

## THE CONCEPT OF FORGIVENESS IN THE QUR'AN: A QUR'ANIC APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study examines the concept of forgiveness in the Qur'an by integrating semantic, normative, and psychosocial perspectives, with the aim of clarifying its role in character formation and mental well-being. **Methodology:** Using a qualitative library-based approach, the study analyzes Qur'anic verses, Prophetic hadith, and classical as well as contemporary exegesis through linguistic–semantic, comparative exegetical, and normative–ethical analysis. **Findings:** The Qur'an presents forgiveness as a hierarchical ethical system comprising *al-'afw* (relinquishing retaliation), *aş-şafh* (inner magnanimity), and *al-maghfirah* (moral and social protection). Forgiveness is positioned as a higher moral choice beyond justice, contributing to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, emotional regulation, mental tranquility, and the formation of Qur'anic character. **Research Implication:** The findings provide an integrative ethical framework applicable to Islamic character education, conflict resolution, and mental health discourse. **Originality:** This study offers a holistic Qur'anic model of forgiveness by systematically integrating theological, ethical, and psychospiritual dimensions within a single analytical framework.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic Forgiveness; *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*; Mental Well-Being

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of forgiveness in the Qur'an, viewed through a Qur'anic approach, constitutes both a spiritual principle and a psychological mechanism that supports inner tranquility and social harmony. Thematic studies indicate that forgiveness strengthens communal bonds and reduces emotional stress (Megabas, 2023a). Moreover, forgiveness plays a role in alleviating conflict and promoting interreligious tolerance (Fattahizadeh, 2022; Usman et al., 2023). Even the softening of the heart from harshness (*ghalīz al-qalb*) is understood as a result of forgiving attitudes and righteous deeds that have a direct impact on emotional balance (Brady et al., 2023). Thus, forgiveness in the Qur'an is an integrative concept that harmonizes spiritual dimensions with mental health. We identify a clear evidentiary gap in previous research, particularly the lack of a comprehensive framework that integrates theological, ethical, social, and mental health perspectives in understanding the Qur'anic concept of forgiveness. Some studies emphasize the role of forgiveness in strengthening social cohesion and communal harmony (Abdullah et al., 2023; Megabas, 2023b), while others focus on theological aspects such as prophetic *istighfār*, the vastness of divine mercy, and debates concerning intercession (*shafā'ah*) (Atilgan, 2022; PiŞgiN, 2023; Sarraoğlu, 2023). Meanwhile,

research on Qur'anic ethics discusses generosity of heart, moral self-control, and the softening of *ghalīz al-qalb* as foundations of virtuous conduct (Fattahizadeh, 2022; Megabas, 2023b; طلاب & الفتلاوي, 2023).

This study aims to examine the concept of forgiveness in the Qur'an through a Qur'anic approach by situating it within three main domains: conceptual, normative, and psychosocial. First, the study analyzes the semantic distinctions between *al-'afw* and *aṣ-ṣafh*, as explained by classical and contemporary exegetes, in order to map the ethical gradations that structure Qur'anic forgiveness. Second, it examines the position of forgiveness in the relationship between justice and *iḥsān*, including the conditions under which forgiveness becomes the primary response and situations in which the demands of justice take precedence, based on guidance from the Qur'an and Hadith. Third, the study explores the contribution of forgiveness to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, mental well-being, and the formation of Qur'anic character in both individual and social life, thereby formulating an integrative model that explains the relevance of Qur'anic forgiveness for character development and psychological well-being within the community.

The stages of this research include data collection from primary and secondary sources discussing the terminology of forgiveness in the Qur'an and Hadith, followed by the classification of relevant verses and interpretations according to themes and contexts. This is followed by linguistic analysis to trace word roots and semantic relationships among key terms, as well as comparative analysis of classical and contemporary exegesis to identify ethical gradations. The study then proceeds to normative analysis, situating forgiveness within the framework of justice and *iḥsān*, and to psychological–spiritual analysis linking forgiveness to *tazkiyat al-nafs* and moral formation. All findings are integrated to formulate a conceptual model of Qur'anic forgiveness and its implications for mental health and social life.

## METHODE

This study employs a qualitative–descriptive approach using a library research method, focusing on the examination of Qur'anic texts and classical as well as contemporary Islamic sources. This approach is chosen because the object of study concerns normative–theological concepts that cannot be measured quantitatively, but must instead be understood through analysis of meaning, discursive structure, and conceptual relationships between texts. The research data sources are divided into two categories. Primary sources include the Qur'an, the Prophet's ﷺ hadith, and authoritative works of Qur'anic exegesis by both classical and contemporary mufassirs, such as those of al-Qurṭubī, Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Bayḍāwī, ar-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, and al-Shanqīṭī. Secondary sources consist of supporting literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and recent research findings relevant to the themes of forgiveness, Qur'anic ethics, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and mental health from an Islamic perspective.

Data collection was carried out through the identification and inventory of Qur'anic verses and hadiths containing terminology related to forgiveness, particularly the terms *al-'afw*, *aṣ-ṣafh*, and *al-maghfirah*. These verses were then classified according to thematic contexts, including interpersonal relations, justice and *iḥsān*, and the cultivation of the soul and moral character.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, a linguistic–semantic analysis was undertaken by tracing word roots, semantic fields, and the distinctions

among the various terms of forgiveness as explained in classical dictionaries and Qur'anic lexicographical works. Second, a comparative exegetical analysis was performed by comparing the interpretations of classical and contemporary mufasssirs to reveal ethical gradations and the normative implications of the Qur'anic concept of forgiveness. Third, a normative–ethical analysis situated forgiveness in its relationship with justice (*'adl*) and *ihsān*, while examining the sharī'ah-based limitations governing its application. Fourth, a psychospiritual analysis linked the Qur'anic concept of forgiveness to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, mental well-being, and the formation of Qur'anic character at both individual and social levels.

All analytical findings were then synthesized integratively to formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework of Qur'anic forgiveness and to elucidate its relevance for strengthening mental health, emotional balance, and character development in Muslim life.  
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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. The conceptual distinction between *al-'afw* and *aş-şafh* is explained by classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegetes.

Qur'anic exegetes conceptually distinguish between *al-'afw* (forgiveness) and *aş-şafh* (forbearance or magnanimity) within the ethical framework of the Qur'an. Ar-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī explains that *aş-şafh* occupies a higher ethical status than *al-'afw*, because *'afw* is limited to relinquishing the claim to punishment, whereas *şafh* reflects an attitude of abandoning reproach and turning away completely from the wrongdoing of others. This distinction is affirmed in several Qur'anic verses, such as the saying of Allah the Exalted:

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْتَصُوا وَأَصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾

“Many of the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after your faith, out of envy from themselves after the truth has become clear to them. So pardon (*fa'fū*) and be forbearing (*waşfaḥū*) until Allah brings His command. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.” (Qur'an, al-Baqarah [2]:109)

فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

“So turn away from them and say, ‘Peace.’ They will soon come to know.” (Qur'an, az-Zukhruf [43]:89)

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ ﴿٨٥﴾

“We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except in truth. And indeed, the Hour is surely coming. So forgive with gracious forgiveness (*faşfaḥi aş-şafḥa al-jamīl*).” (Qur'an, al-Hijr [15]:85)

Al-Qurṭubī emphasizes that *al-'afw* means relinquishing the demand for punishment, whereas *aş-şafh* entails erasing the trace of wrongdoing from the heart through an inner and social act of turning away (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, 2/71). Ibn 'Āshūr, in *At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr*, explains that *şafh* is a metaphor for turning one's face away, indicating an attitude of no longer reproaching or recalling past offenses. Therefore, it is positioned as a higher ethical stage than *'afw*. For this reason, the Qur'an often couples both commands as a gradual divine pedagogical method for cultivating noble character (At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr, 1/671).

Furthermore, exegetes also distinguish between *al-'afw*, *aṣ-ṣafḥ*, and *al-maghfirah*. Al-Bayḍāwī interprets *al-'afw* as refraining from punishment, *aṣ-ṣafḥ* as turning away without reproach, and *al-maghfirah* as covering faults and safeguarding the offender's honor (Tafsīr al-Baiḍāwī, 5/219).

This conceptual structure finds its practical expression in Qur'an, at-Taghābun [64]:14, which unites *al-'afw*, *aṣ-ṣafḥ*, and *al-maghfirah* within a single ethical construction. Ibn 'Āshūr explains that the integration of these three terms indicates a gradation of ethical responses to conflict, beginning with legal self-restraint (*'afw*), progressing to psychological magnanimity (*ṣafḥ*), and culminating in social and moral protection (*maghfirah*) (At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr, 28/285). This explanation is reinforced by *At-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ*, which states that forgiveness encompasses social and religious transgressions accompanied by repentance, thereby transcending mere permissiveness and functioning as a mechanism for rehabilitating social relationships (Majma' al-Buḥūth, 10/1453).

The practical ethical dimension of these concepts is further clarified through the theory of *kaẓm al-ghayẓ* (restraining anger) and *al-'afw*. Ibn 'Āshūr describes *kaẓm al-ghayẓ* as the ability to restrain and conceal surges of anger, likening it to tightly sealing a water skin filled to the brim—an image that signifies the dominance of rational will over emotional impulses (At-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr, 4/91). According to him, *al-'afw* functions as the completion of such self-restraint so that it does not transform into latent resentment. Asy-Syanqīṭī affirms that the Qur'anic command to forgive and show forbearance constitutes a divine strategy to sever cycles of conflict and build social reconciliation, and that it serves as a cause for divine forgiveness based on the principle of moral reciprocity (Aḍwā' al-Bayān, 6/181–182). Accordingly, the concept of forgiveness in the Qur'an forms a comprehensive ethical system that integrates spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions in shaping individual character and a society grounded in *iḥsān*.

## B. Forgiveness Positioned Between Justice and *Iḥsān* According to the Qur'an and Hadith

### 1. Forgiveness Between Justice and *Iḥsān* in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith

Normative literature indicates that individuals who experience painful verbal harm have three possible ethical responses. First, they may choose forgiveness (*al-'afw*) and forbearance (*aṣ-ṣafḥ*) as forms of self-restraint oriented toward the values of piety (*taqwā*). The Qur'an directly associates this attitude with the promise of divine forgiveness and reward, as Allah, Exalted is He, says:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like that of the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-conscious.” (Qur'an, Āli 'Imrān [3]:133)

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُفْرِ وَالْإِيمَانِ وَالْعِزِّ وَالْحَبْوَةِ وَالْأَعْيُنِ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“Those who spend in ease and hardship, who restrain anger and pardon people and Allah loves the doers of good.” (Qur'an, Āli 'Imrān [3]:134)

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

“The recompense of an evil is an evil equal to it. But whoever pardons and reconciles, his reward is with Allah. Indeed, He does not love the wrongdoers.” (Qur'an, ash-Shūrā [42]:40)

وَلَا يَأْتِلْ أَوْلُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أَوْلَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا  
أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“And let not those of virtue and wealth among you swear not to give to relatives, the needy, and those who have emigrated in the way of Allah. Let them pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Qur’an, an-Nūr [24]:22)

These verses construct forgiveness not merely as a social virtue, but as a spiritual practice that carries implications for attaining divine *maghfirah*. Forgiveness (*al-‘afw*) in the Qur’an is not positioned as a passive attitude that negates the principle of justice; rather, it is framed as an expression of *ihsān* that transcends the minimum threshold of justice itself. The Qur’an affirms that retaliation is permissible so long as it is proportionate, yet simultaneously encourages forgiveness as a higher moral choice: “The recompense of an evil is an evil like it; but whoever forgives and reconciles, his reward rests with Allah” (Qur’an, ash-Shūrā [42]:40). This normative pattern indicates that justice represents the minimal ethical standard, whereas forgiveness constitutes the pinnacle of ethical excellence.

Second, the Qur’an grants limited legitimacy to proportionate retaliation (*al-muqāṣṣah*) without exceeding the bounds of justice. This principle is emphasized in Qur’an, ash-Shūrā [42]:40–43 and an-Nisā’ [4]:148–149. Nevertheless, the normative structure of these verses consistently positions forgiveness as the more *afḍal* (preferable) option in comparison to retaliation.

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Amīn ash-Shanqīṭī (رحمه الله) affirms that both forgiveness and retaliation have their respective domains. In *Daf’u Ḥām al-Iḍtirāb ‘an Āyāt al-Kitāb* (pp. 32–33), he explains that certain forms of injustice, if met with forgiveness, may constitute negligence toward the sanctity of the Sharī‘ah, rendering retaliation obligatory in specific circumstances. Conversely, in cases of harm that are personal in nature and do not have broader social consequences, forgiveness is the more virtuous choice.

The Prophetic hadith further reinforces this theological framework. In a narration recorded by Muslim (no. 2588) from Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet ﷺ said: “Allah does not increase a servant through forgiveness except in honor.” Likewise, a hadith narrated by Ahmad (15/390), graded sound and strengthened in *as-Silsilah aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 2232), affirms that a person who is wronged and restrains himself for the sake of Allah will be granted honor and divine support.

Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله), in *Jāmi‘ al-Masā’il* (6/38), explains that claiming one’s rights constitutes justice, whereas forgiveness represents *ihsān*. Such *ihsān* retains its virtue so long as it does not result in greater harm. If forgiveness leads to the amplification of injustice or causes harm to others, then it loses its Sharī‘ī legitimacy.

This explanation is further reinforced by Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn (رحمه الله) in *Sharḥ Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn* (3/408–409), who clarifies that the hadith “Allah does not increase a servant through forgiveness except in honor” is *muqayyad* (conditional) upon the presence of *iṣlāḥ* (reform). If forgiveness does not yield social improvement and instead enables the perpetrator to repeat the wrongdoing, then upholding one’s rights and adopting a firm stance becomes more appropriate.

Thus, forgiveness in the perspective of the Qur’an and Sunnah is a contextual ethical practice, bound by the objectives of the Sharī‘ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*) and oriented toward realizing both individual and social welfare. Forgiveness is not a symbol

of weakness; rather, it is an expression of spiritual strength and moral maturity, grounded in theological awareness of divine mercy and justice.

### C. Forgiveness in the Qur'an and Its Contribution to *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, Mental Health, and the Formation of Qur'anic Character

#### 1. Forgiveness and Mental Well-Being in the Qur'anic Perspective

Forgiveness in the Qur'an is directly connected to *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), because moral and spiritual transformation always begins with inner reform. Allah affirms that self-transformation will not occur without prior rectification of the inner self:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ

*“For each person there are successive angels before and behind him, guarding him by the command of Allah. Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no repelling it, and there is no protector for them besides Him.” (Qur'an, al-Ra'd [13]:11)*

True success belongs to those who are able to purify their souls:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ۗ

*“Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it, and indeed, failed is the one who corrupts it.” (Qur'an, al-Shams [91]:9–10)*

Within this framework, forgiveness becomes a concrete practice of soul purification, as it suppresses the ego's impulse to retaliate and cleanses the heart from destructive emotions such as resentment, hatred, and anger. The correlation between forgiveness and mental well-being is clearly reflected in the concept of *qalb salim*—a sound, healthy, and secure heart. Allah describes that salvation on the Day of Judgment is granted only to those who come with a heart free from inner disease (Qur'an, al-Shu'ara' [26]:88–89). Exegetes such as Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī interpret *qalb salim* as a heart free from shirk and hypocrisy, while al-Rāzī broadens the meaning to include freedom from all moral diseases, including envy and reprehensible character traits. Accordingly, forgiveness may be understood as a spiritual mechanism that preserves the purity of the heart from various forms of emotional corruption.

From a psychospiritual perspective, forgiveness constitutes a process of releasing negative emotions and strengthening calming positive emotions. This phenomenon aligns with the characteristics of *qalb salim* as a heart imbued with tranquility, sincerity, and inner clarity (Brady et al., 2023b; Cook & Yucel, 2022)(Cook & Yucel, 2022; Brady et al., 2022). In the literature of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, the heart is described as having three conditions: healthy, diseased, and dead. It becomes diseased when filled with sin, heedlessness, and spiritual unawareness. Forgiveness plays a role in cleansing the heart from such states, as it revives values such as gentleness, empathy, compassion, and sincerity. Likewise, remembrance (*dhikr*), supplication, and reflection upon the Qur'an reinforce this process. Allah affirms that the purification of the soul is ultimately His grace, yet it must be pursued through supplication and devotion (Qur'an, an-Nūr [24]:21). The supplication of the Prophet ﷺ “O Allah, grant my soul its piety and purify it...” serves as a foundation indicating that forgiveness is inseparable from the process of spiritual healing.

The Qur'an also depicts that turning away from remembrance leads to constricted living and inner darkness:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى (١٢٤)

“And whoever turns away from My remembrance—indeed, he will have a miserable life, and We will raise him on the Day of Resurrection blind.”  
(Qur’an, Tāhā [20]:124)

By contrast, remembrance of Allah (*dhikrullāh*) is the primary source of spiritual tranquility:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah. Indeed, it is by the remembrance of Allah that hearts find rest.”  
(Qur’an, al-Ra’d [13]:28)

Early Sufi scholars such as al-Qushayrī emphasized that a heart distant from remembrance is prone to anxiety, and that one of the causes of inner unrest is the persistence of hatred or the reluctance to forgive.

The Prophetic hadith further strengthens the relationship between the heart and mental well-being: “Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the entire body is sound, and if it is corrupted, the entire body is corrupted. Indeed, it is the heart.” (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim). Within this framework, forgiveness is not merely an ethical act, but a vital step in safeguarding one’s overall psychological and spiritual health.

Findings from modern psychology further reinforce this perspective. Contemporary studies show that forgiveness plays a role in reducing stress, enhancing mental well-being, and decreasing emotional disturbances (Mavrogiorgou & Juckel, 2022; Opit, 2020). In Islamic terminology, forgiveness helps prevent hardness of the heart (*ghalīz al-qalb*) and opens space for inner expansiveness and moral gentleness (Purwati et al., 2022).

Thus, forgiveness constitutes one of the central pillars of the journey toward *qalb salīm*, as it integrates three essential dimensions:

1. Emotional regulation, through the release of resentment and inner pressure;
2. Spiritual maturity, by reviving remembrance, piety, and soul purification;
3. Moral integrity, through the actualization of Qur’anic character in social relationships.

These three aspects synergistically cultivate inner tranquility and harmony with the divine will, as envisioned in the concept of *qalb salīm*.

## 2. Forgiveness and the Formation of Qur’anic Character

Noble character represents the pinnacle of perfection in both inner and outward deeds. It serves as an indicator of *taqwā* and *ihsān*, and as a means by which a Muslim attains closeness to his Lord and achieves the highest ranks in the Hereafter. For this reason, Allah describes the Messenger of Allah ﷺ—whose character was the most perfect—with direct praise in His statement:

وَأَنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And indeed, you are truly upon an *‘im* (sublime) character.” (Qur’an, al-Qalam [68]:4)

Scholars regard this verse as a depiction of the purity of the Prophet’s soul, the clarity of his character, and the moral excellence integrally embodied in his person. Al-Junayd emphasized that the greatness of the Prophet’s ﷺ character lay in the totality of his orientation toward Allah, such that his outward interactions with people never severed his inward connection with al-Ḥaqq (Tafsīr Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, 5/346).

The Prophetic hadith further reinforce the centrality of character as the core of faith. The Prophet ﷺ affirmed that a person may attain a rank equal to that of those devoted to

fasting and night prayer through good character; that nothing is heavier on the scales than noble character; and that the most beloved people to Allah are those with the best character. These narrations demonstrate that character is not merely a form of social etiquette, but a spiritual value system that shapes the integrity of the Muslim personality.

In Islamic ethical literature, character encompasses multidimensional relationships: the human relationship with Allah, with other people, with oneself, and with non-rational creatures (Habannakah, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyyah*, 1/37). In the realm of interpersonal relations, the qualities of forgiveness (*ʿafw*), forbearance (*ṣafḥ*), and restraint of anger (*kaẓm al-ghayẓ*) are moral structures strongly emphasized by the Qur'an. These three qualities are essential elements in the formation of Qur'anic character, as they are directly related to emotional regulation, inner clarity, and a spiritual orientation that prioritizes the pleasure of Allah.

The Qur'an positions the ability to restrain anger as a crucial bridge toward forgiveness. In its description of the God-conscious, Allah characterizes them as those who restrain anger and pardon people:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

“Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is that of the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-conscious—those who spend in ease and hardship, who restrain anger and pardon people; and Allah loves the doers of good.” (Qur'an, Āl 'Imrān [3]:133–134)

*Tafsīr al-Sa'dī* explains that restraining anger means controlling the natural impulse to retaliate, protecting the heart from negative turbulence, and choosing patience despite possessing the ability to retaliate. Forgiveness then functions as the completion of this process, as it requires expansiveness of heart and the willingness to respond to harm with goodness.

The virtue of restraining anger is further emphasized in the hadith of Mu'ādh ibn Anas, which states that a person who restrains his anger while having the capacity to unleash it will be granted special honor before all creatures on the Day of Resurrection (narrated by Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd). This hadith underscores that moral worth is not measured by one's inability to express anger, but by the conscious choice and capacity to exercise self-control. Consequently, the magnitude of the reward corresponds to the intensity of the moral struggle underlying such behavior.

Imām al-Ghazālī, through his elaboration on *ḥilm* and *kaẓm al-ghayẓ*, explains that restraining anger constitutes a form of spiritual training that leads a person toward inner stability and freedom from impulsive rage. At this stage, one attains the quality of *ḥilm* gentleness of intellect and firmness of the soul which no longer requires strenuous effort to maintain self-control. Thus, forgiveness in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely an emotional response, but the outcome of sustained character formation that encompasses the regulation of desire, the purification of the heart, and the alignment of behavior with divine values.

Within the overall structure of Qur'anic ethics, forgiveness, forbearance, and restraint of anger function as mechanisms of moral formation that strengthen mental well-being, cultivate inner tranquility, and create moral resilience in the face of social dynamics. Through these qualities, Qur'anic values become fully internalized within the

Muslim personality and serve as the foundation of conduct that reflects the depth of faith and the maturity of spiritual development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the conceptual, textual, and normative analysis above, forgiveness in the Qur'anic perspective constitutes an integrated and hierarchical ethical system that does not stop at relinquishing the claim to punishment (*al-'afw*), but extends to inner expansiveness and the erasure of residual emotional wounds (*aş-şafh*), and culminates in moral and social protection of the offender (*al-maghfirah*). These three concepts are positioned by the Qur'an and its exegetes as mechanisms of moral formation that bridge justice and *ihsān*, and are oriented toward realizing both individual and collective welfare. Forgiveness is not a passive attitude or a sign of weakness; rather, it is an expression of spiritual maturity, self-restraint, and inner clarity rooted in *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Within this framework, forgiveness contributes significantly to mental well-being, inner tranquility, and the formation of a stable, resilient Qur'anic character oriented toward seeking the pleasure of Allah, while simultaneously serving as an ethical foundation for harmonious and just social relations.

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