

## 2. That which is Repented from (i.e. sins);

Repentance entails forsaking sin, which necessitates an awareness of its occurrence. If repentance is mandatory, then knowledge of the sins from which one repents is equally essential. Sin encompasses any act or omission that contravenes the commands of Allah.

### The Categories of Sins Concerning the Servant

Sins are classified into two categories: those committed between the servant and Allah, and those involving the rights of others. Sins that fall between the servant and Allah, like neglecting prayer, fasting, or other obligations, are more likely to be forgivable.

The intensity of unwavering defiance fluctuates with the magnitude of the impulse. Thoughts are more facile to convey than speech, often influenced by insinuations. In solitude, the soul continues its internal dialogue, and constancy is governed by a different preoccupation that takes precedence over the heart.

### The Division of Sins into Major and Minor

Sins are classified into minor and major categories; however, opinions vary regarding this distinction. Some assert that all sins committed against Allah are major, although this view is considered weak, as Allah states that avoiding heinous sins can lead to the forgiveness of other sins. The Prophet Muhammad also emphasised that performing the five daily prayers and the Friday prayers expiate for sins, provided that major sins are avoided. Major sins encompass associating partners with Allah, disrespecting parents, murder, and bearing false oaths.

The Prophet's Companions and their successors held differing views regarding the number of major sins. Ibn Mas'ud identified four, whereas Ibn Umar asserted there are seven. Ibn 'Abbas remarked: "They are closer to seventy than to seven." A predecessor stated: "Any sin punishable by law is considered major," while Abu Talib al-Makki provided further clarification.

*The seventeen major sins are enumerated from various Prophetic traditions and sayings of scholars such as Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ud, and Ibn 'Umar. Four sins originating in the heart encompass ascribing partners to Allah, persistent transgression, despairing of Allah's mercy, and feeling secure from His devising. Four sins associated with the tongue include false testimony, accusing a married individual of fornication, engaging in false oaths that confirm or deny wrongful acts, and wrongfully taking a portion of a Muslim's property, referred to as 'engulfing' due to its association with hellfire, as well as sorcery. Three sins are situated within the belly: consuming wine or other intoxicants, unlawfully taking an orphan's wealth, and knowingly engaging in usury. Two sins are associated with*

*the sexual organs: fornication and sodomy. Two sins are linked to the hands: murder and theft. One sin involving the feet is fleeing from battle when the enemy ratio is two or fewer to one, whilst one sin of the entire body is disobedience to parents.*

This is what Abū Talib al-Makki stated, which is neither unlikely nor definitive, as the list of sins he referenced may be augmented or diminished. Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri remarked, "Indeed, you perform actions that appear trivial to you, yet in the era of Allah's Messenger, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, these were regarded as major sins."

To clarify, the term 'major sin' is inherently ambiguous, lacking a precise linguistic predicate and a clear definition within the framework of Sacred Law. This ambiguity arises because the concepts of 'great' and 'small' are relative, and no sin is categorically identified as such; rather, sinfulness is contextual, classified as great in relation to lesser sins and small compared to more serious transgressions. In fact, sins are delineated in accordance with Sacred Law into those explicitly recognised as heinous, those regarded as minor, and those whose classification remains uncertain or doubtful, with rulings on them being undefined.

It is impossible to precisely define these major sins or compile a comprehensive and exclusive list thereof, unless an authoritative report from Allah's Messenger, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, is available. Consequently, how can anyone accurately enumerate those acts which the Sacred Law has not explicitly delineated? The Sacred Law may deliberately omit the exact number of major sins to cultivate a sense of fear among the followers, similar to its omission of the specific timing of the Night of Destiny (Laylat al-Qadr), thereby encouraging individuals to strive diligently in pursuit of it.

### **The High Degrees and Low Levels in the Afterlife**

A minor sin has the potential to escalate into a major transgression through perseverance and other influencing factors. As articulated, 'There is no such thing as a minor sin when one is persistent, and no such thing as a major sin when seeking repentance.' A significant sin committed only once is considered more forgiving than persistent minor transgressions. Similar to water drops impacting a stone, small sins can accumulate over time and cause considerable harm. The Messenger of Allah stated: 'The most beloved in Allah's sight are enduring, even minor, beneficial deeds.' Ceasing to perform good deeds diminishes their rewards, just as prolonged minor sins can darken the heart. Accordingly, it is essential to promptly suppress undesirable desires through seclusion and vigilance.

**Another reason** is the reduction in the severity of the sin: as long as a servant views a sin as serious, it is seen as negligible before Allah. This view stems from the heart's dislike of the sin, which lessens its effect, but repeated exposure makes it seem minor while actually increasing its impact on the heart. A Prophetic tradition says: 'The believer perceives his sin like a mountain—afraid it will fall—while the hypocrite sees it like a fly passing over his nose, which he then brushes away.'

A sin is regarded as significant in a believer's heart because of their awareness of Allah's majesty. When contemplating Allah's grandeur, even minor sins appear noteworthy. As reported by Anas, actions considered trivial by many individuals were regarded as major

sins during the era of Allah's Messenger, owing to the companions' profound understanding of Allah's glory. Therefore, some sins are considered particularly serious when committed by a knowledgeable person, yet less so if performed by an unlearned individual, analogous to how certain actions are overlooked when performed by an ordinary person but not by a Gnostic.

**Another issue** relates to happiness, celebration, and boastfulness over minor sins. When the enjoyment from these sins surpasses a person's ability to control themselves, their effect on darkening the heart becomes significant, often leading to praise for the transgressor. The minor sins of this individual, along with those of others in a similar situation, can grow into major sins.

Among these reasons is the indifference towards Allah's concealment of the sinner's transgressions and His granting of respite, unaware that Allah grants respite out of detestation to lure him into more sins, while he perceives it as a matter of Allah's concern. This arises from feeling secure from Allah's devising and ignorance of the hidden traps of arrogance. Allah says: {... and they say to themselves, 'Why does God not chastise us for what we say?' Sufficient for them is Gehenna, at which they shall be roasted — an evil homecoming!

One reason pertains to an individual committing a sin and subsequently disclosing it, such as transgressing and publicly acknowledging it, which constitutes a violation against Allah's concealment. A Prophetic tradition states: 'All people are excused except those who disclose; someone may sin at night, which Allah hides, but in the morning reveals and talks about it.'

Another reason arises when a scholar becomes a source of imitation for others. If a scholar commits a minor sin, such as wearing silk or acquiring dubious property from rulers, it can escalate into a major sin. Such a scholar may pass away, yet his wrongful acts persist. Blessed is the individual whose sins perish with him. The Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, stated: "Whosoever initiates an evil practice shall bear its burden and the burdens of all those who do it, without diminishing any part from their burdens." Allah, exalted be He, declares: {... and write down what they have forwarded and what they have left behind}; what they leave behind are the deeds that follow the doer after his passing, and after his work ceases.

It is apparent from this that the matter concerning scholars is perilous. They bear two responsibilities: to avoid sin and, should they indulge in it, to conceal it.