13990 - A young man did all kinds of haraam actions, and he wants to repent

the question

I am a young man who is an evildoer (faasiq) and a kaafir. I want to repent to Allah. I used to do all kinds of haram actions, and I do not pray. But now I want to repent. I hope the Shaykh can tell me how to repent.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

“Say: “O ‘Ibaadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith (Islamic Monotheism) to your Lord and submit to Him (in Islam) before the torment comes upon you, (and) then you will not be helped.
And follow the best of that which is sent down to you from your Lord (i.e. this Qur’aan, do what it orders you to do and keep away from what it forbids), before the torment comes on you suddenly while you perceive not!’”
[al-Zumar 39:53-54 – interpretation of the meaning]
I have received your letter and I was impressed with your eagerness to repent and come back to Allah, despite the fact that you have committed all kinds of haram actions, as you say, above all neglecting prayer. It is very important that you should know that the gate of repentance is open to you. You should think deeply about what is mentioned in the aayahs quoted above. I will also tell you some practical steps which will show you clearly how to repent, in sha Allah.
The word tawbah (repentance) is a great word with deep meaning. It is not, as many people think,

merely words to be uttered whilst persisting in sin. Think about what Allah says:

“Seek the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance”

[Hood 11:3 – interpretation of the meaning]

You will see that repentance is something more than seeking forgiveness.

Because this is a serious matter, there have to be conditions attached. The scholars mentioned the conditions of repentance, based on aayahs from the Qur’aan and ahaadeeth. There follows a list of some of them:

1 – Giving up the sin immediately.

2 – Regretting what has happened in the past.

3 – Resolving not to go back to it.

4 – Making amends to those whom you have wronged, or asking for their forgiveness.

You should not forget other important matters connected to sincere repentance, such as:

1 – You should give up the sin for the sake of Allah and not for any other reason such as not being able to do it or repeat it, or being afraid of what people will say, for example.

The person who gives up a sin because it may affect his standing or reputation among people, or because it may cost him his job, cannot be described as having repented.

The person who gives up sins for the sake of his health and strength cannot be described as having repented, such as a person who gives up zinaa (adultery) and immoral actions for fear of contagious deadly diseases, or for fear that they may weaken his body and his memory.

The person who refrains from taking a bribe for fear that it may be being offered by undercover officers cannot be described as having repented.

The person who gives up drinking alcohol and taking drugs because he has become bankrupt cannot be described as having repented.

Similarly, the person who is unable to commit sin because of something that lies beyond his control cannot be described as having repented, such as a liar who becomes paralyzed and loses the power of speech, or an adulterer who loses the ability to engage in intercourse, or a thief who has an accident and loses his limbs. In such cases, a person has to feel regret and stop wishing to commit sin, or he has to feel sorry for what has happened in the past. To someone like this the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Regret is repentance.” (narrated by

Ahmad and Ibn Maajah; Saheeh al-Jaami', 6802)

2 – He should feel repelled by the sin and the harm it causes.

This means that sincere repentance cannot be accompanied by feelings of enjoyment and pleasure when remembering past sins, or wishing to go back to it in the future.

In his book al-Daa' wa'l-Dawaa' wa'l-Fawaa'id, Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned many of the harmful effects of sin, including the following:

Being deprived of (Islamic) knowledge – feelings of alienation in the heart – difficulties – physical weakness – being unable to do acts of worship – being deprived of blessings – less help from Allah – anxiety – more bad deeds – getting used to sin – the sinner becomes insignificant in the sight of Allah – he becomes insignificant in the sight of people – the curse of the animals will be upon him – he will bear marks of humiliation – his heart will be sealed and he will come under the curse (of Allah) – his du'aa' will not be answered – cause of mischief on land and sea – loss of gheerah (protective jealousy) – loss of modesty – the blessings of Allah will disappear – punishment will befall him – terror in the heart of the sinner – falling into the clutches of the Shaytaan – a bad end – punishment in the Hereafter.

Knowing these harmful effects of sin will make you want to keep away from sin altogether, but some people may move from one sin to another for a number of reasons, including the following:

- They think that it is less serious
- The self is more inclined towards it and the desire for it is stronger
- It is easier to commit this sin than others, unlike sins which require some preparation; the means of doing it are readily available and widespread
- His friends and companions are committing this sin and it is difficult for him to differ from them
- A particular sin may give a person some status among his companions, and it is too difficult for him to lose this position, so he continues to commit that sin.

3 – He should hasten to repent. Hence delaying repentance is in and of itself a sin for which repentance is required.

4 – You should make up the duties towards Allah that you have missed, if that is possible, such as paying the zakaah which you withheld in the past; and because this is something which is the right of the poor.

5 – You should keep away from places of sin if your being there may make you fall into sin again.
6 – You should keep away from those who helped you to commit sin.
Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):
“Friends on that Day will be foes one to another except Al-Muttaqoon (the pious)”
[al-Zukhruf 43:67]
Bad friends will curse one another on the Day of Resurrection, so you should keep away from them and break off your friendship with them, and warn others against them if you are not able to call them (to Allah). Do nt let the Shaytaan deceive you or make the idea of going back to them in order to call them to Allah look attractive to you, for you know that you are weak and will not be able to resist.
There are many cases in which people have gone back to sin because they resumed relationships with their former companions.
7 – Destroy haram things that you may have in your possession, such as intoxicants, musical instruments, haram pictures and movies, permissive stories, statues and so on. They should be broken, destroyed or burnt.
It is very essential that the one who wants to repent should rid himself of all items of jaahiliyyah. How often has it happened that keeping these haram things caused people who had repented to go back on their repentance and be led astray after having been guided. We ask Allah to make us steadfast.
8 – Choose righteous friends who will help you against your nafs (self) and who will be an alternative to bad company. Strive to attend circles of dhikr and gatherings of knowledge. Fill your time with beneficial things so that the Shaytaan will not find any opportunity to remind you of the past.
9 – Focus on your body which has been fed on haram substances and direct its energies towards obeying Allah. Seek out halaal substances with which to nourish your body so that your flesh will be renewed with halaal substances.
10 – Do a lot of good deeds, for good deeds cancel out bad deeds.
If you are sincere in your repentance to Allah, then receive the good news that all your previous evil deeds will be changed into good deeds. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those who invoke not any other ilaah (god) along with Allah, nor kill such person as Allah has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse and whoever does this shall receive the punishment.
The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in disgrace;
Except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds; for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”
[al-Furqaan 25:68]
I ask Allah to benefit you by these words, and to guide your heart. Now get up and utter the Shahaadatyan, purify yourself (with ghusl) and pray as Allah has commanded you. Observe the Islamic duties regularly and give up haram things. I will be happy to help you in any way.
I ask Allah to give us and you strength to do that which He loves and is pleased with. May He accept the repentance of us all, for He is the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.