

"I Seek God's Pardon..."

by

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THIS profound and searching act of contrition is attributed to the greatly revered Abū Madyan whose shrine near Tlemcen is still the object of pilgrimage. Born in or about the Year 1126 A.D. at Seville, he moved to Fez early in his life and there followed the Sufi Way under Muhammad al-Daqqāq and Abū Ya'azzā. He often went into retreat high up on Mt. Zalagh, to the North of Fez. After some years he went to the East on the Pilgrimage and may have met the famous 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Iraq. On his return to his native North Africa he settled at Bījāyah (Bougie) and attracted many disciples around his person, many of whom were to influence greatly the spread of Sufism in North Africa. Inevitably, living as he was under Almohad rule, he aroused the wrath of the local religious scholars, and it was on his way to stand trial before the Sultan in Marrakesh that he died at 'Ubbād near Tlemcen.

Although he left little in writing, and although much of what bears his name is probably from the pen of later disciples, his standing in the history of North African Sufism is very great. The formidable Ibn 'Arabī spoke very highly of him and it is clear that his *barakah* or spiritual grace was profoundly felt by all who came into contact with him, whether directly or indirectly.

ISTIGHFAR OF SHU`AIB ABU MADYAN

I seek God's pardon, Who moves the spheres in their courses in the darkness like the swell
of surging waves.

I seek God's pardon, Who saves the suppliant when (false) knowledge threatens him with
harm.

I seek God's pardon, Who forgives the sins of one who comes to him broken, humble,
and full of regret.

I seek Gods' pardon, Who covers the faults of blemished men and snatches them from
His own vengeance.

I seek God's pardon for what I utter, for my (so called) virtue, for the shamefulness of my
affair, my form and characteristics

I seek God's pardon for my private and public state, for the fickleness of my heart and the
(self-satisfied) smile upon my lips.

I seek God's pardon for what I hear and see, for my hidden thoughts and notions, as also
for my words.

I seek God's pardon, for my speech, my deficiencies, my greater sins and misdemeanours.

I seek God's pardon for the wrongs my hands have wrought and the evil my steps have
turned to.

I seek God's pardon for what I have failed to achieve and what I have gained for my own
profit since reaching maturity.

I seek God's pardon for (the state of) my soul, for my breath, for my idle thoughts, as also
for my dangerous and lustful imaginings.

I seek God's pardon for my natural state, my greediness and the deterioration of my
(spiritual) state in sickness.

I seek God's pardon for saying "I", "with me", "mine" "in my possession", for my
opinions and oaths.

I seek God's pardon for what I have not learned and what I have learned, as also for what
I may have misconstrued in writing.

I seek God's pardon for my sleeping and dozing and waking and the immunity I have
snatched by my sleeping.

I seek God's pardon both day and night and for the morrow before it exposes my
deficiency.

I seek God's pardon for my youthful conflict with the aged and venerable.

I seek God's pardon for as long as breezes blow from the Yemen and streams flow in hills

and valleys.

I seek God's pardon for as long as the pilgrims journey to places hallowed by absolution
and sacrosanctity.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are letters, verses and maxims in Holy
Scriptures.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are pasturing camels, worlds on the horizon
(of heaven) and mountain peaks on earth.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are plants, as the riches of the deep and the
flocks of beasts on land.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are winds, things to eat and shares thereof.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are stars, seen or unseen in the black darkness
of space.

I seek God's pardon as many times as the sands or the rains which water the earth.

I seek God's pardon as many times as there are men and jinn, Arabs and non-Arabs.

I seek God's pardon as many as are the thoughts in the hearts and minds of wise and
mature men.

All majesty be to God, our Creator, Maker of all things, Giver of life to mouldering
bones.

All majesty be to God, our Provider, the Bestower of blessings and abundance He to
Whom is ascribed all Bounty.

All majesty be His, many times the things I have mentioned.

Finally, blessing be upon the Chosen of Mudar, the best of creation, best of those who
weep or smile.