiveness before he died, he wouldn’t be in regret when under the ground after what he did on it!

I ask Allah to forgive you and me, and that he will bring us together in Paradise.

*Shaqiy rises to find everyone lowering their heads. Some are wondering how Satan managed to pull them towards sins. Others are struggling with their soul and deciphering how to rid it of satanic desires. Shaqiy turns to Salih and finds him*
too, lowering his head and mumbling to himself while crying.

Salih: Allah, I seek refuge in You from regret when I am in my grave. I seek Your forgiveness and I declare my repentance. I seek salvation in Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful.

Shaqiy begins to feel dizzy thinking about the days, hours and minutes playing around and wasted in pure pleasure. He realizes that he didn’t consider the rights of his Creator upon him. He sees his past flashing before him. He feels as if he is standing before God on the Day of Judgement. He begins to talk to himself.

Shaqiy: How much money have I stolen?
    How many glasses of wine have I
drunk? How many girls have I spent my time with? How many prayers have I missed? How many fasts have I neglected? How many times have I lied, backbited or mocked people. How much time have I wasted?

How often have you, your religion neglected?

How often have you, your faith disrespected?

How often have you forgotten to do the right?

And waste your good deeds as you backbite?.

O you are but a harmful scorpion or insect.
You know Allah sees you, but Him you don’t respect.

You don’t prefer what is eternal to what is dying.

In the morning you repent, in the evening you’re lying.

Self-deluded with this life and its gains.

But in the grave you’ll cry when nothing remains.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{Shaqiy continues to rebuke himself harshly.}

The words of wisdom my heart never obeys.

It is always harsh and remorseless.

And my soul usually talks and says,

But never does any goodness

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O my soul! Why does Allah always
Sees you with the heedless,
You should be ashamed of your ways.
And from Him seek forgiveness.\(^\text{37}\)

He raises his hands towards heaven and offers sincere repentance, regretting everything he has done, deciding to abandon all the evils he used to partake in. He makes the intention not to return to this evil way. He returns to Salih and finds him smiling.

Salih : Congratulations for your repentance.

(He embraces him).

Shaqiy : Is it normal to congratulate the sinner for doing so.
Salih: Yes, did you hear what one of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) Ka'ab Ibn Malik said when he realized that Allah had accepted his repentance for not participating in the Battle of Hunayn? He said: “I came to Allah’s Messenger and on my way I met groups of people who greeted me because of the (acceptance of) repentance and they said: ‘Here is a greeting for your repentance because it was accepted by Allah.”

Shaqiq: May Allah reward you! I’ll never forget the favor you have done me. Just pray to Allah that he will keep me steadfast.
Salih : From now on you are not ‘Shaqiy,’ because Shaqiy is someone who is deprived of repentance. But never mind we’ll think of that later. Let’s go and talk to the Sheikh.

He takes Shaqiy by the hand through the crowds until they meet the Sheikh and greet him. They introduce themselves and promise to visit him the following day. They leave the mosque after ‘Isha’ prayer and chat on the way back to the hotel.

Shaqiy : Do know, Salih, that since my childhood I have always wanted to repent, but the devil always tricked me? Now I feel satisfied.
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Salih: This is a glad tiding that has come to you directly. But you are still only in the beginning of the way.

Shaqiy: (in a frightened voice) What do you mean? The beginning? Are we going somewhere else?

Salih: No! I don’t mean that. What I mean is that repentance is the first step in the ladder of practicing Islam. Al-Kittani was asked what repentance is and he answered: “It is to abandon what is unworthy and keep to what is praiseworthy. Then it is to suffer, struggle, be steadfast and guided, by then you deserve the gifts of Allah.”

Shaqiy: This means I’m still in the initial stages of the path of guidance.
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Salih : Yes! And this will make the devil fiercer than before, so it can steer you away from the straight path.

Shaqiy : Why?

Salih : Because in the past he used to control your thoughts, but today you won’t let him. This is why the battle inside you will be stronger.

Shaqiy : This frightens me.

Salih : Don’t be frightened. Seek the help of Allah to overcome the devil and always bear in mind what Abu Hazim said: “When one clears his conscience, his major sins will be forgiven. When he intends to repent, everything will be open to him.”

Shaqiy : What things will be opened up?
Salih: What I meant by ‘Allah’s help’ is that He makes you steadfast on the path of guidance, and that Allah will open a treasure of knowledge for you. He will change your bad deeds only on one condition.

Shaqiy: What is the condition?

Salih: To have the will never to return to committing those sins. Most people regret their sins and actually stop doing them during their repentance. But they don’t make the intention and find the strong will to never go back to doing them again. You have to continue to ask for forgiveness because it is like the soap that washes the sins away. Abu Musa said: “Allah
gave you two promises of security when he said:

(But Allah was not going to send them a chastisement while you were among them, nor was He going to send them while they could ask for pardon).\(^{41}\)

As for the first promise not to punish them, this was as long as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was alive and among them. Concerning the second promise that he was not going to punish them as long as they asked forgiveness, the forgiveness lasts until the Day of Judgement.\(^{42}\)

Shaqiy : (smiling) That is really nice. I think only a few Muslims today understand this properly.
Salih : You’re right. Most people think that they should only ask forgiveness after sinning. This is untrue.

Shaqiy : Does asking forgiveness influence the acts of obedience?

Salih : Yes it does. Any kind of wrongdoing makes people lose heart and renders them unwilling to obey Allah. Wrongdoings chain people and hold them back from observing their duties towards Allah the Almighty. Al-Hasan Al-Basri spoke on this matter. “If you are unable to pray by night and fast by day, then you should realize that you are chained by sins and wrong doings.”43
Shaqiy : (in contemplation) There is a lot to be gained by Al-Basri’s words. If people could only realize that their love for this life is nothing but a fetter. I think what he wanted to say was that the sinner is in the prison of sin. And he’ll stay there till the Judge decides whether his repentance is true or not. Then He will pardon him and set him free to worship Him. Thank you Allah.

Salih : We’re back at the hotel now.

They enter the hotel, shower and pray the night prayer followed by watr prayer, which they pray collectively. They both fall asleep when putting their heads on the pillow. For Shaqiy, he feels it was the best day of his life. If the

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repentant’s sleep is greater than anything in his life, then what about the day when he wakes up?

Except those who repent and make amends and openly declare the Truth: to them I turn, for I am Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.\(^{14}\)

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1 Sahih Al-Jami` As-Saghir, volume 1, page 575.
2 Ar-Rafi`I, Wahi Al-Qalam, volume 1, page 48.
3 Reference to the verse: \(\text{On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.}\) (Surat An-Nur, verse 24)
5 Ibn Al-Jawzi, Al-Mudhish, page 150.
6 Ibid., page 152.
7 Ibid, page 167.
8 Surat Tahrim: verse 8.
9 Surat Taha: verse 82.
10 Surat Ash-Shams: verses 9-10.
11 Ibn Al-Jawzi, Dham Al-Hawa, page 175.
13 Aj-Jinn: verse 16.
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16 Surat Qaf: verse 30.
17 *Min Wasaya Ar-Rasul*, volume 1, page 43.
18 Sahih Muslim, no. 6644.
19 Surat Qaf: verse 31-34.
22 *Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen*, page 121.
23 *Ighathat Al-Lahfan*, volume 1, page 57.
24 *Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen*, page 165.
27 Surat Al-An’am: 44-45.
29 Surat Ghafir: 7-8.
31 Al-Muhasabi, *At-Tawbah*, page 45.
33 *Al-Mawi’zah Al-Hasanah*, Hasan Khan, p. 85.
34 Surat Al-Hadid: verse 21.
38 Sahih Muslim, no 6670.
41 Surat Al-Anfal: verse 33.
42 Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, volume 3, page 60.
44 Surat Al-Baqrarah: verse 160.
Yahya Ibn Mu’adh, may Allah be pleased with him, said: Dreaming of a long life is what hinders people from repenting. The one who repents must: shed tears, like loneliness, and must question himself whenever he is about to do something wrong.¹
Shaqiy sleeps deeply. He has a strange dream, which frightens him. He wakes up yelling:

Shaqiy: I am Sa`id (meaning happy and blessed) Not Shaqiy! I'm Sa`id! Not Shaqiy!

The screams wake Salih. Salih finds him murmuring and shaking. Mentioning the name of Allah, he tries to calm him down.

Salih: What's the matter with you?

Shaqiy: (taking a deep breath) I had a nightmare.

Salih: What was it?

Shaqiy: I saw a long road going through mountains and hills. There were thorns, nails and broken glass on both sides and at the end was the clear blue
sea. Although I was walking alone, there was an old man with a white beard following me. I ran away from him, but he kept calling after me: Shaqy! Shaqy! I reached the bottom of a mountain, but then I saw him, right in front of me, and he said: ‘Shaqy! Take this good news, but...’ I said: ‘What do you mean by but?’ He repeated what he said. ‘Please old man! What do you mean by but?’ I said. Then he pointed to the sky and I heard a voice. I couldn’t work out where it came from. It said:

(The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except by His leave: of those (gathered), some will be wretched and some will be blessed. Those who are wretched
shall be in the Fire; there will be for them. There in (nothing) but the heaving of sighs and sobs. They will dwell therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure except by the Lord wills. For thy Lord is the (sure) Accomplisher of what he plans. And those who are blessed shall be in the Garden: they shall dwell therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord wills: a gift without a break.

The voice continued: Shaqiy! Go and change your name to Sa’id as it means happy. Then you’ll be you’ll be happy in the hereafter. You know that names indicate the character of their holders. Remember these words:

Wait poor man! Judgement will come tomorrow,
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With the Balance and the paper of your deeds,

Will you be called Shaqiy and have the sorrow

Or will you be lucky to be called Sa`id?  

O Sa`id! May Allah help you from now on."

Then the old man said: “This is good news that Allah has accepted your repentance, so take it.” Allah says:

(Know they not that Allah does accept repentance from His votaries and receives gifts of charity, and that Allah is He, the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.)

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Shaqiy continues to cry and Salih embraces him

Shaqiy: Receive the glad tidings! This is a sign that Allah has accepted your repentance. From now on we’ll call you Sa`id. Go and make ablutions, pray two rak`as and then sleep like the dwellers of Paradise.

Sa`id gets up to do as his brother suggested to him. He feels pleasure in his heart and he sleeps till morning. At dawn they awake to pray the fajr prayer. While eating breakfast, Sa`id notices a letter that has been slipped under the door. He questions Salih about it.

Salih: Oh this is a habit of the people who live in the Land of Repentance they
exchange advice every morning in this way.

Sa`id: Let’s open it then. We might find something useful in it about repentance.

*Salih opens the envelope and takes out a card. It reads:*

**Levels of Repentance**

Dear Brother Repentant!

Hearts are like cooking pots. When the contents boil, they overflow from them. In the same way, if your heart is filled with the love of this life, it will overflow from your heart and be apparent on the movements of your limbs and your tongue.
But if your heart is filled with love for the Hereafter and dislike for this life, this will also reflect on you. Be keen to fill your heart with dhikr and ask forgiveness so that it is only repentance that flows from your heart and spills over through your body.

Al-Harith Al-Muhasabi said: ‘The repentance of the eye is to cease looking at anything that is unlawful. The repentance of the ear is to cease listening to anything that is unlawful. The repentance of the hand is to cease holding anything that is unlawful.

The repentance of the feet is to cease walking to any place that is unlawful. The repentance of the private parts is to cease having any unlawful sexual relationships.
Thus all parts of the body are asked to repent. The mind is also asked to repent, ceasing to think of anything that is unlawful. And the tongue should repent by not uttering anything bad.\(^5\)

The organs cannot repent unless the heart is full of repentance. And the one boiling point differs from one cooking pot to another according to the temperature. This is true with the hearts. Repentance differs from one heart to another according to the degree of faith. There are levels of repentance.

The lowest is for disbelief and polytheism and it raises one to the level of faith. Above this, is the level of repentance for major sins and this raises one to a degree of normal piety. Following that is the level for minor sins and it
raises one to the degree of higher piety. Then there is the repentance for undesirable deeds and not partaking in desirable deeds. Above this is repentance for imperfection of human behaviour and this raises one to the level of ihsan [proficiency]. Above this is the level of repentance for not fully observing Allah and His blessings and this raises one to the level of those who are close to Allah.⁶

Remember to repent and purify yourself all the time. Remember to climb the ladder of repentance until you reach the top to repent for forgetting Allah and His blessings.

Sa`id : I always thought that repentance was only one kind and of one result.
Salih : Now it is clearer, but unless we use the knowledge we have just received, we will be questioned about it.

Sa`id : *lies on his bed thinking about the different kinds of repentance and the ways of repenting like with the hand, tongue and eye etc.*

Salih : Now I understand. Allah wants every part of our body to submit to Him.

Salih : Yes! Since Allah gave us them as gifts, then it is not right to use them to disobey Him.

Sa`id : *(jumps up all of a sudden)* Don’t we have an appointment with that Sheikh?

Salih : Let’s go!
They leave the hotel.

Sa`id : Do you know where he lives?

Salih : Yes, I asked him.

Sa`id : Is it far?

Salih : No! Near the Mosque of the Ever-Penitent in Wahb Ibn Munbih Street.

Sa`id : Who is Wahb Ibn Munbih?

Salihn : Oh, he is one of the respected early Muslims, [at-tab`iy - the second generation after the Companions] He was very knowledgeable on the books that were written before his time, and was known for his piety. He died in San`a in the year 1100 A.H.⁷

Sa`id : What do you know about his life?
Salih : Not much. But I know some of his sayings. For example, “There once was a man who was known to be a righteous worshipper. He passed by another worshiper like him and asked him: “What’s the matter with you?’ He said: “I wonder about that man who used to be a wonderful worshipper but now he is tempted by this life to such an extent that it took him astray.” The other responded: “Don’t wonder about those whom life took astray, and wonder about those whom life took straightforward.”

Sa`id : Why should he say that? Shouldn’t everyone have a straightforward life?

Salih : No! Being on the straight path can be difficult. It is not easy to overcome
one’s desires. But if the person repents, then following the straight path will be much easier.

Sa`id : How?

Salih : Allah addressed the Prophet in the Qur’an, saying:

\[\text{Therefore stand firm (in the straight path) as you are commanded. You and those with you, turn (to Allah)}\]

Notice that turning to Allah in repentance is a prerequisite to leading a life on the straight path.

Sa`id : But why was the worshipper so astonished?

Salih : Because those who can overcome their lusts and desires are few in number. The repentants are few too.
So those who lead a life on the straight path will be few also. This is what surprised him.

Sa`id : But you can't guarantee this unless you protect your mind with faith strong enough to steer you away from thoughts from Satan.

Salih : I can tell you ten ways of keeping yourself aloof from such thoughts and help you follow that straight path.

Be sure that Allah is watching you and your heart, and that he knows the details of your thoughts.

Feel shy of Him.

Fear Him enough lest He should read the thoughts in your mind, which was originally created to learn about Him.
Fear Allah lest Allah should despise you for having such thoughts.

Only accept that your heart contains His love.

Fear lest such thoughts should grow wilder so that they take away all the Faith and love for God from your heart.

Realize that those thoughts are like the grains that lay before the bird to falls into the trap.

Understand that a heart cannot contain both good and bad thoughts, as one must overcome the other.

Know that these thoughts are like a dark and endless sea; if the heart happens to fall into them, it will get lost and drown.
Such thoughts are the hopes of the ignorant, the fruits of which are only Shame and regret.  

Sa`id : O Allah! Help me with my faith to safeguard my mind so that I can follow the straight path.

Salih : We have arrived at Wahb Ibn Munbih Street. I think this our Sheikh's house.

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1 Ibn Al-Jawzi, Dham Al-Hawa, page 174.
2 Surat Hud: verses 105-108.
3 Nubala’ Al-Yaman, volume 3, page 64.
4 Surat At-Tawbah: verse 104.
5 Al-Muhasabi, At-Tawbah, page 52.
6 Al-Akhlaq Al-Islamiyah, volume 1, page 690.
8 Ibn Al-Jawzi, Sifat As-Safwa, volume 1, page 293.
9 Surat Hud: verse 112.
10 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Tariq Al-Hijratain, pages 175-176.
Chapter six

A Meeting with the Sheikh

Abul Hasan Ibn Sam`un said: Be careful from the small sins.

Small spots leave traces on clean cloth.'
The Sheikh lives in a bungalow. Its small, wooden windows indicate the simplicity of the house. Sa`id and Salih knock on the door. The Sheikh receives them warmly and invites them in, serving them food and drinks. Sa`id recounts the recent changes to his life.

Sa`id: Will you explain to me this hadith that I heard when I was a child. “Had you not committed any sins, Allah would have brought into existence a creation that would have committed sins, and Allah would have forgiven them.”

Sheikh: Human beings are just too weak and fallible by nature. But they do differ in their attitude towards repentance. Ibn al-Jawzi had something to say on
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this matter. "This is a punishment from Allah to you. Don’t deal with the sword but deal with asking forgiveness."³

Accept that people sin and repent. Allah would have created another creation just to do so. So, Sa`id, be a reason for humanity to exist and not to vanish.

Sa`id : Does Allah accept repentance from everyone?

Sheikh : The repentance that Allah accepts is: "Allah wrote on himself to accept any repentance that comes from a soul that has deeply and vehemently been by regret until it returning to consciousness. Therefore it repents in an early stage of life. Such a soul
should have a sincere desire to be purified and adopt a new style of life."

Sa`id : Praise be to Allah. I can actually feel it inside my soul.

Sheikh : And so this proves that your repentance was accepted. In sha Allah.

Salih : But there is something I don’t quite understand.

Sheikh : What is that?

Salih : Why does Allah leave someone to commit a sin? What is the wisdom behind this?

Sheikh : *(changing his position slightly)* This is an important question. But before I answer it, you should understand the
meaning of His name ‘Al-Hakim’ (The Most Wise). Anything, good or bad that Allah destines for His servants has wise motives behind it. They may be clear or unclear motives. Sometimes Allah lets man commit sins for many reasons. Some of them are:

Allah is pleased when he repents for his sin.

It makes the servant need Allah and His refuge to protect him from being devastated.

Allah loves him to be in a state of submission to Him in servitude and humility. This happens when the person commits the sin and asks for forgiveness.
The sin enables the person to realize just how patient and generous Allah is.

By sinning, the person is aware that the only means of rescue is through Allah’s forgiveness.

Sins are an audience made on man.

The sinner will always like to treat those who wrong him in the same way he likes Allah to treat him when he wrongs Him.

Sins steer person away from pride and self-admiration.

When Allah forgives a person for his misdeeds, this person will be thankful to Allah.
When someone does something wrong, he gets a clear image of the traps of the devil so he can avoid them next time.

A sin, which is associated with man’s humility to Allah, is much better than purity, which is associated with pride and haughtiness.

Committing a sin and suffering from it lets him yearn for the happiness, the blessings of forgiveness and a reunion with Him.

Sins are tests that Allah makes for His servants. He can judge whether they are good enough to carry the responsibility or not.\textsuperscript{5}

Salih: May Allah reward you for enlightening me on this subject.
The three drink tea while they chat about their backgrounds. At the Sheikh's request, Sa'id gives his address to him. They thank the Sheikh for the useful time they spent and leave for the hotel.

After the asr prayer they suggest a short walk on the beach. They spot a café there with a roof made of reeds and chairs from tree trunks. It is full of people eating and drinking soft drinks.

Sa'id : How about sitting here?
Salih : Are you tired walking on the sand?
Sa'id : No! But I'd just like to have a cool drink.
Salih : Is this a condition for repenting?
Sa'id : No, more for walking on the sand.
1 Sifat As-Safwah, volume 2, page 473.
2 Sahih Muslim, no. 6620.
3 Ibn al-Jawzi, Said Al-Khatir 393.
4 Sayid Qutb, Fi dhilal Qur'an, volume 1, page 603.
Chapter Seven

The Café

Ibn Taymiyah said: “When my mind is unable to deal with a certain problem, I ask for forgiveness a thousand times (more or less). It is only then that I feel relaxed and my problem is solved. If this problem happens when I am in the market place, mosque or school, it doesn’t hinder me from dhikr and asking forgiveness until I get what I want.”
They both order a drink and desert. Gazing at the sea, they reflect in their own individual way. The sound of the radio is heard in the background. There is poetry recited on the airwaves:

Radio:

Hasten to repent before you die
And your tongues cease to speak,
By repentance your soul purify
And raise it up to its peak.²

My dear listeners! Listen to the final episode from: “Ask forgiveness and Paradise will be a gift for you.”

Sa`id: What’s this program, Salih?

Salih: Probably a series of some kind.
Sa`id : Now I know why the café is so busy.

Salih : *(turning around)* Yes! That might be the reason.

Radio: Listeners! Repentance has many advantages. It is sufficient for the one who repents that he has the honor to be described by Allah as ‘just’. Allah says:

\[\text{\textit{(And those who do not desist are indeed wrongdoers (unjust)).}}\]^{3}

If those who don’t repent are unjust, then logically speaking, those who do are just. The author of this book (may Allah have mercy on him) said that there are many benefits in repenting. He gives a list:

The first benefit of repentance is moral protection. It is a fatal spiritual
weapon, so that when a person uses it, it changes the course of his life.

"Repentance is one of the most basic moral values and any delay in making it is considered a fault in the Islamic character." In an article published in the magazine of the 'Islamic Society of Woking, England, the Dutch writer, Franz Stal said: "Repentance in Islam is a means for individuals to change themselves. It is a great moral weapon where there is regret and change." My dear repentant! Be ready with your weapon and fill it with ammunition of regret, abandonment of sins, and strong will. Then direct that weapon to your own self... and shoot! You'll see the results.
The next benefit is self-respect. It is wonderful that repentance makes a person respect himself after he used to despise and hate himself. This psychological impact becomes clear because:

It gives a person hope in life and relaxation after being devastated by his own sins.

It makes a person respect himself rather than hating and despising himself.

It frees man from the chains of guilt and fear. In this way the repentant overcomes the temptation of his soul. What he always thought was a dream will come true.  

The third benefit is that a person’s deeds will be blessed and the heart will be
filled with spirituality. My dear repentant! Repentance influences the deeds and the heart. Ibn Al-Jawzi said: "Repentance makes it obligatory on the repentant to continue to love, feel spiritual about and thank Allah. He is satisfied with all that He decrees. Once a person repents, he will consequently receive many gifts and he may not even know what they are exactly. He will always feel the blessing of repentance in his life as long as he does not relinquish it."7

After everything we have learned about the benefits of repentance, who dares to sacrifice them? How many hard hearts were softened by repentance? How many difficult things in your life were made easy because you repented, even while you were
unaware of it. Let’s go on now to the last benefit of repentance and that is:

It changes evil into good. Allah says:

(Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good. Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.)

This advantage is the most attractive to people and induces them to repent every minute of their life. Repentance wipes away all wrong doings that happened before it. Sincere repentance makes one as pure as a newborn baby.

"Repentance is the traveler’s first step on his journey. It is the investment of the businessperson, the key to the straight way to those who are lost. It is the starting
point of selecting those who will be loved and brought close to Allah."

To conclude: we ask Allah to benefit us with what he have heard and grant us the ‘Periodical Repentance’ as it is the only weapon to change, respect ourselves, soften our hearts, bless our deeds and change our evil deeds into good deeds. May Allah forgive you and I. Thank you for joining us.

The radio continues to broadcast poetry. Everyone leaves the café. Sa`id and Salih walk back along the beach to the hotel as they have to prepare for their journey home.

Sa`id : I kind of sense what the presenter was talking about. Since I repented, I have
a feeling of peace of mind and self-respect.

Salih : It is certainly a noble feeling. Give it a few days, and you’ll be much happier with your faith and deeds.

Sa`id : Is that another benefit as well?

Salih : Yes! You’ll feel pleasure for your good deeds.

Sa`id : How is that?

Salih : Well, there is a story that I read in Imam Ar-Razi’s interpretation of the Qur’an which proves what I say.

Sa`id : So tell me then.

Salih : The Roman king, Anno Shirwan was once on a hunting trip. He went quite far ahead and lost sight of the
soldiers. Feeling thirsty, he entered a garden and asked a boy to give him a pomegranate. The boy gave him one. He split it in half and crushed the seeds. It was very juicy. The king liked this fruit and thought about forcibly taking the garden from its owner. He told the boy to give him another one, but when he squeezed it, he found it a bit sour. When the king asked the boy why this happened, the boy replied that it was because the king had evil thoughts on his mind and that such thoughts caused the pomegranate to taste bitter. The king repented in his heart, then he asked the boy for another. When he tasted it, it was sweeter than the first one.
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He asked the boy why he thought this was the case. The boy answered that maybe the king repented for his intended oppression.¹⁰

Can you see how repentance influences the man’s deeds. It turns the sour into sweet and fills you with happiness so that you submit yourself more to Allah in humility.

Sa`id : Is this true?

Salih : Yes! Sins bring bad luck in everything: one’s life, wife, car and house. Haven’t you heard of Al-Fadil Ibn Ayyid who said: “When I commit a sin, I know it in the way my donkey, my servant, my woman and even the mouse that lives in my house behave

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towards me.” Unless he repents to Allah, this bad luck will accompany him all his life till he dies. But as for the repentant, he will always look at catastrophes as fate prescribed by Allah, and he will always consider the happy and sad events to be from Allah.

He reads this short poem:

The one whose mouth is sick and sour,
Will taste even sweet water as sour.

Sa`id : What does that poem have to do with what you said before?

Salih : Well, it explains that the heart is the reason behind everything. If someone’s heart is spiritually healthy, he’ll be happy worshipping Allah and
remembering Him. But if his heart is sick, he will hate worshipping and love wrongdoing.

Sa`id : This means that we should repent immediately after sinning so that it doesn’t stay long in our hearts and exhaust it.

Salih : Don’t take the word ‘immediately’ lightly.

Sa`id : Why?

Salih : Because if you don’t repent straight away, you have a double repentance.

Sa`id : How?

Salih : One is for the mistake you made and the other is for the delay in repenting. This delay is a sin in itself. Ibn Al-Qaiyim said: “Sometimes it doesn’t
occur to the repentant that he needs to repent again just after repenting because he delayed his repentance in the first place.”

Sa`id : May Allah reward you Salih.

Sa`id looks behind him and realizes that they have walked past the hotel.

Sa`id : Did you realize that we just walked past the hotel?

Salih : (looking back) Oh yes, there it is.

They stroll back, pray Maghrib and `Isha, and pack their bags. Sitting in the balcony at dinner:

Sa`id : I feel frightened.

Salih : What are you frightened of?

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Sa`id : Well, you see, committing sins was almost instinct in me. How do I deal with this?

Salih : That is an important question. But I am surprised at you.

Sa`id : Why?

Salih : Don’t you remember what I asked you to know off by heart before we left?

Sa`id : What was that exactly? You know how forgetful I can be.

Salih : Remember, “Whoever had a bright start will have a bright end. Whoever is with Allah, Allah is with him.”

Sa`id : Yes, I remember now. I hope Allah helps me in this.
Salih : Sayid Qutb once wrote something that lends a deeper meaning to this. It concerns keeping on the straight path after repenting and how to change devilish inclinations into Godly ones. He says: “Repentance begins with a feeling of regret and then by abandoning the sin. It ends with doing good deeds to prove that it is sincere. These good deeds are a kind of positive compensation that the soul does to make up for earlier sins. Because a sin is an act and a movement, it should be compensated by a counter movement, so that the soul doesn’t feel empty and return to sinning.”\textsuperscript{13}
Does this mean that I have to fill this vacuum with something positive?

Exactly! Otherwise you’ll have the tendency to return to sinning.

What about my friends, relatives and those whom I love?

If you have to, then you should distance yourself from them, either physically or with your heart according to the situation. Remember the story of the man who killed ninety-nine souls. He was advised: “You better go to such and such a land where the people are devoted in prayer and, and you will worship along with them. And do not come to
this land of yours since it is an evil land for you.”

Beware that on the Day of Judgement you will be full of regret that you followed a particular person. Allah says:

(The Day that the wrongdoer will bite at his hands and he will say: O would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger! Ah! Woe is me! Would that I had never taken such a one for a friend! He did lead me astray from the message of Allah after it had come to me! Ah! The Satan is but a traitor to man.)

Sa`id: Allah, give me help and save me from any disappointment on that Day. Now I declare a merciless war against sins. I’ll never return to them again.
Salih : And don’t let Satan sneak into your heart by any means.

_They both fall asleep, wake for fajr prayer, breakfast and take a taxi to the station._

Sa`id : I was thinking about what you said yesterday about positive compensation. Is it difficult for me to do it by myself?

Salih : Of course it is.

Sa`id : How can I make it easy then?

Salih : Keep good friends. They will help you to do the right thing. Company like that is like a strong fortress that protects you. It is a sign of the sincerity of repentance.
Sa`id : I don’t think this sounds convincing. What is the relation between sincere repentance and keeping good company?

Salih : You don’t have to be so startled. You just don’t like the idea because it is new to you. One of the good scholars was asked about the signs of repentance and he answered: crying a lot to express sorrow for your mistakes; fear of returning to them; abandoning the evil companion; and keeping friends with shy people.¹⁵

Sa`id : Why did he choose shyness as a characteristic in referring to good company?
Salih : Well! That is because shyness reflects the vividness of the heart. A lack of shyness is a sign of the heart’s death. This is why Al-Junayd said: "Shyness is a moral value that makes one desert abhorrent behaviour and prevent one from wrongdoing others."¹⁶

Therefore, the one who keeps company of shy people will be too shy to disobey Allah, and even if he disobeys Allah, he will repent at once. This is how Allah will grant him the straight path (straight forwardness) in this life and the next.

Sa`id : O Allah, grant me the company of people who are shy.
Salih: I’ll tell you more about the advantages of keeping good company. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “The example of a good righteous companion and an evil one is that of a person carrying musk and another blowing a pair of bellows. The one who is carrying musk will either give you some perfume as a present, you will buy some from him, or at least you will smell the sweet scent from him. But the one who is blowing a pair of bellows will either burn your clothes for you, or smell horrible.” 17

Also, there is a saying: “The good companion is better than
loneliness, but loneliness is better than an evil companion.”\(^{18}\)

Then there are the words of Ibn Al-Jawzi who said: “Beware of the ignorant companion and don’t befriend the sinful. Whoever betrays his first benefactor, Allah, will never be faithful to you.”\(^{19}\)

In the story of the people of the cave in the Qur’an, there is a dog mentioned among them. Although the dog is unimportant, it was honored because he was with righteous people. The righteous people are those who never bother their companions.
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Sa`id : If I am shy, does it mean that I will never disobey Allah?

Salih : No, as no one is infallible. Even the most pious of people are sometimes tempted. Desires and pitfalls are part of the soul’s nature and sometimes the soul overcomes nature. Such people will be in an eternal race towards repentance and forgiveness as long as they live.

The taxi stops at the station. They buy the train tickets and take their seats on the train.
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1 Ibn Taymiyah, Batl Al-Islah Ad-Dini, page 17.
2 Tafseer Al-Qurtubi, vol. 5, p. 92.
3 Surat Al-Hujurat: verse 11.
4 'Afif Tubbarah, Ruh Ad-Din Al-Islami, p. 175.
5 Ibid.
6 'Afif Tubbarah, Al-Khatayah, p. 28.
7 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Muftah Dar As-Sa`adah, vol.1, page 365.
8 Surat Al-Furqan: verse 70.
9 Ash-Sharabasi, Mausu`at Akhlaq Al-Qur'an, volume 2, page 53.
10 Tafseer Ar-Razi, volume 1, page 244.
12 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen, page 157.
13 Sayed Qutb, Fi Dhilal Al-Qur’an, volume 5, page 2580.
15 Abdul Qadir, Mukafirat Al-Dhunub, page 7.
16 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen, page 390.
17 Bukhari, no. 192.
Chapter Eight

Back Home

One night, Abu Sufyan Ath-Thawri kept crying and he did so till the morning. He was asked: “Is this all for the fear of sins?” He took a straw from the ground and said: “Sins are less important than this straw, but I cry for the fear of having a bad end to my life.” This is considered the highest degree where a person fears lest his sins become so many that they prevent him from having a peaceful end.
The train leaves the station. As they watch and bid farewell to the green countryside, the ticket inspector enters their cabin. He gives them some cards, which Sa`id takes with anxiety.

Sa`id : (looking at the inspector) Aren’t you Farham?

Farham : Yes, but who are you? Oh yes, I remember. You’re Shaqiy.

Sa`id : Well, yes, I was, but...

Farham : (interrupting) What do you mean you were?

Sa`id : I mean in my jahiliyah [days of ignorance] I was called Shaqiy, but now my name is Sa`id.
Farham: Did you live in the days of *jahiliyah* during the time of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab?

Sa`id: No, Farham, I mean my own *jahiliyah*. Everyone has his own days of ignorance.

Farham: And so what do you mean by *jahiliyah*?

Sa`id: What I mean is a state of ignorance I was in when I used to disobey the commands of God.

Farham: Really! You look different. Your face is not the same as it was when I saw you two days ago.

Salih: This is the blessing of repentance and a sign of Allah’s satisfaction with him. Ibn `Uqayl said that faith has
signs and smells. And the fragrance and signs of faith are what you see on Sa`id’s face.

Farham: Congratulations! I ask Allah to make us steadfast in His religion. This is a free card and it is given to all those on their departure from the Land of Repentance.

_Sa`id opens it._

**To the One on His Departure**

Repent always. Whoever remains on the straight path after repenting, Allah will reward him with Paradise. Sins affect us badly at the end of our life. Here are two examples of people in their last moments of death.

“On 24th March, while on his deathbed, Beethoven received a gift of wine from Rhine
region. He commented, ‘I’m sorry it came too late.’ Then he died.”

“There was a man named Imam Al-Maqdisi who, whenever he heard a du’aa’, memorized it. And whenever he heard the prayer, he prayed it straight away. If he heard a hadith, he practiced it immediately. He never skipped a night prayer since his youth and before he died he reduced his eating habits so much that he began to look rather thin. When he died, he was holding his fingers in the position of tasbih [glorifying Allah].”

Dear brother! Think of these two stories. Today you are leaving our land, but tomorrow you will be leaving all the lands of this world. It is said: “A laughing man who admits a sin is better than a crying man who wrongs Allah. And a crying man who regrets his sin is better
than a laughing man who admits his love for pleasure.”

Choose what camp you want to be in and what sort of end you wish to find yourself in.

*Sa`id folds over the card and places it in his pocket. He turns to Salih.*

**Sa`id:** We should pray to Allah to give us the gift of a happy end.

**Salih:** Ameen. Can you see what kind of effects sins leave?

**Sa`id:** Yes, but how do sins affect the end of a person’s life?

**Salih:** We will all leave this world with the same deeds and behaviour we have when living. For example, if he was pious during his lifetime, he will be
pious at the moment of his death. If he was sinful in his lifetime, Allah will make him so until the last moment on earth.

_Sa`id prays to Allah to grant him a good end to his life. An hour of silence passes by and is interrupted every now and again by the sound of someone asking Allah to forgive him._

_Sa`id_ : Is there a restaurant on the train. I’m quite hungry.

_Salih_ : Yes, I think it is in the first car.

_Sa`id_ : *(rising)* Do you want to eat?

_Salih_ : No thanks!

_Sa`id walks along the car squeezing past the many passengers. The train is swaying strongly, he almost falls, but a_
hand reaches to help him keep his balance. He looks at the one who holds him and finds an old man with a sad face. Sa`id thanks him but he seems distressed.

Sa`id : Assalamu alaikom.

Man : (turning precisely) Wa alaikom assalam.

The man turns to the window. Sa`id feels the man’s expression reminds him of himself when he was unable to repent and when he was a friend of Mahroum.

Sa`id : Can I help you?

Man : No thanks.

Sa`id : What’s your name? May Allah bless you.

Abdullah: Abdullah!

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Sa‘id : My name is Sa‘id. Why do you seem to be so upset Abdullah?

Abdullah: I am not upset. I am just a bit busy minded with a story I read in the book *The Repentant*. I was rather impressed by it.

Sa‘id : Please, tell me about it.

Abdullah: Sure! It is a story called ‘The Repentance of a Singer.’

Sa‘id : And so who is the singer then?

Abdullah: His name is Zadhan from Kufa.

Sa‘id : How did he repent?

Abdullah: It was narrated by Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him, who once passed by a place in Kufa and saw a group of debauched
boys. They were drinking and listening to a singer called Zadhan. He was playing a lute and singing in a sweet voice. When Ibn Mas`ud heard him, he said: `What a sweet voice! I wish it was used in reading the book of Allah.' He put on his turban and left. Zadhan asked: `Who is he?' They answered: `He is Abdullah Ibn Mas`ud, the Prophet's Companion.' He asked what he had said and they told him. Zadhan stood up and knocked the lute to the ground and broke it. He hurried and caught up with Ibn Mas`ud, wrapped his handkerchief around his neck and cried between the hands of Ibn Mas`ud. Abdullah Ibn Mas`ud then
embraced him and they both cried. He then said to him: ‘How can I not love someone whom Allah loves?’ Then Zadhan repented and kept close to the company of Ibn Mas‘ud to learn until he became a scholar. He narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ud, Salman, and others.⁶

Sa‘id: That is impressive. But what astonishes me is that Zadhan changed himself mentally, psychologically, and methodologically from just a few words.

Abdullah: That is because the words were sincere. Allah added His blessing to them and put them on the tongue of Ibn Mas‘ud to heal the wounds of a lost man. Sayid Qutb said: “A good
word is a good healer for the wounds of the hearts. It moistens the dry heart and fills it with noble compassion.”

There is a story to the contrary, though, showing how words can affect a person negatively.

Sa`id: Tell me then.

Abdullah: Well this is ‘The Story of the Lie.’ When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was exposed to shame and A’ishah was accused of indecent behaviour with Safwan Ibn Umayah, the whole of Madinah was in turmoil because of the words of the hypocrite, Abdullah Ibn Sallul. He lied when he saw A’ishah’s camel being pulled by Safwan when she was

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left behind the caravan searching for her necklace. Thus words can be a double-edged sword.

Sa`id : Let me hear more on these lines.

Abdullah: Certainly! There is another story about Abu Bakr Ibn Ayash. He once said: "A man told me when I was a young man to set myself free from the enslavement of the Day of Judgement as long as I am alive in this world. This is because the slave of that Day can never be set free. By Allah, I never forgot those words."^8

Sa`id : I feel like `Ayash.

Abdullah: What do you mean by that?
Sa`id : I feel that I have been influenced by something I heard when I was starting off my path to guidance.

Abdullah: Really! What was that exactly?

Sa`id : Whoever had a bright beginning will have a bright end.

Abdullah: That’s nice. Ma sha Allah! I admire your strength in faith. I might as well tell you another story.

Sa`id : Go on!

Abdullah: It is *The Repentance in the 21st Century.*

Sa`id : *(astonished)* What do you mean? Is it a sin to live in the 21st Century?
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Abdullah:  *laughing*  No, I mean the repentance of someone living this century. He is a friend of mine.

Sa`id : Who?

Abdullah: It’s me!

Sa`id : What’s your story then?

*Abdullah reflects and starts to recollect his past.*

Abdullah: I used to travel to Europe every summer to satisfy my sexual and physical desires. I was drowning in sins. Life to me was eternal and not ephemeral.

"There is a great difference between the ephemeral and the eternal. The ephemeral is merely a
means to satisfy God, but the eternal is to satisfy lusts and desires.”

And this is the real loss. I was of the opinion that sins were indispensable for youth.

*He pauses and starts to cry. Sa`id remembers about Mahroum and the dialogue that took place between them. He thanks Allah for not having followed him.*

Sa`id: *(to himself)* I hope he learns what I have learned about faith.

Abdullah: I felt annoyed and bored of life. I thought about how to change this state of mind, but I only slept to escape it. I found psychological respite in my pillow. Then I had a dream that I was singing, dancing and

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having so many girlfriends in Europe. All of a sudden the dream turned out to be a nightmare. I saw a little child coming towards me and shouting loudly: Allahu Akbar. I became frightened and tried to wake up, but I couldn’t. It felt as if something heavy was pressing on my chest and suffocating me. The child disappeared and I awoke trembling. I slept again and saw the same child appear saying the same words. I jumped out of bed and hurried to make ablutions and pray two rak`as and read Qur’an. After a short while, the adhan of fajr came and I went down to the mosque and prayed with them together. I was only 24 years old.
at the time. Until now, whenever I hear the adhan, I remember the image of the child and then I go to pray.

Sa`id: May Allah bless you and make your heart fixed on the right way. But can a person become guided just because of a dream he had?

Abdullah: Yes, I know many people who have changed in this way. But there are other ways too.

For example, someone may be guided because of hearing the Qur’an, poetry or a hadith. Others may find the True path after a disaster that befell them, whether it was a financial problem or a death. Listening to a religious speech, a
du’a’, contemplating Allah during the nights of Ramadan, and on Hajj or ‘Umrah by just looking at the holy Ka’bah. Someone may be guided after reading a book, listening to a lecture or witnessing a model example.

Sa’id: Yes, well the reasons behind the change are many. But most people are not guided.

Abdullah: People’s situations in life are generally the same. It is the approach to life and those situations that are different. The grave, for example, is approached by the undertaker as a financial commitment, whereas it is approached by a pious person as a source of spiritual inspiration.
JOEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Sa`id : I belong to the second group of people who changed because of a disaster. I was going through a difficult period with my son, my father and myself. But, alhamdullillah what at the time seemed harm has turned into an advantage.

_The train begins to slow down and he thanks  Abdullah, prays for him and returns to Salih._

Salih : What did you get?

Shaqiy : I am full.

Salih : You were away a long time. What did you eat?

Sa`id : (laughing) Eat! I didn’t eat anything.

Salih : So how can you be so full up and what’s so funny?
Sa`id tells him about his conversation with 'Abdullah and repeats the stories of Zadhan and Abdullah. Salih wishes he had been with them. The train reaches the platform and they say goodbye to one another. They arrange to meet the following day.

5 Al-Mawardi, *Adab Al-Dunya wa Ad-Din*, page 105.
Chapter Nine

Sins Committed When Alone

Those whose faces with love and piety appear,

When they are alone they treat Allah with fear,

For such believers, Allah made a reward,

That’s better than everything in the world. ¹
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

Sa`id returns home and greets his family. He tells them about his adventures and everything that happened to him. It is not long before the family goes back to what they were doing: some are only concerned with money others with women. His sentiments remind him of the poem.

A stranger in my homeland and among my dears,

I call to the Way of Allah but they turn a deaf ear.

They make their tongues like arrows and their words like spears,

And hit me while I’m shielded with only patient tears.²

He goes home to his wife and son. She is impressed with his story. Sa`id sleeps peacefully that night after praying and reading Qur’an. He
awakes for fajr, prays in the mosque and sleeps again. His wife wakes him with a letter in her hand.

Sa`id : What’s this?

His wife: I don’t know, but it says on the envelope ‘The Land of Repentance.’

Sa`id jumps out of bed to get the letter. He hurries to Salih who is having breakfast.

Sa`id : (with the letter in his hand) Who do you think would write to me from ‘The Land of Repentance?’

Salih : (smiling) Who else but the Sheikh, of course?
Sa`id opens the letter. There is a long message, which says:

To the brothers, Sa`id and Salih from the Sheikh of ‘The Land of Repentance.’

Beware of sins when one is alone. Thawban narrates that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “I know from my Ummah who will come on the Day of Judgement with their good deeds as white as the mountains of Tihamah. Allah Most High will make such deeds as scattered dust.” Thawban said: O Messenger of Allah, describe them to us and make them clear to us, lest we should be among them while we are unaware of that. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “They are your brothers and kin. They partake during the night in worship what
you partake, except that in their moments of privacy they violate what is prohibited by Allah."

Dear brothers! I remind you and myself of the times when we are alone to utilize them. Notice how a seed if when it is well planted will germinate and grow a perfect fruit. The same applies to you. If when in seclusion you bury yourself with Allah, this will give you the best result in good deeds. The more sincere a servant of Allah is in seclusion, the more Allah will bless him with light on his face and richness in the heart.

"Be careful, be careful of sins, especially of those committed when you are alone."
Fear Allah when you are alone and don’t say: “No one is watching me!” Allah the All-Knowing observes the movement of the eye and what is in the hearts. If he sees you doing what He has prohibited you from doing, He will punish you by making the hearts of the people cease to love you. Abud-Darda’, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “One should be careful lest the hearts of the believers should curse him while no one is aware. Do you know why this happens? It happens because if a person is alone and commits sins, Allah will throw His anger on to the hearts of the believers while he is unaware.”

So be obedient in both public and private, and be thankful to Allah in public and private.
Thanking Allah in private means to obey Him when you are alone.

Someone asked Junayd when he was a boy about giving thanks. He answered: “It is when one doesn’t use Allah’s bounties on one to disobey Him.”

Be thankful and seek the help of Allah in all situations and correct your mistakes if you have any, because: “insisting on sinning is a sin. By not correcting mistakes is considered insisting on sin and taking pleasure with it. This is a sign of one’s own destruction. But the most dangerous sins of all are those committed shamelessly in public while the sinner knows that Allah is watching him from His Throne.”

We ask Allah to pardon us, and again beware of the sins when one is alone.
Sa`id folds up the letter and they ponder over it for a while.

Sa`id : I wish Mahroum could know what I know now concerning repentance.

Salih : Let’s go and tell him then. Let’s invite him to repent. We might be the means of guiding him.

Sa`id : I’m sure Allah who has guided me will guide him too.

Salih : Come on then.

They arrive at Mahroum’s house.

Mahroum’s son answers the door and tells them that his father is not at home. He is on a journey – to a land where he will repent. He has gone to perform `Umrah.
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF REPENTANCE

1 Muhammad Al-Jazri, Az-Zahr Al-Fa 'ih, page 81.
3 Ibn Majah, volume 2, no. 4245.
5 Ibn Al-Qaiyim, Al-Jawab Al-Kafi, page 47.
7 Tahdhib Madarij As-Salikeen, page 123.