

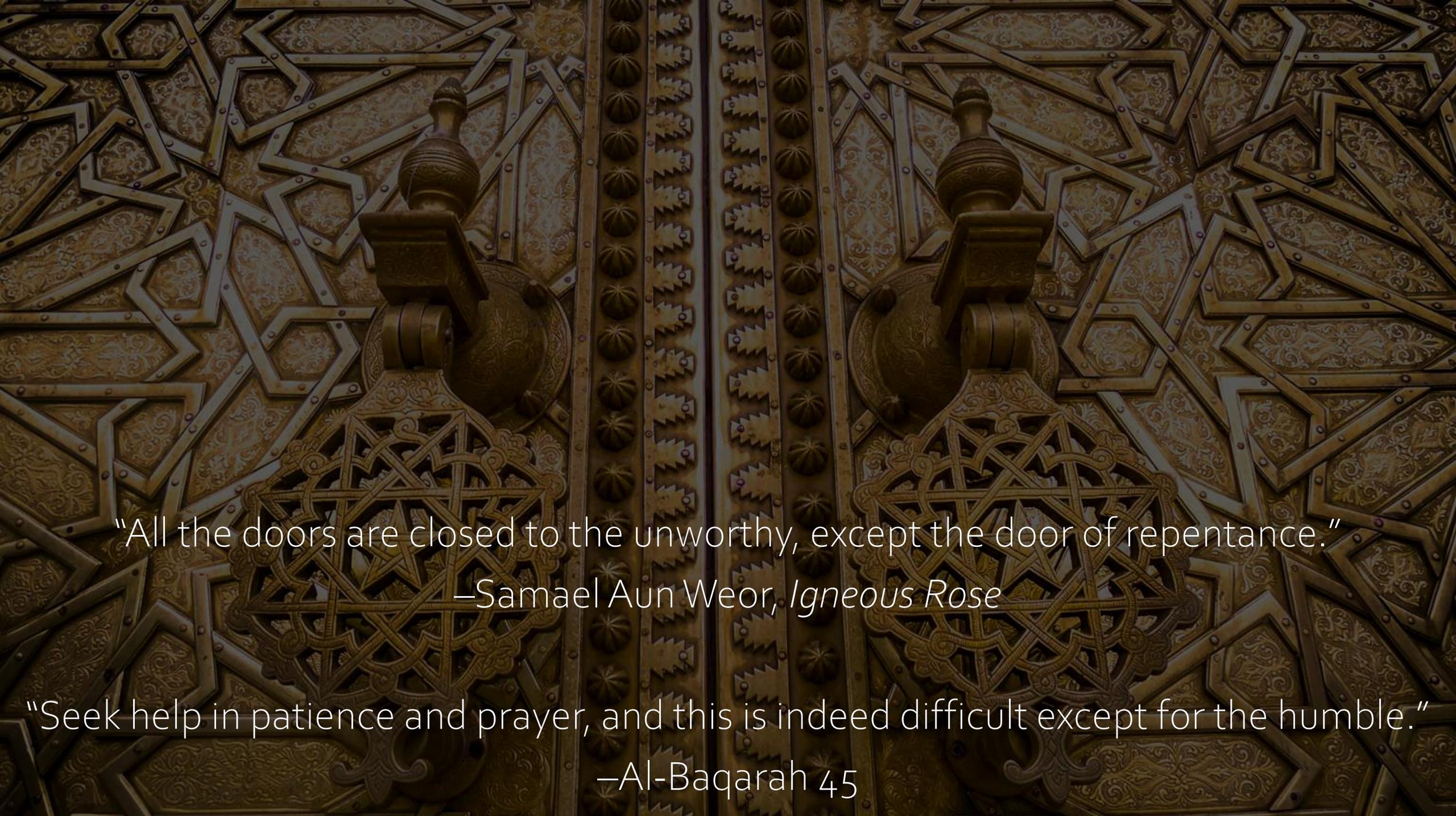
# Sufi Principles of Meditation



## Lecture 9: Repentance

*"My heart had been torn to pieces looking for help. When I understood that helplessness is the only help, I repented helplessly."*

—Rumi



“All the doors are closed to the unworthy, except the door of repentance.”

—Samael Aun Weor, *Igneous Rose*

“Seek help in patience and prayer, and this is indeed difficult except for the humble.”

—Al-Baqarah 45

# Qur'anic Verses on Repentance

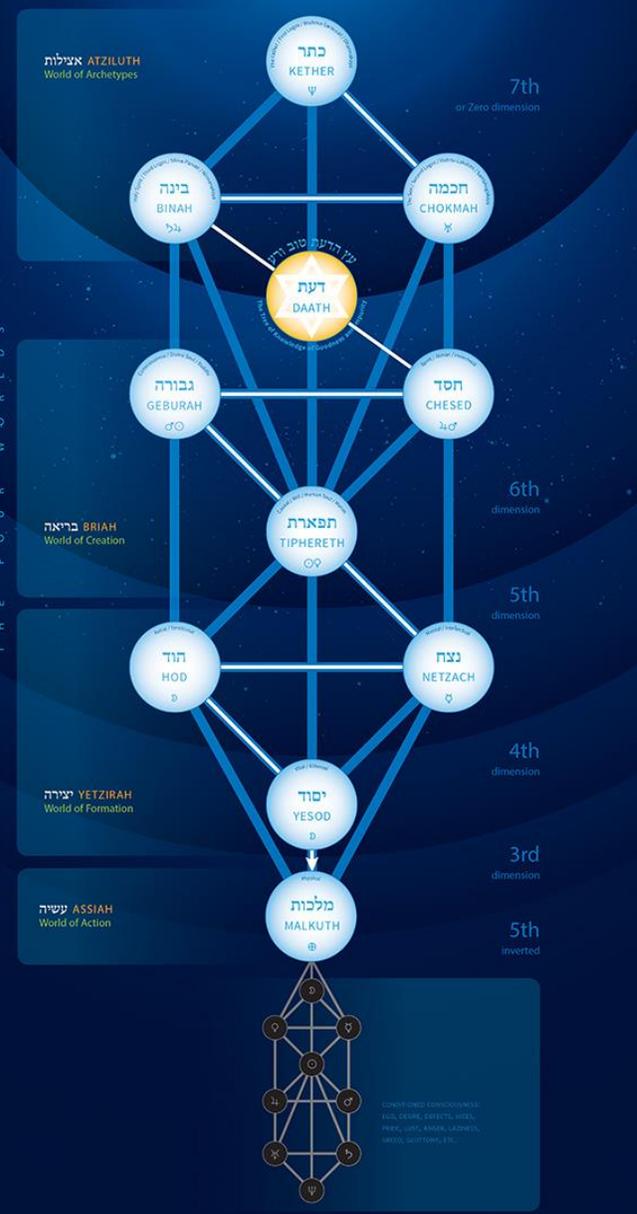
God the Exalted has said, "Turn to God, together, O believers, that you might be successful." The Exalted has said, "Seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn to Him in repentance," and the Exalted has said, "O you who believe, turn to God with sincere repentance!" The Exalted has said, "And those who do not turn in repentance, they are the transgressors!" and the Exalted has said, "Truly God loves those who turn in repentance, and He loves those who purify themselves." There are similar sayings in the noble verses of the Qur'an.

–Aishah al-Ba'uniyyah, *The Principles of Sufism*



אין אין  
אין סוף AIN SOPH  
אין סוף אור AIN SOPH AUR  
The Absolute

אין סוף אור  
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# Definition of Repentance (*Tawbah*)

According to the lexicons, *tawbah* means “to return.” *Taba*, *aba*, and *anaba* all have one meaning, which is “return.” *Thaba* is similar: people say, “The milk has returned (*thaba*) to the udder.”

–Aishah al-Ba’uniyyah, *The Principles of Sufism*

*Tawbah*, repentance, is the first station for spiritual travelers and the first stage of development in seekers. The root meaning of *tawbah* in the Arabic language is “return”—its associated verb, *taba*, is used to mean “to come back.” So repentance is the return from what is blameworthy in the divine law to what is praiseworthy in it.

–Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*

# Three Constituents of Repentance

Outward repentance is the return from blameworthy actions to praiseworthy ones and from foul words to righteous ones. Inner repentance, with which the Sufi folk are concerned, is to turn away from all things and towards God, mighty and glorious. Repentance is not valid without three things: remorse for sin, abstention from it, and the resolution not to return to it. When one of these conditions is not met, repentance is not valid. This is the rule for repentance for sin between the servant and his Lord.

–Aishah al-Ba’uniyyah, *The Principles of Sufism*

# Sincerity of the Heart

From an analytical perspective, repentance has causes, degrees, and parts. First comes the heart's awakening from the sleep of heedlessness and the servant's recognizing his negative condition. He will attain to this if he manages to pay attention to the reprimands of God, the Truth within him, by listening to his heart. This is found in the hadith, "God's counselor is in the heart of every Muslim," and in the hadith, "There is a piece of flesh in the body: if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. It is the heart."

—Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*



# Self-Reflection and Resolution

When the servant has reflected in his heart on the evil of what he is doing and has seen the ugliness of his actions, the wish for repentance and for leaving his negative behavior will form in his heart. God will help him by confirming his resolution, his starting to return to good deeds, and his readiness for the steps of repentance.

–Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*



# How to Strengthen Repentance

These steps begin with his leaving bad company—that is, people who would entice him to turn back from his purpose and confuse him about the rightness of his decision. Perfection at this level only comes with the diligent practice of witnessing that increases the servant's longing for repentance and with the dedication of his efforts to accomplish his resolve through the strengthening of his fear and hope of God. Then the knot of his persistence in negative actions will be loosened from his heart. He will stop running after dangerous things. He will rein in his ego from pursuing passions or desires of the flesh. Then he will immediately abandon his sin and confirm his resolution never to return to the like of it in the future. If he proceeds according to his intention and acts in conformity with his will, he has been granted true sincerity in his repentance. But even if his repentance has weakened once or many times and only his force of will induces him to renew it—and the sort of thing occurs very frequently—he must not give up hope of repentance on account of such incidents because, "*Surely to each period is a decree established*" (13:38).

–Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*



# The Blessings of Repentance

Repentance is turning to God. God Most High says, "*Turn to God with sincere repentance*" (66:8).

Know that knowledge is life, wisdom is a mirror, contentment a protective wall, hope a mediator and intercessor, remembrance [of God] a remedy, and repentance a cure.

Repentance is the signpost on the path, the leader of the kingdom, the key to the treasure, the intermediary that assists you to become united with God, the condition for being accepted to the divine presence, and the secret of all happiness.

The pillars of repentance are threefold: remorse within the heart, apology upon the tongue, and severing one's attachments with evil and wicked people.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat, *Stations of the Sufi Path*

# Three Types of Repentance

There are three types of repentance: the repentance of the obedient devotee, the repentance of the sinner ('asi), and the repentance of the gnostic ('arif). The repentance of the obedient devotee comes from reliance in his own obedience and considering his acts of devotion to be of great import. The repentance of the sinner comes from seeing his sins and acts of transgression as insignificant. The repentance of the gnostic is from ingratitude vis-à-vis God's conferral of favors upon him.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat, *Stations of the Sufi Path*

# Signs of the Devotee, Sinner, and Gnostic

Setting great stock and reliance in one's own obedience has three signs. The first is seeing one's own obedient devotion as constituting one's savior and protector. The second is regarding with contempt those who neglect their devotions. The third is not investigating the defects in one's own actions.

Beholding one's own sins and acts of transgression as insignificant also has three signs. The first is considering oneself as deserving of forgiveness by God, the second in remaining at peace while still persisting [in sin], and the third is having intimate friendship with wicked people.

Likewise, there are three signs indicative of ingratitude for God's conferral of favors upon one. The first is ceasing to regard oneself as contemptible, the second is considering one's spiritual condition as of great value, and the third is stepping back from the joy of intimacy with God.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat, *Stations of the Sufi Path*