

Acceptance of Repentance in the Quran - A Systems Thinking Perspective

Akbar Farahani ^a, Mehrdad Yasrebi ^b, Asad Azemi ^c

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to present, based on the verses from the Holy Quran, a Holistic Systems Approach (HSA) representation for the concept of the Acceptance of Repentance by Allah. Roadmap is outlined in a practical way to reach the two main goals necessary for the acceptance of repentance, the repentance (توبة) and the seek for forgiveness (استغفار). Relevance of the above concepts to the grand system of creation in the Quran is discussed.

Keywords: Quran, توبة, استغفار, Holistic Systems Approach, Repentance, Forgiveness

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Introduction

The concept of a system is central to understanding and analyzing various phenomena, whether they are natural, or human made. From a systems thinking viewpoint, a system is a complex set of interacting or interdependent components or parts that form a unified whole. Describing natural or artificial phenomena is not easy, and one needs to rely on the “modeling” approach, which tries to represent components and relationships that the systems are made up of. Systems thinking is an approach that considers the relationships and interactions among these parts, rather than focusing solely on the individual components.

From the system’s perspective, one may define Islam as a system; mankind as one of its elements, Quran and Prophet Muhammad as its interconnections and worshipping Allah as the purpose. Islam as a system, has many sub-systems (سبل). The purpose of this article is to present a systematic perspective of a Quranic sub-system, the acceptance of repentance.

The Quran explains that Allah did not create humankind except to be his worshiper (عبد).¹ Worship means mere dependence that leads to guidance and obedience. Guidance to what Allah wants humankind to achieve.¹ To be a worshiper of Allah, one needs to elevate and flourish his soul, to whatever extent possible, with qualities required for such a responsibility.

It appears that the Quran describes the general methodology by which the human soul can acquire the above qualities and grow. The Quran asserts that every human will be put into tests with bad and with good, as trial.²⁻⁶ Through these frequently occurring exercises in life, human beings can acquire the required vision and ascend their souls toward the straight path (الصراط المستقيم).⁷⁻⁸ If the outcome of each trial is successful, the soul will ascend. If the soul sins and fails the trial, it will descend lower.⁹

One may imagine the purpose of human life and its connection to the hereafter analogous to climbing a slippery uphill. In this simplified analogy, the human soul is the climber, and the objective is to ascend as high as possible by the end of life. The position of the soul on this uphill road at the point of death may indicate the initial starting point in the hereafter.⁹ The Quran is very clear that the soul is inspired to be able to acquire both good and bad.¹⁰ The soul therefore may also slip on this slippery hill and go downhill as the result of the above-

a Institute of Divine Systems Research, Media, Pennsylvania 19063, U.S.A. akbar.farahani@IQSR.org

b Institute of Divine Systems Research, Media, Pennsylvania 19063, U.S.A. mehrdad.yasrebi@IQSR.org

c Institute of Divine Systems Research, Media, Pennsylvania 19063, U.S.A. asad.azemi@IQSR.org

mentioned trials. The higher the soul has climbed at the time of death (benevolence soul), the closer it will be to the promised paradise in the hereafter.⁹ The farther the soul has slipped downhill (cruel soul) at the time of death, the closer it will be to the promised hell fire in the hereafter.⁹

If the soul slips, the corrective step to recover and extend the ascend is a three-stage solution. The first stage is to avoid further slippage. The second stage is to climb up to the starting position. The third stage is to climb further up past the initial slippage point. The purpose of the present article is to present a detailed description of Quranic sub-systems for the first and the second stages. The third stage discussion is not the subject of the present article and is discussed elsewhere.⁹ What is presented is only the understanding of the authors, based on the provided references and logical deductions.

A representation of a system is a model. A model tries to have a strong congruence with the system. Models fall far short of representing the real system. This is certainly true regarding any attempt to model the Quranic concepts. The hope is that this article provides some additional insights into the concept of acceptance of repentance.

The Quran recognizes that even well-intended souls may slip in life.¹¹⁻¹² In the most encouraging and positive tone, the Quran invites every guilty soul to try to climb back up and purify their souls.¹¹ The Quran also appears to provide clear guidelines in doing so. The guideline offered by the Quran to avoid further slippage or stage one, is repentance (توبة).¹³⁻¹⁶ The guideline offered by the Quran for climbing up to the initial level before the slippage or stage two, is to seek forgiveness (استغفار).¹⁷⁻²² Once repentance and seeking forgiveness is done properly, Allah may forgive and accept the repentance (تواب),²³⁻²⁵ and the soul becomes as pure as if no slippage was ever occurred. The soul is now ready to attempt to climb further up.

The root meaning of each word in the Quran is unique.²⁶ Nevertheless, words توبة and استغفار like many other words used in the Quran have broad usage in different contexts with delicate nuances in meanings. In this research the meanings of the above words are discussed specifically in the context of the acceptance of repentance only. The usage of the above words for other contexts, such as the elevation of soul, or stage three, is not discussed.

The word توبة comes from the root word (ت- و- ب) and means “return”.²⁷ In the context of the Quran, the root meaning of توبة for the human being means returning from sin and regretting it.¹³ Imam Ali describes the meaning of توبة (repentance) as “regret in the heart, asking forgiveness with the tongue, abandoning sin in action, and aspiration not to return”.¹⁴ In summary, the stage of توبة is to avoid further slippage and change direction toward the almighty God to move up toward him again.

The word توبة is also used for Allah in the Quran. In this context, the word توبة comes with a suffix على and it also means return. Return of God toward a sinner who has turned toward him.¹⁴ Allah in the Quran names himself تواب (the acceptor of repentance).²⁹ The word تواب is also from the root word (ت- و- ب) and means “return”.

The word استغفار comes from the root word (غ- ف- ر) and means “to cover”.²⁷ In the context of the Quran, the root meaning of استغفار means erasing and expunging the effects of a sin.¹⁹ Imam Ali describes the meaning of استغفار (seeking of forgiveness*) “First, regrets from the past action. Second, determination not to sin again. Third, to fulfill the rights of the people (compromised by the committed sin) to meet God free from any sin. Fourth, fulfill any obligation that you have not fulfilled. Fifth, you melt the flesh that has grown on your body in sin, in sorrows, so that your skin touches your bones; before new flesh grows. Sixth, make your body taste the pain of obedience, just as you had tasted the sweetness of sin”.¹⁸ In summary, the stage of استغفار is to move

* Definition adopted by the authors

up the hill to where the slippage had occurred by repairing the damages the slip had created.

The word غفور is used for Allah in the Quran. It also comes from the root word (غ - ف - ر) and means “to cover”. In this context, the word means to erase and expunge. So, the sinner repents from the sin and Allah arises and expunges the sin.

The concept of action and reaction is a well-established teaching in the Quran.³⁰⁻³⁴ The phenomenon of action and reaction is seen in the case of acceptance of repentance in the Quran. It appears that the sole repentance, as was defined above, is not sufficient to produce the acceptance of repentance from Allah.³⁵⁻⁴⁶ One needs to repair the damage the sin has created before one can completely clear the traces of the sin from the soul. The Quran Says, “Will they not then turn to Allah and seek his forgiveness? And Allah is forgiving, merciful.”³⁷ In the uphill analogy, one needs to climb up to the initial level to clear the effect of slippage. This concept is graphically shown in Figure 1.

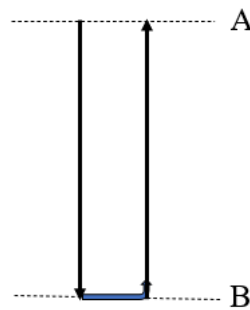


Figure 1- A proposed graphical representation of the process of the acceptance of Repentance in the Quran. (A) The initial state of a soul before sinning. (B) Soul drops to this level after sinning. The arrow from A to B represents a drop in the status of the soul from A to B due to a sin. The curved arrow at line B represents repentance, that is a stop to commit more sin and returning toward the righteous direction. The arrow from B to A represents the seek for forgiveness by repairing the damages due to the initial sin. Once no more sin is committed and the damages due to the committed sins are repaired, the position of the soul returns to the initial position as if no sin was ever committed.

In the following sections, methods on how to accomplish the two requirements for the acceptance of repentance, the توبة and the استغفار, are explored from the verses in the Quran and presented in a practical format representation developed by the authors called the Holistic Systems Approach (HSA).

Holistic Systems Approach (HSA)

A system can be defined as a set of *elements* – people, equipment, values, functions, or whatever – *interconnected* in such a way that they respond to some *inputs* to produce a behavior over time to create a *purpose*.⁴⁷ Each element of a system may be defined as a sub-system with its own inputs, elements, interconnections, and purpose.⁴⁸ For example, the Quran is a grand system of guidance. Every teaching in the Quran can be considered as a (سبيل) of the Quran. The acceptance of repentance in the Quran is consequently a system by itself, and a sub-system of the Quran.

There are many ways to represent a system.⁴⁷⁻⁵¹ Each may be intended to represent specific aspects of a system. The Holistic Systems Approach (HSA) appears to be a systems representation method suitable for some aspects of divine topics. HSA has the following characteristics making it suitable for present research. It is holistic, expandable, and practical. HSA representation uses an alignment chart schematic to achieve the following,

- To identify the purpose of the system. This is called Expectation.

- ▶ It identifies the requirements needed to obtain the expectations of the system. These are called Imperatives. An imperative is a goal that must be achieved to successfully meet expectations.
- ▶ It identifies how to tangibly measure success in achieving the imperatives. Each imperative must be quantified and measured. This is called Results Measurable. A result measurable is an overall gauge of whether things are being done to meet system imperatives. It is a look from the top down. Result Measurables are tracked over time and shown in the form of a Trend Chart. Results Measurables must be reviewed regularly. Periods depend on the specific system. Results Measurables indicate whether HSA processes are properly identified, providing value to achieving system expectation.
- ▶ HSA identifies, from the bottom up, the relationships between key processes and sub-processes that feed into the Results Measurable. These are called Processes and Process Measurables.

In the following section, the Acceptance of the Repentance system will be presented by the HSA method to illustrate a step-by-step example of developing an HSA representation.

HSA representation of the Acceptance of Repentance in the Quran

Figure 2 displays the HSA representation of the Acceptance of Repentance in the Quran. The very left column represents the components of the HSA representation. The first row is the Expectation, or the purpose of the system. It is to gain the acceptance of repentance from Allah. The second row shows the Imperatives or the goals that must be achieved to successfully meet the Expectations of the system. Repentance (توبة) and the seek for forgiveness (استغفار) are the two imperatives that must be accomplished before Allah may grant forgiveness to the sinner.³⁵⁻⁴⁶ No acceptance of repentance can be achieved without both imperatives.

Each imperative must be measured and quantified. This will make the system a useful and practical tool for personal growth. The third component of HSA, Result Measurable, is an overall gauge of whether things are being done properly to meet system imperatives. Measuring imperatives directly may not be practical. An imperative can be made of a plurality of components and is not practical to measure as it is. For example, repentance (توبة) is composed of several parts.¹⁴ One needs to stop sinning, but also needs to have the aspiration for not committing it again. These two cannot be measured simultaneously. Similarly, the seek for forgiveness (استغفار) has several parts.¹⁸ The aim of the result measurable component of the HSA system is to identify measurable components and track them over time in the form of a Trend Chart as shown in Figure 3. Results Measurables must be reviewed regularly to evaluate self-improvement toward the final goal. Periods depend on the specific system. One result measurable identified in Figure 2 for توبة is to monitor the repeat of sin, and for the استغفار is to monitor the atonement of the sin. One may identify additional result measurable for even more comprehensive monitoring. The three dots (...) next to each measurable in Figure 2 indicate the option for adding more measurables if desired. The monitoring of the Results Measurables indicates whether HSA Processes are properly identified or implemented, providing value to achieving system expectation.

Result Measurables are practical milestones in achieving the purpose of the system. They are quantitative milestones by which one's progress toward the goal can be monitored. The last two components of the HSA, the Process and Process Measurable in Figure 2 outline how result measurables can be achieved and the progress toward them quantified as well.

Processes are the actions one may need to take to achieve a result measurable. The Quran appears to guide how to avoid repeating a sin. The Quran says, "Surely those who guard against evil (by تقوى), when a visitation from the Shaitan afflicts them, they remember Allah (become mindful), then they see."⁵² تقوى, guard against evil or what is commonly translated as piety, is the solution the Quran offers against temptation. The challenge of choosing good against bad is a three-way struggle between the good (تقوى), the bad (فجور) and the temptation.⁵³⁻⁵⁴ The temptation can temporarily elevate the desirability of the bad and may cause one to favor the bad. The above verse suggests having تقوى in the heart (and mind) can suppress temptation and prevent

the bad from taking favor. So, in Figure 2 under the Do Not Repeat the Sin result measurable تقوى is chosen as a process.

The Quran also teaches that, whoever does good deeds, God will change his evil deeds into good deeds.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹ It is shown that an important catalyst for the grant of a supplication (دعا) is good deed.⁴⁸ It is logical then to assume that a good deed from the repenting person will grant him help from Allah toward his success in abstaining from repeating the sin. Based on this argument, the Good Deed is added as another process for the

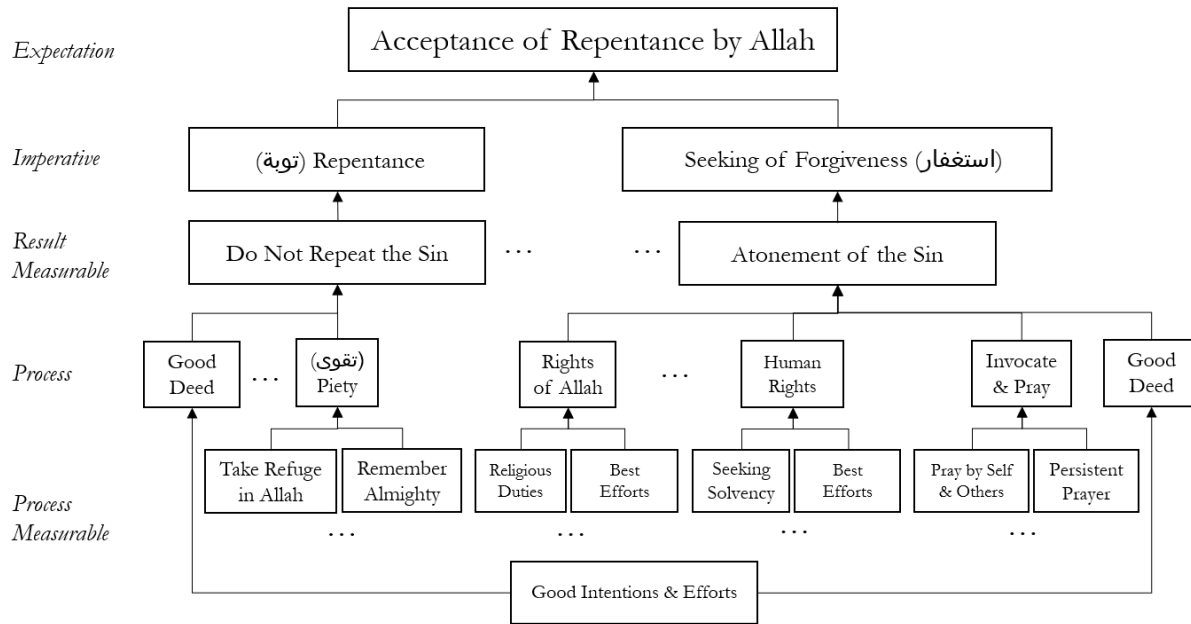


Figure 2 - HSA representation of the Acceptance of Repentance in the Quran.

Result Measurable of Do Not Repeat the Sin. Again, the three dots (...) next to the two processes in Figure 2 indicate the option for expansion if one can think of additional processes.

Developing processes for the result measurable of Atonement of the Sin follows the same procedure. Good Deed again can be assigned as a process here as well. A good deed is only a catalyst and may speed up the process of reaching the result measurable.⁴⁸ However, in certain cases, good deeds may become the process itself. There may be cases where the atonement of the sin is not possible. In such cases, based on the above-mentioned verses, Allah may change evil deeds into good by the action of good deeds, even if the good deed is not related to the committed sin.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹

Invocation and Prayer for the success of the Atonement of the Sin are another two catalysts mentioned in the Quran and are added to the list of processes for the result measurable of the atonement of the sin. In the story of Joseph, when the brothers realized that they had sinned, they went to their father for help. They said, “O our father, ask for us forgiveness of our sins; indeed, we have been sinners”. He said, “I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. Indeed, it is he who is the forgiving, the merciful”.⁵⁹ The above verse does not elaborate if Prophet Jacob supplicated only once for the forgiveness of his sons, or continued doing so until all his sons were forgiven. However, it is documented that Prophet Jacob continued his supplications each Friday for twenty years until Allah forgave all his sons' sins.⁶⁰ Invocation and personal prayer catalysts may also become a process instead of a catalyst under certain cases like the good deed process. They can be added to the list of processes of the Do Not Repeat the Sin result measurable if desired as well.

The two main processes for the atonement of a sin are the compensation for Human Rights and the compensation for the Rights of Allah. Human rights are the rights that a person must observe about others, which includes the right to self, such as harming one's health.⁶¹ The rights of Allah are the rights that humans must observe about God, either matters that God has mandated or what he has forbidden from doing. Every right is the right of Allah. However, based on an arbitrary definition, the rights of Allah are referred to only religious rituals and responsibilities. Again, the three dots (...) next to the above processes in Figure 2 indicate the option for expansion if one can think of additional processes. Certainly, some atonements may require both human rights and the rights of Allah, but some may only require one or another.

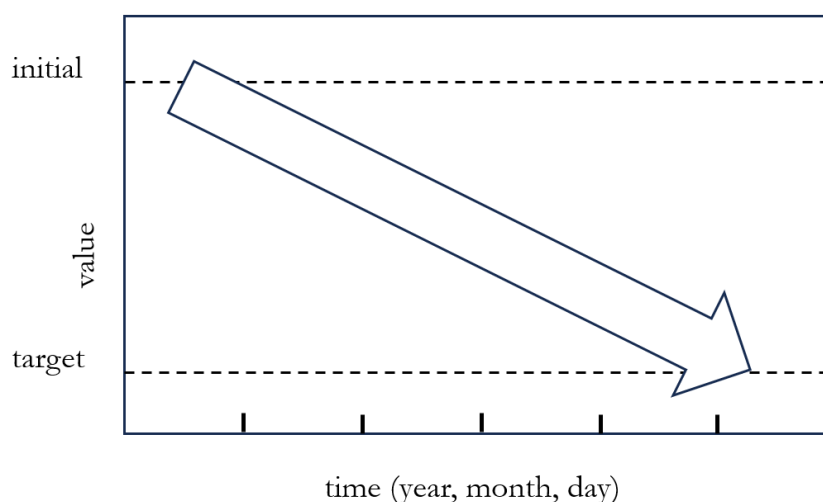


Figure 3 – Result Measurable trend chart versus time. Results Measurables must be plotted and reviewed regularly to evaluate self-improvement toward the final goal. Periods depend on the specific variable being monitored. Something like rage, curses or things that can happen daily should be monitored and the numbers of occurrences should be recorded as value more frequently. Longer-term issues such as paying off an old unpaid monetary obligation that whereabouts of the claimants are not known may need less frequent monitoring. The desired target value for the case of توبة would be zero, which indicates the person has become capable of controlling his rage or other undesirable acts. The desired target value for the case of استغفار would also be zero, which indicates that the person has fulfilled his obligations to atone the committed sin.

The last component of the HSA representation is the Process Measurable. Process Measurables are the actions taken to properly meet processes. Like result measurables they can also be measured and quantified. These are the ground-level actions the person seeking the acceptance of repentance must take to achieve the expectation of the system.

Process Measurables for the Good Deed Process are Good Intentions and Effort. This is shown in the last row of Figure 2. Comparing good deeds done by different people is difficult due to external factors, such as genetics, socioeconomics, education, health, age, and possibly other factors. It is shown that good intentions and effort are the only factors that can quantify good deeds.⁹ Both measurables are quantifiable, but to the person only. It is the person who is doing the good deed knows how much his intention is for Allah and how much he is putting a sincere effort into doing it.⁹

Process Measurable for تقوى is suggested to be at least two measurables, Taking Refuge in Allah and Remembering Almighty. The Quran says, “And if an evil whisper comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, he is all-hearer, all-knower. Surely those who guard against evil (by تقوى), when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them, they remember Allah (become mindful), then they see “. ^{52, 62}

تقوى represents what is good. Through fitrah (فطرة), man knows what good is and what bad is. The Quran calls both the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the Quran “reminders”, indicating that humankind is hardwired with the knowledge of what good is by the creation.⁹ However, the mere knowledge of good does not make one favor it. The solution the Quran offers is to take refuge in Allah for guidance.⁵² The Quran then suggests once good is favored in the heart, remembering Allah will remind one of good and the person will acquire insight during temptations.⁵²

Two process measurables for the Rights of Allah are suggested, Religious Duties and Best Efforts. Obviously, by definition, fulfilling any missed religious obligations and possible penalties are the Rights of Allah that need to be fulfilled. If the exact extent of obligations is not known and cannot be determined, then the second process measurable, The best efforts would allow to fulfill the obligations based on sincere and the best guess effort.

Finally, for the human rights process, Seeking Solvency and the Best Effort are suggested as two process measurables. Certainly, the most straightforward way to repair the damage done to someone’s right is to replace the damage and pay for the punitive penalty, monetary or else, and finally indulge the satisfaction of the person whose right was violated. In many instances, however, indulging the satisfaction of the person whose right was violated is not practical. In such cases, one needs to refer to his own heart and determine if he has done enough to deserve the forgiveness of the person whose rights were violated.

The process measurables suggested in Figure 2 can be expanded if desired. Again, the three dots (...) underneath each category of process measurables suggest such a possibility.

Conclusions

Holistic Systems Approach (HSA), a holistic, expandable, and practical representation model suitable for representing some Divine concepts was introduced. The Acceptance of Repentance in the Quran was then presented as a step-by-step example of how HSA can be developed. Ways to achieve repentance (توبة) and seek forgiveness (استغفار), the two main requirements for the Acceptance of Repentance were illustrated using the HSA model.

References

- 1- Holy Quran 51:56 - And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship me.
وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ . Also see Muhammad Ali Ansari, Bayan 2, Interpretation of Quran same verse
- 2- Holy Quran 21:35 - Every soul will taste death. And we test you with evil and with good as a trial, and to Us you will be returned.
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ
- 3- Holy Quran 2:155 - And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good words to the patient,
وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ
- 4- Holy Quran 6:165 - And it is he who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that he may try you through what he has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, he is forgiving and merciful.
وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

- 5- Holy Quran 7:168 - And we divided them throughout the earth into nations. Of them some were righteous, and of them some were otherwise. And we tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return [to obedience].
وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا مِّنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَبَلَوْنَاهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ
- 6- Holy Quran 18:7 - Indeed, we have made whatever is on the earth an adornment for it, that we may test them as to which of them is best in deed.
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا
- 7- Holy Quran 1:6 - Guide us to the straight path.
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
- 8- Holy Quran 5:16 - By which Allah guides those who pursue his pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by his permission, and guides them to a straight path.
يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
- 9- Mehrdad Yasrebi and Akbar Farahani, “The Purpose of Life in the Quran – A Systems Thinking Perspective”, Islam Today Journal, June 20231.
- 10- Holy Quran 91:8 – Then he showed him what is bad for him and what is good for him.
فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا
- 11- Holy Quran 39:53 - Say, “O my worshipers who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is he who is the forgiving, the merciful.”
قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ
- 12- Holy Quran 9:126 - Do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice but then they do not repent, nor do they remember?
أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ
- 13- Allamah Hassan Mostafavi, on the meaning of توبة in the Quran. In كلمات قرآن الكريم
- 14- Imam Ali in “غرر الحكم ودرر الكلم” Page 39.
التَّوْبَةُ نَدَمٌ بِالْقَلْبِ وَاسْتِغْفَارٌ بِاللِّسَانِ وَتَرْكُ بِالْجَوَارِحِ، وَإِضْمَارٌ أَنْ لَا يُعُودَ.
- 15- Holy Quran 4:18 - But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, “Indeed, I have repented now,” or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them we have prepared a painful punishment.
وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا
- 16- Holy Quran 5:74 - So will they not repent to Allah and seek his forgiveness? And Allah is forgiving and merciful.
أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
- 17- Holy Quran 5:74 - So will they not repent to Allah and seek his forgiveness? And Allah is forgiving and merciful.
أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

18- Imam Ali in “ Nahj Al-Balagheh”, Hekmat 417

وَقَالَ (عليه السلام) لِقَائِلٍ قَالَ يَحْضَرْتَهُ "أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ": ثَكْلُكَ أُمُّكَ، أَتَذَرِي مَا الْإِسْتِغْفَارُ؟ الْإِسْتِغْفَارُ دَرَجَةُ الْعَلِيِّينَ وَهُوَ اسْمُ وَاقِعٍ عَلَى سِتَّةٍ مَعَانٍ: أَوَّلُهَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى، وَالثَّانِي الْعَزْمُ عَلَى تَرْكِ الْعَوْدِ إِلَيْهِ أَبَدًا، وَالثَّالِثُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى الْمَخْلُوقِينَ حُقُوقَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْقَى اللَّهَ أَمْلَسَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ تَبِعَةٌ، وَالرَّابِعُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى كُلِّ قَرِيبَةٍ عَلَيْكَ ضَبِغَتَهَا فَتُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّهَا، وَالخَامِسُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى اللَّحْمِ الَّذِي نَبَتَ عَلَى السُّحْتِ فَتُذِيبَهُ بِالْأَخْزَانِ حَتَّى تُلْصِقَ الْجِلْدَ بِالْعَظْمِ وَتُنْشَأَ بَيْنَهُمَا لَحْمٌ جَدِيدٌ، وَالسَّادِسُ أَنْ تُذِيقَ الْجِسْمَ أَلَمَ الطَّاعَةِ كَمَا أَذَقْتَهُ حَلَاوَةَ الْمَعْصِيَةِ؛ فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَقُولُ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ

19- Allamah Hassan Mostafavi, on the meaning of استغفار in the Quran. In كلمات قرآن الكريم

20- Holy Quran 4:99 - For those it is expected that Allah will pardon them, and Allah is ever pardoning and forgiving.

فَأُولَئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَغْفُو عَنْهُمْ، وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا غَفُورًا

21- Holy Quran 4:110 - And whoever does a wrong or wrongs himself but then seeks forgiveness of Allah will find Allah forgiving and merciful.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

22- Holy Quran 5:39 - But whoever repents after his wrongdoing and reforms, indeed, Allah will turn to him in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful.

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

23- Holy Quran 5:74 - So will they not repent to Allah and seek his forgiveness? And Allah is forgiving and merciful.

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ، وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

24- Holy Quran 9:104 - Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from his servants and receives charities and that it is Allah who is the accepting of repentance, the merciful?

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

25- Holy Quran 2:37 - Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and he accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is he who is the accepting of repentance, the merciful.

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

26- Holy Quran 2:160- Except for those who repent and correct themselves and make evident [what they concealed]. Those - I will accept their repentance, and I am the accepting of repentance, the merciful.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

27- Allamah Hassan Mostafavi, In كلمات قرآن الكريم

28- قاموس قرآن

29- Ali Bakhtiari, Syed Mohammad Bagher Hashemi Tabatabaei, Mehrdad Yasrebi, “The Names And Attributes Of Allah In The Holy Quran” Islam Today Journal, Vol 20231.

30- Holy Quran 99:7-8 - So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

- 31- Holy Quran 2:245 - Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so he may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah who withholds and grants abundance, and to him you will be returned.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

- 32- Holy Quran 2:261- The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom he wills. And Allah is all-encompassing and knowing.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

- 33- Holy Quran 6:160 - Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof; and they will not be wronged.

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلُهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

- 34- Holy Quran 39:10 - Say, "O my worshipers who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account."

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ إِنَّهَا يُوقَى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

- 35- Holy Quran 2:160 - Except those who repent and do righteous deeds, and openly declare (the truth which they concealed). These, I will accept their repentance. And I am the one who accepts repentance, the most merciful.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

- 36- Holy Quran 5:39 - But whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms (himself), then surely Allah will turn to him (mercifully); surely Allah is forgiving, merciful.

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

- 37- Holy Quran 5:74- Will they not then turn to Allah and ask his forgiveness? And Allah is forgiving, merciful.

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

- 38- Holy Quran 4:64- And we did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission; and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Apostle had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah all-forgiving, most merciful.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

- 39- Holy Quran 3:89- Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is forgiving, merciful.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

- 40- Holy Quran 6:54- And when those who believe in our communications come to you, say: Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on himself, (so) that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then he is forgiving, merciful.

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

- 41- Holy Quran 16:119- Yet surely your Lord, with respect to those who do an evil in ignorance, then turn after that and make amends, most surely your Lord after that is forgiving, merciful.
ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
- 42- Holy Quran 25:70- Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is forgiving, merciful.
إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا
- 43- Holy Quran 25:71- And whoever repents and does good, he surely turns to Allah a (goodly) turning.
وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا
- 44- Holy Quran 9:104- Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from his worshipers and takes the alms, and that Allah is the one who forgives and accepts repentance, most merciful?
أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ
- 45- Holy Quran 24:5- Except those who repent after this and act right, for surely Allah is forgiving, merciful.
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
- 46- Holy Quran 20:82- And most surely, I am most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction.
وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى
- 47- Diana Wright (ed.), *Thinking in Systems - A Primer* by Donella H. Meadows (London, Earthscan 2008), Introduction.
- 48- Mehrdad Yasrebi and Asad Azemi, “Grant of a Supplication in the Quran - A Systems Thinking Perspective” *Islam Today Journal*, Volume 20231.
- 49- Asad Azemi, “Promoting innovation through systems thinking and systems design “Annual IEEE International Systems Conference (SysCon), 23-26 April 2018.
- 50- Benjamin S. Blanchard, and Wolter J. Fabrycky, *System Engineering and Analysis*, 5th edition, 2011, Pearson Educations.
- 51- Jia-Ching Li, “Various Approaches for Systems Analysis and Design”, University of Missouri, 11/8/2011.
- 52- Holy Quran 7:201- Surely those who guard (against evil), when a visitation from the Shaitan afflicts them, they remember Allah (become mindful), then they see.
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ
- 53- Mehrdad Yasrebi, “Self-Control and Willpower – A Perspective from the Quran”, to be published.
- 54- George Ainslie, “Willpower with and without effort,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 44, e30: 1–57.

- 55- Holy Quran 9:104 -Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from his worshipers and takes the sadaqat (alms, charities) and that Allah alone is the one who forgives and accepts repentance, most merciful?

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

- 56- Holy Quran 9:102- And others have confessed their faults, they have mingled a good deed and an evil one; maybe Allah will turn to them (mercifully); surely Allah is forgiving, merciful.

وَأَخْرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

- 57- Holy Quran 25:70-No, whoever repents and believes and does good deeds - those are the ones - God will change their evil deeds into good deeds - and God is forgiving and merciful.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

- 58- Holy Quran 65:5-That is the command of Allah which he has revealed to you, and whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will remove from him his evil and give him a big reward.

ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا

- 59- Holy Quran 12:98- He said, "I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. Indeed, it is He who is the forgiving, the merciful."

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

- 60- Molla Fath-o-Allah Kashani, *Quran Interpretation*.

- 61- Mojtaba Ali Akbarian "Investigating the importance of human rights in the Holy Quran", Specialized Quarterly of Quranic and Hadith, Vol 5, Number 19, Winter 2013.

- 62- Holy Quran 7:200- And if an evil whisper comes to you from Satan then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is all-hearer, all-knower.

وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَفْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ