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In the Presence of the Beloved

Commentaries on
Durr̄ al-Ithnāshūr,
Durr̄ 'Abd Hamzah al-Thumālī
and Durr̄ 'Makrīm al-Akhlīq

Professor Muhammad Taqi Miftāh Yazdī

Translator
Mansour Limba



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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In the presence of the beloved

Book ID

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, The All-Beneficent, The All-Merciful

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Point

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

(إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا)

Indeed, Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and
.purify you with a thorough purification

(Sūrat al-Aḥzāb ٣٣:٣٣)

Prophetic traditions, mentioned in most reliable Sunnī and Shī'ite reference books of ḥadīth and tafsīr (Qur'anic exegesis), confirm that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively involve the five People of the Cloak; namely, Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, to whom the term 'Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House)' is solely dedicated

:For instance, refer to the following references

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. ٢٤١ AH), Al-Musnad, ١:٣٣١; ٤:١٠٧; ٦:٢٩٢, ٣٠٤. (٢) Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (d. (١) ٢٤١ AH), ٧:١٣٠. (٣) Al-Tirmidhī (d. ٢٧٩ AH), Sunan, ٥:٣٤١ et al. (٤) Al-Dūlābī (d. ٣١٠ AH), Al-Dhurriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah, p. ١٠٨. (٥) Al-Nassā'ī (d. ٣٠٣ AH), Al-Sunan al-Kubrā', ٥: p. ١٠٨, ١١٣. (٦) Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. ٤٠٥ AH), Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, ٢:٤١٦, ٣:١٣٣, ١٤٦, ١٤٧. (٧) Al-Zarkāshī (d. ٧٩٤ AH), Al-Burhān, p. ١٩٧. (٨) Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. ٨٥٢), Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, ٧:١٠٤

:As for Shī'ite reference books of ḥadīth, refer to the following references

Al-Kulaynī (d. ٣٢٨ AH), Uṣūl al-Kāfī, ١:٢٨٧. (٢) Ibn Bābawayh (d. ٣٢٩ AH), Al-Imāmah (١) wa al-Tabṣīrah, p. ٤٧, Ḥ. ٢٩. (٣) Al-Maghribī (d. ٣٦٣ AH), Da'ā'im al-Islām, pp. ٣٥, ٣٧. (٤) Al-Ṣadūq (d. ٣٨١ AH), Al-Khiṣāl, pp. ٤٠٣, ٥٥٠. (٥) Al-Ṭūsī (d. ٤٦٠ AH), Al-Amālī, Ḥ. ٤٣٨, ٤٨٢, ٧٨٣

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse involved in the following reference books of tafsīr: (١) Al-Ṭabarī (d. ٣١٠ AH), Book of Tafsīr. (٢) Al-Jassāss (d. ٣٧٠ AH), Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. (٣) Al-Wahīdī (d. ٤٦٨ AH), Asbāb al-Nuzūl. (٤) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. ٥٩٧ AH), Zād al-Maṣīr. (٥) Al-Qurṭubī (d. ٦٧١ AH), Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. (٦) Ibn Kathīr (d. ٧٧٤ AH), Book of Tafsīr. (٧) Al-Tha'ālibī (d. ٨٢٥ AH), Book of Tafsīr. (٨) Al-Suyūṭī (d. ٩١١

AH), Al-Durr al-Manthūr. (٩) Al-Shawkanī (d. ١٢٥٠ AH), Fath al-Qadīr. (١٠) Al-‘Ayyāshī (d. ٣٢٠ AH), Book of Tafsīr. (١١) Al-Qummī (d. ٣٢٩ AH), Book of Tafsīr. (١٢) Furṭ al-Kūfī (d. ٣٥٢ AH), Book of Tafsīr; in the margin of the exegesis of verse ٤:٥٩. (١٣) Al-Ṭabrisī (d. ٥٦٠ AH), Majma‘ al-Bayān, as well as many other reference books of ḥadīth and tafsīr

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of the Beloved

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قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ:

كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ

تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَدًا، وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ

الْحَوْضَ.

:The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said

Verily, I am leaving“

among you two weighty things [thaqalayn]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [‘itrat], the members of my Household [Ahl al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [ḥawḍ] (of Kawthar

:Some references

q AlḤākim

alNayshābūrī, AlMustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109–110, 148, 533

,q Muslim, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ

English translation), book 31, ḥadīths 5920–3)

q AlTirmidhī, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ, vol. 5, pp. 621–2, ḥadīths 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219

q Al-Nassā’ī, Khaṣā’iṣ ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ḥadīth 79

.q Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol

pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181–182, 189–190, 3

q Ibn alAthīr, Jāmi‘ alUṣūl, vol. ١, p. ٢٧٧

,q Ibn Kathīr, AlBidāyah wa alNihāyah

vol. ٥, p. ٢٠٩

q Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm , vol. ٤, p. ١٩٩

q Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī, Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah (Kuwait: Al-Dār al-Salafiyyah),

vol. ٤, pp. ٣٥٥-٣٥٨

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Commentaries on

,Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ

Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī

and

Du‘ā’ Makārim al-Akhlāq

Professor Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī

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The legacy of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), preserved by their followers, is in the custody of their school of thought, which forms a complete system that covers the various branches of Islamic learning. This school has been able to train minds that were favorably disposed to drink from this spring and present the Islamic nation with great scholars who emulated the missionary life of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). For centuries, these scholars provided convincing answers in response to questions that were posed by people from different schools of thought and intellectual tendencies, both from within .and outside the Muslim nation

In line with its responsibilities, the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly has undertaken to defend the sacred message of Islam and reveal its true nature, which unfortunately has been adulterated by followers of other sects and proponents of ideologies that are in opposition with Islam. This organization, following in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and their followers, strives to respond to constant challenges and remain in .the forefront of the struggle

The intellectual experiences of the scholars of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) school in this regard are unparalleled, as they contain scientific investigation, which depends on rational proof and shuns personal opinion and chauvinism, thus, accepted by all people .possessing an unimpaired natural disposition

The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly endeavors to present, to the seekers of truth, a new round of these rich experiences by publishing a series of works written by contemporary writers who are followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) school of thought, including those who received divine grace and embraced this noble school. In addition, this organization undertakes the edition and publication of beneficial works of past Shī‘ah scholars, to ensure sufficient resource material for the seekers of truth. The purpose of this effort is to put the facts possessed by the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) school at the disposal of the whole world, at a time when minds are globally moving towards .perfection and speedily correlating

It is hoped that readers will not deprive the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly of their .valuable views and suggestions as well as constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating .the pure Muḥammadan (ṣ) Islam

We ask God, the Exalted, to accept this trivial effort and enhance it further under the auspices of His vicegerent on earth, Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent). It is appropriate here to express our utmost gratitude to (Professor Āyatullāh Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī for writing the book

and to Mr. Mansoor Limba for translating it, as well as to all our honorable colleagues in accomplishing this task, especially the dear ones in the Translation Office for .performing their responsibility

Cultural Affairs Department

Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

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Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Bar Dargāh-e Dūst, compiled and edited by – ۱
‘Abbās Qāsimiyān (Qum: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, Winter
.۱۳۸۲ AHS/ ۲۰۰۳), ۳۳۵ pages

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَنَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ وَلَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and Prophet, Muhammad, and his pure progeny, and may the curse of Allah be upon all their enemies

(وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ)

When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearest. I answer“ the supplicant’s call when he calls Me. So let them have faith in Me, so that they may [\(fare rightly.\)](#)

In the ups and downs of life and the bitter and sweet experiences, man sometimes feels such a spiritual emptiness that cannot be filled by any material thing. Even if the power of all the powerful, the wealth of all the wealthy, and all the means of enjoyment and merrymaking in the world are at his disposal, none of them can fill this .spiritual vacuum

In such a state, he confides in his best friend, the nearest of kin or the dearest one. Sometimes, he finds no one to trust and confide in and prefers to seclude himself. The only means of achieving peace of mind is being close to one’s confidant and opening .one’s heart to one’s beloved

If man feels sad after being contaminated by sins and offenses and abhors himself and experiences self-alienation and the deadening of his heart, in whom should he confide or seek refuge? It is here that he must seek refuge in his Creator, the Source of all good and pure, the Initiator of love and

adapted from Sayyid ‘Alī Qulī Qarā’ī, *The Qur’an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English*
[.Translation (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, ۲۰۰۴). [Trans

sincerity, and find solace in His remembrance and love by prostrating on His
threshold

Which tranquility and pleasure can be greater for the humble servant than being in the presence of the Esteemed Deity, purifying his impure self with the limpid water of conversation with Him, and soothing his stormy soul with the remembrance of the One and Only. This is the best, most excellent and sweetest fruit of supplication
[du‘ā].

Dū‘ā’ is commonly interpreted as “petition and imploration”, but its true meaning is “the lover’s call to his Beloved, their private communion, and their companionship and
togetherness in the ecstasy of truth-seeking mystics

When the meek and humble servant realises that the sinful abode of his heart is away from the Manifestation of purity and good, he searches for the way to be close to the Friend and join the assembly of the Beloved, and look for the place where he could
I am indeed“ (فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ) ,have private audience with his Lord and hear the voice saying
[near [all My servants]].

:In the company of the Friend, distance has no meaning at all

(وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ)

“And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”

When the servant attains such a state, experiences nearness or proximity to the Truth (God), and comes a step closer to His assembly, then the Worshipped Being [ma‘būd] becomes his Lover [muḥibb], and it is this servant who becomes the Truth’s
:beloved [ma‘būd] and hears the voice

(فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي)

“I answer the supplicant’s call when he calls Me. So let them have faith in Me.”

We hope that we can also join the mystics in their assembly of supplication and ask nothing from Him but His Sacred Essence, for the acquisition of His

Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١٨٦. In this volume, the translation of Qur'anic passages is – –١
adapted from Sayyid 'Alī Qulī Qarā'ī, The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English
[.Translation (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, ٢٠٠٤). [Trans

.Sūrat Qāf ٥٠:١٦ – –٢

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١٨٦ – –٣

.gnosis [ma‘rifah] is the highest form of acceptance of a servant’s supplication

The present book which is the transcript of some lectures about supplication by His Eminence Prof. Āyatullāh Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī consists of four parts. The first part deals with the general subjects of supplication

The other three parts consist of the slightly modified transcription of a series of ۱۵ lectures by His Eminence at Mahdiyyah of Qum in Ramaḍān ۱۳۹۸ AH (August ۶ – September ۴, ۱۹۷۸).

Since the audience comprised of various strata of people, the quality of the lectures was commensurate with its level of understanding, yet containing very useful and valuable points. It is known to all that a lecturer is incapable of explaining verbally what he can explain in writing

These parts deal with commentaries of Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ, Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī and Du‘ā’ Makārim al-Akhlāq, respectively

.It is hoped that the faithful will find the book beneficial and worth reading

Abbās Qāsimiyān‘

Sha‘bān ۲۱, ۱۴۱۸ AH

Dey/۱۳۷۶ AHS – ۲۲/December/۱۹۹۷/۱

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Part One: Introduction

Point

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(قُلْ مَا يَعْجَبُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ)

“Say, ‘Why should my Lord care for you, were it not for your supplication?’”

The simplest and most natural relationship of man with God is to remember Him. This affects his heart and soul. Occasionally, the effect of this remembrance is manifested by the tongue

Supplication [du‘ā’] is a weapon of the faithful [mu’minīn], a means of proximity to God, the essence of worship [‘ibādah], remembrance of the Truth, and communion with the Lord of the worlds. Asking for a request is an excuse to stand before the Doorstep of the Beloved and appeal to the Self-sufficient Being. Supplication is a source of spiritual vitality and the key to divine bestowals. Supplication means being enthralled by divine mercy

Supplication has greatly been emphasized and is of immense value in Islamic culture. So, it is important to clearly define its essence

What is the essence of supplication? Is supplication an independent reason for the acceptance of requests, or similar to other natural or common reasons? In case it is an independent reason, can it not be an exception to the cosmic precedents [sunan-e takwīnī] of God? Does supplication not contribute to one’s laziness? What and to what extent are the effects of supplication? What is the use of supplication? What educational role can it play in the life of man? Does the effect of supplication lie only in its content, as claimed by some people, in the sense that it has an inspirational dimension which prompts a person to move towards his goal? Or, does it have other effects? God has promised in the Qur’an to hear the supplication of His servants, then why are most of our prayers not granted? Does supplication have some etiquettes and conditions? If yes, what then are those conditions? What is meant by “arrogance in supplication”, which has been prohibited by the Qur’an

.These are the various dimensions examined in this chapter

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.Sūrat al-Furqān ٢٥:٧٧ – –١

?[What is the essence of supplication [du‘ā

Life in the world is such that consciously or unconsciously man’s attention is drawn to material things. But the truth is that man is created to have proximity to God [taqarrub], and he must utilize everything he has to attain this goal. One of the best ways is to allocate a specific time everyday to the sincere remembrance of God. This remembrance is illustriously manifested in prayer. In the ritual prayer [ṣalāh], there are supplications in the state of qunūt(۱) and other positions, besides those to be recited before and after the daily obligatory prayers as mentioned in the traditions [aḥādīth]. In fact, the ritual prayer itself can be considered a “supplication”. As stated, ṣalāh literally means supplication

The essence of supplication is attention [tawajjuh] to the Worshipped Being and it is considered spiritual ascension [mi‘rāj] for the faithful. Supplication does not mean mere recitation of some words and observance of certain acts. The essence or spirit of supplication is man’s soulful attention to the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds. The extent of this attention is commensurate to the degree of one’s gnosis [ma‘rifah] and love of God. As such, one must pay attention to the Attributes of God before and during prayer

The essence of supplication is nothing but worship and because of the attention to God at the time of its performance, it is perhaps even preferred to other forms of worship. In the noble traditions, the Apostle (ﷺ) is reported to have said

الدُّعَاءُ مَخُّ الْعِبَادَةِ.

“Supplication is the brain of worship.”(۱)

In the Holy Qur’an, while dealing with the issue of arrogance in supplication God also says

(وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ)

Your Lord has said, ‘Call Me, and I will hear you!’ Indeed those who are disdainful of “My worship will enter hell in utter humility.”(۲)

In this verse, God has not said “those who are disdainful of supplication to Me,” but described supplication as “worship,” introducing it as a requisite

p: ۲۰

Qunūt: supplication recited in the ṣalāt after the second rak‘ah, in the standing – ۱
[.position, with the palms of the hands raised upward. [Trans
.Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۳, bāb ۱۴, p. ۳۰۰, ḥadīth ۳۷ – ۲
.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu’min) ۴۰:۶۰ – ۳

of servitude; for the threat of hellfire is intended for those who refuse to worship and
[not to those who refuse to make supplication.](#)

This might raise the question: How should man worship God whenever he needs something from Him? To answer this question, the essence of worship must be clarified.

The essence of worship is for man to regard himself as the servant [‘abd] and subject [mamlūk] of God, not to allocate any sovereignty to himself as well as an independent will vis-à-vis that of God. Rather, he must consider himself and his possessions as belonging to God. He must totally submit to the will of God, acknowledge his servanthood before his Lord and voluntarily express his ontological servitude to Him.

In other words, he must express himself to God, thus

إِلَهِي أَنْتَ الْخَالِقُ وَأَنَا الْمَخْلُوقُ وَأَنْتَ الْمَالِكُ وَأَنَا الْمَمْلُوكُ وَأَنْتَ الرَّبُّ وَأَنَا الْعَبْدُ... وَأَنْتَ الْقَوِيُّ وَأَنَا الضَّعِيفُ.

O Lord! You are the Creator and I am a creature. You are the Master and I am a “
[subject. You are the Lord and I am a servant... You are the Mighty and I am weak.”](#)

In reality, worship is an expression of the same; sometimes, through the heart’s attention and at times by verbal expression or bodily gestures and signs. If ever bowing down [rukū‘] and prostration [sujūd] are considered acts of worship, it is because they express humbleness before the infinite majesty of God.

Supplication is an actual indication of belief in the Mastership, Lordship, Greatness, and Power of God.

One who stretches his hands above, bows down and prostrates on the ground, sheds tears, and implores God to grant his requests, demonstrates his utmost humbleness and abjectness before the Greatness of God. He regards himself as poor, weak, abject, and helpless, and God as rich, powerful, great and mighty. Through his physical state, he expresses this truth.

It is true that supplication apparently means petition to meet material and spiritual needs, but in reality, it is a confession of one’s poverty and impotence. It is true that a

supplication is always in verbal form but words

p: ۲۱

.Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Tafsīr al-Mīzān, vol. ۲, p. ۳۳ – –۱

An extract from the litanies [munājāt] of Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (‘a), Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۵, p. – –۲

.۳۹۱, ḥadīth ۳۱

express inner state and have no substance of their own. Neither the type of words nor the manner of expressing them has any effect on events in the world. Supplication must emanate from the heart and soul. Utterance of some words by the tongue without any attention of the heart cannot be deemed as supplication. The essence of supplication is nothing but the highest form of worship

The independent effect of supplication

Can supplication independently cause the granting of a prayer and can a phenomenon come into being as the result of supplication without inevitable causes

From the perspective of the Qur'an, the answer to this question is affirmative. Instances have been mentioned in the Qur'an in which without the agency of apparent causes, supplication has brought a thing into existence. For example, by answering the supplication of Prophet Zakariyyā (Zechariah) (a), God gave him a son (Yaḥyā (a)) in his old age. Other cases have also been mentioned. So, according to the Qur'an, this point is undeniable

Is this not an exception to the precedent set by Allah? The Divine will is for things to happen through their own causes, as mentioned in this tradition

أَبَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْرِيَ الْأَشْيَاءَ إِلَّا بِالْأَسْبَابِ.

“Allah refuses to bring things into existence except through their causes.” (1)

Does it not violate the law of causation? In reply, it must be stated that this issue is similar to that of miracles performed by prophets [i'jāz] and non-prophets [kirāmah]. Just as it is said concerning miracles of the prophets (a), that they are a precedent [sunnah] prevailing over natural and common precedents, the grant of prayer is also a divine precedent prevailing over other precedents. Just as citing the verse, “Yet you will not find any change in Allah's precedent, and you will never find any revision in Allah's precedent”, (2) to deny miracles is not correct, the same verse and tradition, quoted above, cannot also be cited to negate the effect of supplication. In any case, denial of extraordinary events is incompatible with the Qur'an

One of the principles of the religious or divine outlook is to believe in i'jāz, kirāmah and the like. This belief does not exist in materialist schools of thought, and those who believe in it are accused of denying the law of cause

p: ۲۲

.Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۲, bāb ۱۴, p. ۹۰, ḥadīths ۱۴-۱۵ – -۱

.Sūrat Fāṭir (or, al-Malā'ikah) ۳۵:۴۳ – -۲

and effect. It is argued that acceptance of such things is a violation of the law of causation. If the law of causation is accepted, all things must come into being through their respective causes and conditions; otherwise, it is impossible for them to have existence. How can one believe that without the agency of natural causes, a thing can .come into being? Thus, this belief is repugnant to the law of causation

?Is supplication in conflict with the law of causation

Does belief in miracles or extraordinary affairs mean denial of the law of causation? Is the law of causation a general law whose acceptance necessitates the denial of ?miracles and any effect of supplication

The question is: If the law of causation is a general and unalterable law, how can miracles and the effects of supplication be accepted? To answer this question, it is .necessary to make some preliminary remarks

Acceptance of the law of causation is different from acceptance of specific causes in every case and confining causes to only the known ones. These two are erroneously .treated as identical

In philosophy, there is an axiomatic and indisputable principle of causation⁽¹⁾ whose :propositions are as follows

Some creatures in the world are in need of the existence of other creatures or beings, and without the latter the former cannot exist. The example is will, [irādah] which is an effect [ma‘lūl] and depends on a person [nafs] (having that will). The philosophical rule of this discussion states that an indigent being [mawjūd-e faqīr] or contingent effect [ma‘lūl-e mumkin al-wujūd] is in need of the being that would provide its needs. That is, if we see that the needs of a needy being are met, it is obvious that the cause [‘illah] of its existence has provided its needs. Therefore, the phenomena and anything which has no existence of its own must come into being on account of the effects of .other factors

As this rule is self-evident and indubitable, scientists in all fields of science are looking for the cause of the existence of phenomena. The efforts of scientists in discovering

the causes of phenomena throughout history have been anchored in the principle that the effect cannot be without any cause. What mankind has so far discovered has .been due to the blessing of this principle

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For a concise treatment of this philosophical principle, see Sayyid Muḥammad – ۱
Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, trans. Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī
(London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, ۲۰۰۳), chap. ۷ “The Cause and the
[.Effect,” pp. ۶۸–۸۰. [Trans

The error committed in this regard pertains to the identification of specific causes. That is, after accepting the principle that the effect cannot be without a cause, specific causes for specific effects must be determined. To determine the specific cause of every phenomenon is beyond the ambit of philosophy as it is within the domain of science

As such, the philosophical law of causation is that every effect is in need of a cause for which philosophy uses general descriptions. But philosophy does not present a specific cause for certain effects as it is part of the responsibility of science to identify the causes through experimentation. As a rational law, the law of causation states that besides the creatures which are limited, restricted and needy, there must be something on account of which they come into being. But its characteristics and effects cannot be established by the law of causation. In other words, knowledge of the specific causes of a phenomenon cannot be attained through the law of causation. As stated earlier, knowledge of the specific causes is the business of experience and science, while the law of causation is a rational law which does not depend on experience

For instance, let us assume that while a scientist in a laboratory tries to discover the cause of a phenomenon, another phenomenon comes into being; let us say, a light emits, or a sound is heard, etc. As soon as he sees or hears it, he is informed of its existence and understands that the said phenomenon is not without a cause. He understands it according to the rational law of causation and there is no need for experience. However, the intellect alone cannot identify the cause behind the existence of a phenomenon. If it could identify it, there would be no need for experience. The fact is that to find out the cause of a phenomenon requires experience or experiment. So, to know certain causes is the business of experience and science, and not that of the intellect

Whenever they do not know the cause of a phenomenon or they cannot find, in the domain of their experience, that which indicates the mechanism of the emergence of that phenomenon, some people admit that the law of causation has some exceptions

Nowadays, as some physicists have not been able to discover the cause of some hidden phenomena (for example, how a certain electron goes out of its axis), they have claimed that these phenomena have no causes, believing that in such cases, the law of causation is defective! How do they then believe that the law of causation is flawless? What they are supposed to know is the specific cause of phenomena, the failure to discover which is due to a defect in their experiment

Therefore, to know the specific cause lies in experience, but the more important question (second error) is this: Can the sole cause of a phenomenon be known through experience? If under certain conditions we perform an experiment and find out that the emergence of a thing depends on another and the relationship between the two is established—for example, through experiment we find out that whenever A is present, B is also present and whenever A is absent, B is also absent—could this
?experience prove that B cannot exist except through the existence of A

For many years, mankind has been using specific means to produce fire. Can it be said that except through these means one can in no way produce fire? As we always use fire to generate heat, do we have the right to say that heat cannot be generated except by means of fire? Can it be claimed that at any time and in any part of the world heat can be produced only through fire? Does experience advance such a conclusion? Does it produce the result that under certain conditions, heat is caused by fire? We only have the right to say that, as far as we know, heat is caused by fire, but we have no right to assert that heat is caused by no other thing. This claim shows ignorance, and it does not behoove a researcher to negate the effect of an unknown
.or intangible factor

Thus, experiment and experience (science) cannot point to man the particular cause of a thing. Experience can only prove what is within the domain of human perception and it has no right to deny what is beyond that. So, the claim that science negates the things mentioned by the prophets (‘a) or the effects of supplication is baseless. Science states that as far as experience shows, every person comes from his or her father and mother. But it has no right to assert that other than the agency of his or her
.parents, no person can come into this world

In principle, experience can never prove what is impossible. Impossibility is not an empirical concept. It is rather a philosophical concept which can only be proved through reasoning. What can be proved through experience is the absence of occurrence but impossibility is beyond the scope of experience. No matter how advanced a field of science is, it cannot negate miracles, the effects of supplication and the like, claiming that such things do not exist. Given these preliminary remarks,

:the following points become clear

The acceptance of miracles or extraordinary things does not mean denial of the law of causation or acknowledgment of exceptions to the law of causation, for these things are existentially caused by God. That is, the acceptance of these affairs is tantamount to the acceptance of God as the Cause. Concerning natural causes, however, if an effect emerges without a known natural cause, does it mean violation
?of the law of causation

In view of the stated preliminary points, it cannot be claimed that for an effect to exist, the natural cause is confined only to what we know and there is nothing else, for it is possible in some cases that an extraordinary thing happen whose cause is unknown to us

In addition, in the law of causation a supernatural cause for a natural affair cannot be denied. No field of science can deny the effect of a supernatural thing in the emergence of a natural thing. In fact, such an effect is even confirmed by a field of science. The spiritualists who have strong inner powers can exercise control over some material phenomena and perform acts which cannot be done through natural means. This is a thing which cannot be denied nowadays

Hence, the occurrence of supernatural things does not mean contravention of the law of causation or the philosophical principle of cause and effect. So, the argument of those who cite verses such as the noble verse, “Yet you will not find any change in Allah’s precedent, and you will never find any revision in Allah’s precedent”⁽¹⁾ is incorrect, because the occurrence of an extraordinary event does not necessarily mean revision in Allah’s precedent [sunnah

In addition, the abovementioned noble verse pertains to human beings and informs them that whenever a people rebel against God, belie and negate the divine signs, corruption will spread in their society and the way for reform and truth will be hampered, others will be led into error and they will not be able to find the way of truth. The precedent of Allah is for Him not to give respite to these people but to destroy them with a heavenly or earthly chastisement. This verse relates to those cases and has nothing to do with natural laws, and it does not intend to suggest that Allah’s precedent is that every material phenomenon is caused by a material cause; for example, heat is always caused by fire

Even assuming that the said verse can be applied to all the laws governing the world, are the divine laws only those laws that we know? If there are laws which we do not know, are they also laws of God

One of the precedents of Allah is that whenever expediency dictates, an act is

performed unnaturally. How does science or philosophy prove that Allah's precedence holds that every natural phenomenon must come into being only through
?a material and natural cause

p: ۲۶

.Sūrat Fāṭir (or, al-Malā'ikah) ۳۵:۴۳ – –۱

As such, to prove a miracle or the effect of prayers does not mean negation of the cause of the emergent phenomenon but rather means to prove a cause presently .unknown

Thus, the law of causation as a necessary and general law can be reconciled with (miracles and extraordinary affairs, and does not conflict with them.)

?Does supplication make people lazy and lax

One of the issues raised about supplication has something to do with its socio-psychological dimension. Some people raise the objection that people's faith in the effect of supplication makes them lax in their life activity—in their personal as well as social affairs. Accordingly, this laxity willy-nilly brings about social backwardness and becomes an effective instrument in the hands of tyrants, who keep the people .engaged in supplication and devotional acts, while they plunder their resources

The fact of the matter, however, is that every truth can be misused in one way or another. If a truth is misused, one should not reject the essence of that truth. Supplication does not mean that we should not struggle nor make any effort to fulfill individual or social needs. Supplication means that the faithful [mu'min] considers God as the Real Effector. Whenever he feels the need to solve his problem, he turns to God besides employing the material means at his disposal to solve his problem, for God has enjoined and willed so. However, he does not consider these factors to have independent results. As a result, even if the material factors are not available, he will not be dejected, for he regards God as All-powerful to meet his needs through non-material means. In view of this, belief in the power of prayer induces him to struggle .and be hopeful

If a person relies only on material factors, he will only work if he is hopeful of their availability. But the faithful is not hopeless even when he knows that the conventional .factors are not available

During the Battle of Badr, when the Muslims were in utmost difficulty and their soldiers and military equipment were far inferior to that of the enemies, they resorted

to supplication and God also answered their supplication. He sent three thousand angels to their rescue and they emerged victorious. (۲) If the Muslims had no belief in supplication or had a low morale, they would have withdrawn and eventually been defeated.

p: ۲۷

.See Ma‘ārif-e Qur’ān [Qur’anic Studies] by the author – –۱

[.See Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ۳:۱۲۳-۱۲۴. [Trans – –۲

So, belief in supplication does not end up in withdrawal and defeat. On the contrary, sometimes the absence of belief in supplication gives way to defeat. This objection actually results from the lack of proper knowledge of supplication. The notion that man must only pray and not work does not represent the true meaning of supplication. Once we ask something from God, we have to regard Him as the Real Effector and whatever we possess as belonging to Him, and not that we have to regard whatever we possess to be our own and seek the help of God through other means. Does the existence of man and whatever he possesses not belong to God

Supplication does not mean that man should ask God to do something through other than the conventional means. This is actually determining what God must do. It is like the one who has bread on his table but still asks: "O Lord! Give me provision through other means." This is not a valid supplication

If a person really wants something from God and recognizes Him as the All-efficient and All-wise, he must use whatever is at his disposal, and if he feels anything lacking, he must ask it from God. Hence, to the person whom God has bestowed sight but does not open his eyes and only says, "O Lord! Let me walk with closed eyes and reach my destination," it must be said: "Has God not bestowed sight for you to use

Supplication does not mean that we have to discard the blessings God has bestowed upon us out of His infinite wisdom and say, "O Lord! Give the same thing through other means." This is actually like saying, "O Lord! I do not accept Your scheme. You told me to see with my eyes but I want to see with my ears!" It is narrated that Prophet Mūsā (Moses) (a) got sick and the Israelites prescribed a certain herbal medicine, but he said, "I refuse any medical treatment as I am waiting for God to cure me." After sometime, his awaited recovery was nowhere in sight. God revealed to him: "By My Power and Glory! I shall not cure you unless you use the same herb for your treatment. O Mūsā! Do you want to discredit My wisdom by your reliance [tawakkul]? Except Me, is there anyone who has the power to cure you through the roots of this herb

:Naturally, God's wise design is not consistent with our whims and caprice

(وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ)

Had the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have surely “
(fallen apart [along] with those who are in them.” (۱)

So, we must use, in the best possible manner, whatever is at our disposal and accept God’s scheme and wisdom. The causes and factors He has provided in the world are based upon the dictates of His wisdom. Everything is beneficial to us and contributes to solving our problems. Thus, we must not set them aside and ask for provision through other means. If we use whatever is bestowed upon us, we will realize that God has already provided the means to solve our problems. The only thing lacking is
.our failure to use them

Of course, God is not incapable of providing those things through other means, but not to use the means placed at our disposal does not represent supplication and reliance on Him [tawakkul]. It is rather an act of abuse or misinterpretation of Islamic concepts that some people hold. Tawakkul does not mean belief in God without using
.the material means He has provided

Therefore, those who truly rely on God [mutawakkilīn] are far more active than other people. The struggle of the Islamic combatants [mujāhidīn] who go to the battlefield by relying on God and fight with the enemy considering victory as coming only from
.God is far greater than that of those who do nothing and only pray

(وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ)

(And victory comes only from Allah, the All-mighty, the All-wise.” (۲)

The true mujāhid asks for victory and help from God without ignoring, rather, using whatever God has given him. So, true supplication is practiced by one who uses all the means and factors God has provided, not discarding them and asking for the realization of his needs through other means. According to the traditions [riwāyāt], the supplication of such people will not be accepted. In some narrations, it is reported that a certain man had an impious wife and prayed to God to save him from her evil but his prayer was not accepted because God had given him the right to divorce her whenever he wished to. (۳) If she was indeed impious and living with her was against

his felicity in this world and the hereafter, he should have divorced her. So, his supplication had no sense. Of course, if his intention in his supplication was for God to give him more endurance to deal with such a

p: ۲۹

.Sūrat al-Mu'minūn ۲۳:۷۱ – ۱

.Sūrat Āl 'Imrān ۳:۱۲۶ – ۲

.Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۳, p. ۲۵۶, ḥadīth ۱۰ – ۳

woman so as to attain spiritual perfection or for Him to reform her character, his supplication was ideal; otherwise, it was useless, because the means to be relieved from her mischief was at his disposal and he was not using it. If this person was really serious in what he was praying for, he should have used the means God had provided him.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is reported to have said

أَلْدَّاعِي بِلَا عَمَلٍ كَالرَّامِي بِلَا وَتَرٍ.

“The supplicant who is devoid of action is like the arrow without any bow.”

In another ḥadīth, he (ﷺ) said: “The supplication of one who stays at home and asks for sustenance from God will not be accepted.”

So, Islam does not replace means and factors at the disposal of man with supplication. It rather wants him to realize that causes are not independent of God. The effect of all causes emanates from Him. Thus, even with the existence of causes, man must focus his attention towards God. He must ask God for all his needs even if all the common means to acquire them are accessible. Even if his daily bread is provided, the faithful person turns to God and asks Him to remove his hunger. In his view, all things are means and the ultimate effect emanates from God. So, supplication is desirable under all conditions—whether man has access or no access to the common means. When common means are accessible, supplication shows that he does not consider these means as independent, and believes in God as Self-sufficient and in his own need for divine blessings. When common means are not accessible, supplication shows that he does not consider the Power of God as limited to common means, and believes that He can meet his needs through other than common means. Hence, supplication is desirable under all conditions.

If a person with strong faith feels hungry, he will ask God to satiate him and then go to the kitchen and eat. In this case, his eating does not contradict his supplication. That is, he only regards God as the Real Agent in meeting his needs, believing that as God wills and gives this effect, food removes one’s hunger and as such, he consumes it;

otherwise, the presence or absence of food makes no difference to him, because he believes that God could satiate him in whatever way He likes

p: ۳۰

.Ibid., vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۱۲, ḥadīth ۱۷ – ۱

.Ibid., vol. ۷۱, p. ۳۴۴, ḥadīth ۱ – ۲

God thus revealed to Prophet Mūsā (‘a): “O Mūsā! Ask Me for whatever you need,
” .including your food’s salt

The essence of supplication is for man to understand and acknowledge that he has nothing of his own and whatever he possesses comes from Him. The power to move and act comes from Him. God has provided the means and instruments, as well as the power to think and reflect. These are all divine blessings that must be utilized in meeting one’s needs. Asking God actually means that man must acknowledge that all .means belongs to God. This is the essence of servitude, which requires obedience

Therefore, belief in the power of prayer does not make one lazy. On the contrary, it .serves as a stimulant for man to strive and make more efforts

Effects of supplication

Educational effects

What is the educational role of supplication? Does supplication have a fundamental ?role in the life of man

Some people argue that the educational effect of supplication is limited to its inculcation in a person. That is, once a person utters something good, he inculcates it in his mind. For example, by reciting Du‘ā’ Makārim al-Akhlāq, it is inculcated in one’s mind that he must reform his moral conduct [akhlāq], acquire good attributes and abandon bad habits. These people consider the educational effect of supplication as confined to these things, and those supplications which lack these features as !’imperialist supplications

This notion is a product of shortsightedness and lack of understanding of Islamic teachings. The greatest effect of supplication is no other than the essence of servitude embedded in it that propels man’s spiritual perfection and humanity. Of course, it is possible that in some supplications these inculcations and the like also exist but these effects are similar to the movement of the jaw at the time of eating. While chewing the food, it is also engaged in physical exercise. This exercise cannot

be considered the true benefit of eating food; the true benefit of eating is to procure
.the elements needed by the body

Similarly, the true benefit of supplication is to pay attention to God and serve Him. The
benefits sometimes derived from some supplications are insignificant compared to
the essential benefits. The perfection of man lies in the realization of his poverty in
relation to God and his acknowledgment

of this truth. (1) As long as man refuses to acknowledge this fact, he will not properly understand his poverty and not attain spiritual perfection

Supplication perfects man's knowledge. Supplication in itself is a form of worship and worship, in turn, is the only means of attaining perfection. Therefore, supplication is one way of attaining perfection

:In a noble verse, God says

(وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ)

Your Lord has said, 'Call Me, and I will hear your [supplications]!' Indeed those who "are disdainful of My worship will enter hell in utter humility." (2)

That is to say: "Verily, in utter humiliation and abjectness those, who arrogantly refuse to worship Me and consider it unfitting to be humble before Me, will enter hell." The two statements in the noble verse quoted above serve as the main and secondary statements. Supplication is a form of worship, and whoever refuses to worship Him shall taste painful and humiliating punishment

After the main benefit of supplication, some secondary and other benefits are also derived, which are as follows

Other effects

Knowledge of God. The main reason behind supplication and imploration is to know God. This knowledge is the source of all felicity and improvement

Some people came to Imām al-Ṣādiq (a) and asked him: "Why are our prayers not answered?" The Imām (a) said: "It is because you pray to Him whom you do not know." (3)

(The Blessed Names of God which we recite (4)

and praise are all replete with numerous meanings and reciting them has abundant blessings. One of these blessings is the attention paid to their meanings and

.attributes, thus, increasing man's knowledge about God

p: ۳۲

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- Sūrat Fāṭir (or al-Malā'ikah) ۳۵:۱۵: "O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need — ۱ —
".of Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable
.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu'min) ۴۰:۶۰ — ۲ —
.Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۳, section ۲۴, p. ۳۶۸, ḥadīth ۴ — ۳ —
".Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۱۸۰: "To Allah belong the Best Names, so supplicate Him by them — ۴ —

Once we mention the Names of God such as Al-Raḥmān, Al-Raḥīm, Al-Samī‘, Al-Baṣīr, Al-Mun‘im, Al-Ghafūr, and others, we are reminded that our Lord is All-beneficent, All-merciful, All-hearing, All-seeing, Affluent, and All-forgiving, and as such, we tend to become hopeful of His mercy and forgiveness. By pondering or reflecting on these Attributes, the supplicant sees himself in communion with God whose Power encompasses everything. In essence, ‘easy’ or ‘difficult’ are meaningless to Him. This point gives new hope and enthusiasm to him who does not pin his hope on anything .but God

In this short treatise, there is no need to mention the effect of hope, enthusiasm, struggle, and the enduring of difficulties. Also, attention to the fact that God sees and hears what we do and say encourages the person to do good deeds and avoid evil utterances and thoughts. Moreover, some supplications constitute a complete course on monotheism and theology on an extremely high level. Imām al-Ḥusayn’s (‘a) Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah, Imam ‘Alī’s (‘a) Du‘ā’ al-Ṣabāḥ, Imam al-Sajjād’s (‘a) Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, and many other supplications, especially those included in Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah(1) are some of these supplications

Acquisition of excellent morality. As mentioned in noble aḥādīth, acquisition of . ۲
:excellent morality is highly enjoined in religion

تَخَلَّقُوا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ.

“Behave according to the conduct of Allah.”(۲)

Through his supplication, the supplicant endeavors to emulate those divine attributes. Just as God possesses such Attributes as All-beneficent and All-forgiving, he also tries .to be kind and forgiving to others

Purity and cleanliness. Cleanliness of clothing and lawfulness of the food taken by . ۳
the supplicant, as well as the lawfulness of the place of supplication are among the disciplines of supplication. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Anyone who wants his
supplication to be accepted must purify his food and occupation.”(۳)

The book of fifty-seven prayers known as al-Şahīfah (al-Kāmilah) al-Sajjādiyyah, – –۱ which is one of the major Islamic manuals of supplications, was transmitted from Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Sajjād (‘a), the fourth of the Twelve Imāms and the only son of Imām al-Ḥusayn to survive the massacre at Karbalā’. See al-Şahīfah al-Kāmilah, [<http://www.al-islam.org/sahifa>]. [Trans .Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۶۱, section ۴۲, p. ۱۲۹ – –۲ .Ibid., vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۲۰, ḥadīth ۳۰ – –۳

Once the supplicant is bound not to obtain his daily bread through unlawful means and not to indulge in unjust works or activities, he will attain spiritual perfection. The society whose members have such orientation will be a prosperous community with an illustrious abode

Suppression of the self. The most fundamental benefit of supplication, nay all forms of worship, is the prevention of the rebellion of the self [nafs]. In Khutbah al-Qāsi‘ah, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) has mentioned detailed points while talking against arrogance. In a certain part of this sermon, he (‘a) says: “This filthy disposition is the greatest trap of Satan and his most powerful instrument of deception.”

Elimination of selfishness is like uprooting all moral vices and preparing oneself for the acquisition of all virtues. God thus says in the Qur’an

(قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا)

“One who purifies it is felicitous.”

By standing before God and paying attention to His Greatness and Majesty and at the same time taking into account his own insignificance and helplessness, the supplicant expresses his absolute poverty to God. In so doing, he sees himself not in need of any creature but Him. So, supplication means humbleness accompanied by contentment and high spirit

Conditions for the acceptance of supplications

Although God promises in the Holy Qur’an that He answers the supplications, saying “Call Me and I will hear,” why are supplications usually not answered? What are the conditions for the acceptance of supplications

.This question is posed by all those who are engaged in supplication

Scholars of scholastic theology [‘ilm al-kalām] argue that it is possible to not fulfill a threat [wa‘īd] and such an act is rationally not bad. However, not to fulfill a promise [wa‘dah] is rationally bad and it is impossible for God to do something bad. So, not to

fulfill the promise of answering the supplications as stated in the abovementioned verse is rationally bad provided that there is also no rational reason behind this non-fulfillment of promise. The Qur'an itself states

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ)

p: ۳۴

[.Nahj al-Balāghah (Ṣubḥ al-Ṣāliḥ), Sermon ۱۹۲ (Khuṭbah al-Qāṣi'ah). [Trans – –۱

.Sūrat al-Shams ۹۱:۹ – –۲

.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu'min) ۴۰:۶۰ – –۳

﴿Indeed Allah does not break His promise.﴾¹

This verse is sufficient proof for us to expect that all our prayers would be accepted by God. In view of the need to be truthful to one's promise and God's emphasis on this point, what is the reason behind the non-acceptance of our supplications

This question was repeatedly posed to the pure Imāms (a) who gave different answers commensurate to the diverse levels of understanding of individuals. In some traditions, certain conditions have been set for the supplicants, or certain disciplines or times have been stipulated for the supplication

Does it mean that these points are generally applied to the verses? In other words, is our supplication acceptable provided that it is made at a certain place, time and condition? If it is made in other than the specified times and conditions, will the promise of God not be fulfilled? Or, do these traditions have other meanings

What we can deduce from the outer dimension of the verse is that it is generally applied, and the probability of its being limited is very weak. To explain this point, let us cite an example. If a generous person makes a promise to invite his guests to a party and amid their presence he does not entertain most of them, will they not question him as to why he is not fulfilling his promise? If he answers that it is because of their untidy clothes and their being late for a few minutes, his excuse will be unacceptable, because his invitation was a general one and those conditions (tidiness and punctuality) were not mentioned in the invitation. So, he must fulfill his promise and entertain all of them or have indisputable justification for doing otherwise

:To understand this verse better, it is necessary to examine it closer

What does it mean by "call" [ud'ū]? Does supplication [du'ā'] mean mentioning our request even without necessarily understanding it? Or, does it mean without paying attention to it even though we understand it? Or does it mean so, even if it is against our inner liking, assuming that we pay attention to it

It is true that verbal utterance associated with request is called 'supplication'—for

example, as we call someone and need something from him—but words indicate what is in the mind and cannot be treated absolutely. It does not mean that the form of expression affects world events and that every word in any language is effective.

,As stated earlier

p: ۳۵

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۳۱ – –۱

supplication is a matter of the heart and the tongue only tells what is in the heart. So, supplication must originate from the heart and soul of man and he must truly be asking for something. If he only utters some words without any sincerity, he is not truly asking for something and, indeed, is not engaged in his supplication

Supplication must truly represent “Call Me” [ud‘ūnī]. That is, the request must be addressed solely to God. If a person observes the abovementioned conditions but his heart is not focused on God, he has actually not supplicated. For example, we pray for knowledge; we truly like knowledge; and we are serious in our request; yet, we think that to be learned has nothing to do with God as it depends only on our own efforts and endeavors. We say

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا وَعَمَلًا صَالِحًا.

”O Allah! Grant us beneficial knowledge and righteous conduct“

Yet, deep in our hearts we do not believe that God bestows knowledge on man. In other words, we are only after the inspirational aspect of supplication that knowledge is something good which must be acquired. By “O Allah” [Allāhumma] we actually mean “God willing” [inshā’ Allāh] which we only ceremoniously recite in many of our activities. It is not actually suspension of the will of God. Similarly, at the beginning of many works, we recite “In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful” merely as words of compliment. Yet, only rarely do we really remember God and sincerely begin our activity with His Name. The same is true in the case of most of our supplications. It is true that outwardly, we are asking something from God but in reality, we do not have firm conviction that God must grant our request. In this case also, we must not expect the acceptance of our supplication

Such ‘supplications’, which are mere utterance of some words and are not really requesting something from God will never be accepted because our true request is not addressed to God. Rather, we rely upon material means and our own power. Even if those who are engaged in such ‘supplications’ are asked whether or not God really endows knowledge to man, they will answer and argue that acquisition of knowledge has nothing to do with God

The reason behind the non-acceptance of such ‘supplications’ is the fact that they do not have faith in the power of God and in reality, they are not asking God for anything. Therefore, true supplication is the request which is addressed to God and which we truly believe that only He can grant. If it is not so, it is sheer words of compliment. But as to what extent these words of compliment are beneficial is a different story, which requires a separate

discussion. We must ask for forgiveness of God for such manner of supplicating for with this kind of supplicating and frame of mind, we have treated God as weak and .impotent and we believe in things about Him which are beyond His Station

The verse “Call Me and I will hear” is a condition expressed in command. It is actually, “If you call, I will answer you.” This condition will be realized if first of all, we are serious in our request, and secondly, our request is addressed to God whom we regard as the only One who can grant our request. In this manner, the conditions for the acceptance of supplication will materialize. Can it be said that such a supplication ?might still not be accepted

It is narrated that the Israelites were afflicted with drought for a long period. Prophet Mūsā (‘a), along with a group, went out of the town to pray for rain [ṣalāt al-istisqā’] :and the following was revealed

كَيْفَ اسْتَجِيبُ لَهُمْ وَقَدْ أَظْلَمَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ذُنُوبُهُمْ... يَدْعُونَنِي عَلَى غَيْرِ يَقِينٍ.

How can I answer them (their supplication) when they are engrossed in sins... They“ call on Me yet they do not have certainty [yaqīn]?” (1)

Another point worth mentioning here relates to the conditions necessary for the acceptability of supplication. Sometimes, we ask God for something, thinking it is good for us and can contribute to our spiritual perfection. But in reality, we are wrong. We do not know whether the grant of our request is ultimately good for us or not. If we knew the repercussions of the grant of our request, we would definitely make a different request. Such requests are like those of a child who does not know its .harmful effects, which if he did, he would never ask for it

In cases when we ask for our general welfare but we are wrong in identifying what is exactly good for us, it is possible that our supplication is granted, but according to our general welfare. In such instances, God, the Exalted, may overlook our mistake and grant our request according to the general welfare that we ask from Him. He grants us something else, which is what we would ask Him for if we only saw the whole picture. In this case, God has not deprived us of His grace and at the same time, He

has corrected our mistake. Keeping in view of the three points—serious request, request addressed to God, and what is really good for us—which can be inferred from the abovementioned verse, it can be said that the verse has general application

p: ३४

.That is, they do not have faith that God could grant their requests – – १

There are also cases when instead of granting a request in this world, God gives a person a distinct station in the hereafter. This is related to the third point that can be inferred from the verse in question. That is, if a person who has faith in the hereafter, realizes that his request in relation to a worldly affair is insignificant in comparison to the otherworldly reward, he will definitely prefer his perfection and felicity. If the truth is made manifest to him, he will certainly request them for the hereafter

As God, the Exalted, is aware that the faithful are more interested in the affairs of the hereafter, He sometimes reserves their worldly requests for the hereafter. When they find out what station they will occupy in the next world, they will thank God and be pleased with the arrangement set by the Lord. This point has been mentioned in
:Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ

وَلَعَلَّ الَّذِي أَبْطَأَ عَنِّي هُوَ خَيْرٌ لِي لِعِلْمِكَ بِعَاقِبَةِ الْأُمُورِ.

Perhaps slowing down [in the grant of my requests] may be a blessing in disguise“
”.because You alone know the consequences of all affairs

:The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is reported to have said

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَدْعُو بِدَعْوَةٍ لَيْسَ فِيهَا إِثْمٌ وَلَا قَطِيعَةٌ رَحِمَ إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا إِحْدَى ثَلَاثٍ: إِمَّا أَنْ يُعَجَّلَ دَعْوَتُهُ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يُدَخَّرَهَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يَكُفَّ عَنْهُ مِنَ الشَّرِّ مِثْلَهَا.

No Muslim who supplicates—unless it is for committing sins and severing kinship ties“
—is given by Allah one of these three things: He grants his request; He reserves it for
(him in the hereafter; or in lieu of it, He repels calamity to befall him.”(1)

In addition to the abovementioned points, other reasons for the non-acceptance of supplications are also mentioned in traditions. For example, it is mentioned in some traditions that those who abandon the duty of “enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil” shall be afflicted with two calamities. Firstly, their supplications will not be
.accepted and secondly, the vilest and most corrupt of people will rule over them

Some people complained to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) that their
:supplications were not being accepted. The Imām (‘a) stated the reason behind it

إِنَّ قُلُوبَكُمْ خَائِتٌ بِشْمَانٍ خِصَالٍ: أَوْلَاهَا إِنْكُمْ عَرَفْتُمْ اللَّهَ فَلَمْ تُؤَدُّوا حَقَّهُ كَمَا أُوجِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَا أُغْنَتْ عَنْكُمْ مَعْرِفَتِكُمْ. الثَّانِيَهُ...

p: ٣٨

١ - ١٦ - Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٩٣, p. ٣٦٦, ḥadīth ١٦ - ١

Your hearts have committed treachery in eight things (and for this reason, your“
.(supplications are not being accepted

.You recognize God but you do not give His due right (١)

.You believe in His Messenger, yet you violate his Sunnah (٢)

.You read His Book but you do not act upon it (٣)

You say that you are afraid of God’s punishment or wrath but you commit acts (٤)
.which draw you closer to it

You say that you yearn for His reward, yet you do things which keep you away (٥)
.from it

.You enjoy His blessings but you do not express your gratitude (٦)

.You are commanded to be enemies of Satan but you befriend him (٧)

You place the defects of people before your eyes but are negligent of your own (٨)
.defects

Given this, how can you expect your supplications to be accepted when you have closed their doors? Be wary of God; reform your actions; purify your intentions; enjoin what is good; and forbid what is evil so that your supplications might be
[\(accepted.”\(١\)](#)

In addition, we do not consider what we can usually get through common means as an acceptance of our supplication and as coming from God. This is while the Qur’an attributes to God all things and affairs. Moreover, unconditional acceptance of supplication is not incumbent upon Allah, as explicitly stated in the Qur’an. If the supplication of every person is supposed to be accepted, there would be sets of
:contradictions and the system of the universe would be in disarray. God says, thus

(وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ)

Had the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have surely “
(fallen apart [along] with those who are in them.”[\(۲\)](#)

God not only turned down the supplication of His prophet Ḥaḍrat Nūḥ (Noah) (‘a) to
:save his son, but also reproached him for it

p: ۳۹

.Ibid., vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۷۶ – –۱

.Sūrat al-Mu’minūn ۲۳:۷۱ – –۲

(قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ)

Said He, ‘O Noah! Indeed he is [a personification] of unrighteous conduct. So do not“ ask Me [for something] of which you have no knowledge. I advise you, lest you should [\(be among the ignorant.\)](#)”[\(1\)](#)

In addition to these points, even assuming that apparently the noble verse “I will answer you” means unconditional acceptance of supplication, the moments for the acceptance of supplication are specified by God. After Ḥaḍrat Ya‘qūb (Jacob) (‘a) who was a prophet prayed to God for the return of Ḥaḍrat Yūsuf (Joseph) (‘a), in spite of his prayer being accepted, it took around forty years before Yūsuf (‘a) was able to .return to him

It is mentioned in some traditions that sometimes a faithful person would supplicate to God but God would tell the angels: “His supplication is accepted, but delay its [\(materialization because I want to hear his voice \(praying to Me\).\)](#)”[\(2\)](#)

This proves that purification of the soul is attained through a connection with God and supplication. The acceptance of supplication is sometimes delayed because the true perfection of man lies in his connection with God and not in the acceptance of his supplication. For example, the supplication of one who is sick, seeks refuge in God from the pain he is suffering and prays to Him for his recovery, contributes to his spiritual perfection and proximity to God. If he recovers on the very first day, he will .no longer pray or pay attention to God, and his attention towards God will decrease

Another example is of a person who prays for wealth to be spent in the way of Allah and thus attains spiritual reward. Since God knows that once he becomes wealthy he will forget his Lord, He will not let him attain his ambition. However, God will provide his sustenance through other means and, thereby, he will obtain the same spiritual .reward

God exercises such an authority [wilāyah] over His faithful servants. This is one of the .forms of His wilāyah over the faithful

God's authority, guardianship or mastership [wilāyah] over man has many forms,
among which are the following

1. His general wilāyah over entire creation .1

p: ۴۰

1- ۱۱:۴۶ - Sūrat Hūd

2- ۱۶ - Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۷۴, ḥadīth

His special wilāyah over the faithful [mu'minūn]. The Qur'an points to this kind of His .۲
:wilāyah, thus

(اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا)

“Allah is the Master of the faithful.” (۱)

This wilāyah is limited to the faithful. Similarly, the guidance of God is of two kinds. One is the general guidance which encompasses all mankind by endowing them with the intellect and other faculties. God has also specific 'guidance' for the faithful. That is, those who wholeheartedly accept the invitation of the prophets (‘a) and the divine message will find the right path and be encompassed by divine guidance. God will bestow upon them more light, proper understanding, and profound knowledge. This guidance is limited to those who have faith in God and entrust everything to Him. In
:Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah, we read

إِلَهِي أَعْنِنِي بِتَدْبِيرِكَ عَنْ تَدْبِيرِي وَيَاخْتَارِكَ عَنْ إِخْتِيَارِي.

O Lord! By Your Design and Decision, make me needless of my design and“
decision.” (۲)

Those who have attained this station are also encompassed by the special wilāyah of Allah. He exercises wilāyah in all aspects of their lives, managing their life affairs and making them needless of their own plans. As such, instead of health He chooses sickness for His faithful servant, or poverty instead of wealth. On account of his prayer for recovery, the health condition of a sick person may sometimes get even worse! This worsening of the health condition is a blessing of God so that he should acquire more preparedness and endurance and, consequently, attain further perfection. For this reason, instead of being accepted, some of our supplications will be reserved for us in the hereafter, or granted in another form according to the
.demand of our worldly welfare

Of course, these cases are beyond the comprehension of everybody. Only those who
.have these stations can understand these words

God exercises this kind of wilāyah only on His special servants and not on all people. Of course, God is immune from bias but since others do not like it, He does not exercise such a wilāyah over them, for man must act according to his freewill and entrust himself to God out of his own volition so that God can do whatever He deems good for him. But to those who do

p: ٤١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٥٧ – ١

.”(Shaykh ‘Abbās Qummī, Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, “Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a – ٢

.not want it, God does not exercise by compulsion His special wilāyah over them

The essential desirability of supplication

That which is more important than the acceptance of supplication is the supplication itself or earnest imploration and petition to God. Usually, we supplicate for the fulfillment of our needs. That is, whenever we face a problem in our life and we feel something lacking, we extend our hands above and pray to God

Of course, apart from the fact that this practice is a requisite of belief in the Divine Lordship and expression of servitude, it can play a constructive role in man. It must be noted, however, that the philosophy of supplication, and fervent prayers and litanies, in general, is not only the fulfillment of needs—especially worldly needs. Rather, as can be inferred from most of the supplications transmitted from the Infallibles (‘a), supplication itself or fervent prayer to God—regardless of the acceptance or non-acceptance of supplication—is particularly significant. The act of requesting [ṭalab] [itself is more important than the requested thing [maṭlūb

Fervent prayer to God and communion with Him is so valuable and pleasing that if a person could comprehend it, he would never pay attention to mundane and worldly matters, let alone asking for them. Therefore, that which is of immense importance in supplication is the act of fervently praying to God. Its value is far greater than the grant of the request. The mere fact that the servant finds opportunity to have a private meeting with his Master and amorous talk with Him is far valuable for him than the grant of his requests. He has not only been granted permission to talk with God who is the Lord of the worlds but has also been invited by God by the words “Call Me” [\(1\)](#) What a sublime felicity for such a servant

Faith and certainty in supplication molds the personality and nurtures the feelings of man. In his inner world, the supplicant has pleasures and fortunes which are impossible for a non-suppliant to obtain and grasp. This state is indicative of the personality and spiritual growth of the faithful

Etiquettes of supplication

:Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) said

إِحْفَظْ آدَابَ الدُّعَاءِ وَانظُرْ مَنْ تَدْعُو وَكَيْفَ تَدْعُو.

p: ٤٢

.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu’min) ٤٠:٦٠ – ١

Observe the etiquettes of supplication, and consider to Whom you supplicate and“
(how you supplicate.” (۱)

How must we supplicate? Does supplication have its own etiquettes and requisites? Is
?it in need of a particular time and place

It can be learned from the traditions of the pure and infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the
Qur’an that there is no specific time and place for supplication. The door of divine
mercy is always open to all those who are in need, and whenever a person turns his
.heart to God, God will answer him

Of course, there is no doubt that some periods such as the Night of Ordainment
[Laylat al-Qadr] and the night preceding Friday, and some places such as Masjid al-
Ḥarām and the sites of martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) and the other Imāms of
guidance have special importance. However, the Qur’an and traditions have also
mentioned other etiquettes of supplication, the most important of which is to pay
.attention to the Greatness of God before and during the supplication

:In one verse, God says

(اذْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً)

(Supplicate your Lord, beseechingly and secretly.” (۲)

From this verse, two points can be deduced: to supplicate in a low voice and humble
.manner

God is close to His servants and can hear their supplications. So, there is no need to .۱
shout. The Muslims had been prohibited from raising their voice in the presence of the
Apostle (ﷺ). (۳) How much more if the addressee is God? One who feels that he is in the
.presence of God is ashamed of raising his voice

The word taḍarru‘ [humble entreating or beseeching] is mentioned many times in .۲
the Holy Qur’an and whose existence shows that contrary to the notion of some
people, supplication is not mere ‘conditioning of the mind’. Rather, other things exist in

supplication; otherwise, perhaps ‘conditioning of the mind’ could possibly be better in
forms other than taḍarru

p: ۴۳

.Muḥ Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۲۲, ḥadīth ۱۶ – –۱

.Sūrat al-A‘rāf ۷:۵۵ – –۲

Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt ۴۹:۲: “O you who have faith! Do not raise your voices above the – ۳
voice of the Prophet, and do not speak aloud to him as you shout to one another, lest
[.your works should fail without your being aware.” [Trans

In two verses of the Holy Qur'an, a similar concept about taḍarru' is mentioned. In one verse, God says

(وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاہُمْ بِالْبُؤْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ)

We have certainly sent [apostles] to nations before you, then We seized them with “stress and distress so that they might entreat [Us].” (1)

:In another verse, He says

(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبُؤْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ)

We did not send a prophet to any town without visiting its people with stress and “distress so that they might entreat [Allah for forgiveness].” (2)

What is emphasized in these two verses is the implicit invitation to the people to entreat or beseech [taḍarru'] God

?Why taḍarru'? What benefit can taḍarru' give us? Why does God emphasize it

The psychological makeup of man is such that if he does not humbly entreat God, he will gradually succumb to moral vices. Taḍarru' suppresses his egoism and selfishness, and makes him see his position in relation to God, the Exalted, because it is attained through humbling oneself. A person cries and weeps once he humbles himself and feels helpless. This is the best condition for worship and expression of servitude to God

:(It is narrated in a ḥadīth qudsī (3) that God said to Ḥaḍrat 'Īsā (Jesus) ‘a

يَا عِيسَى لَا تَدْعُنِي إِلَّا مُتَضَرِّعًا.

“O 'Īsā! Supplicate Me not but beseechingly.” (4)

:In another ḥadīth, He said

يَا عِيسَى ذَلَّلْ قَلْبَكَ.

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۴۲-۴ – ۱

.Sūrat al-A‘rāf ۷:۹۴ – ۲

Ḥadīth Qudsī (or Sacred Ḥadīth): a sub-category of ḥadīth, which are sayings of – ۳
God but differ from the Qur’an as they are expressed in the words of Prophet

[.Muḥammad. [Trans

.Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۱۴, p. ۲۹۰, ḥadīth ۱۴ – ۴

.Ibid., vol. ۱۴, p. ۲۹۸, ḥadīth ۱۴ – ۵

The ability to be in a state of taḍarru‘ is also realized by the will of God. It is not true
.‘that whenever we like, we can cry or be in a state of taḍarru

Our expression of humility, meekness, helplessness, and abasement does not benefit God. Through His creative power and out of His mercy and grace, He gives us certain stations or states on account of which our faith, guidance and knowledge are augmented. He gives us a chance to become aware of our sins and acknowledge them. This is one of the graces of God. What become a barrier between Him and us are our egotism and arrogance. If man lifts these veils, he will see himself abased, despicable and helpless before God, thereafter, he will be enveloped by His vast divine mercy. Like waterfall, Divine mercy is always flowing. By confessing our sins while lamenting and beseeching Him, we can be enveloped by it. By breaking the idol of our egoism, we can attain such a station and be able to benefit more from it;
.otherwise, our actions alone cannot win the mercy of God

As stated earlier, the kernel of supplication is the expression of abjectness and servitude to God. The more man feels this abjectness, the more he becomes nearer to God. This does not imply that God is like an egotistic and arrogant dictator who wants everybody to be humble before him and thus humiliates his subjects. On the contrary, He is pleased and glad with our worship because it contributes to our spiritual perfection. The peak of perfection for man is to identify his dependence on God. Through this understanding and knowledge, he will achieve a union with God and
.[experience the beatific vision [liqā’ Allāh

Another condition of supplication is to have a feeling of fear and hope [khawf wa rajā]. In this relationship, on one side is God, the Exalted, and on the other side is the sinful servant. Once a person pays attention to his sins, he will feel ashamed and once he turns his attention towards Divine mercy, he will become hopeful. Man must, on one hand, be afraid of Divine wrath, and on the other hand, bear in mind that God might forgive all his sins. This point has particularly been highlighted in Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-
.Thumālī

Other etiquettes of supplication have been mentioned in a tradition reported from

:(Imām al-Şādiq (‘a

You begin supplicating by praising and eulogizing God and then enumerating His“ blessings. Thereafter, recount and confess your sins, ask forgiveness of God and [invoke blessings on Muḥammad and his progeny.”](#)⁽¹⁾

:The following acts cultivate man’s relationship with God at the time of supplication

p: ۴۵

.Ibid., vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۱۷, ḥadīth ۲۱ – –۱

;Being in a state of ablution

;Observing inner and outer purity

;Purging of the heart from rancor against the faithful

;Giving in charity before supplicating

;Forgiving the mistakes of others

;Giving priority to others in supplication

Invoking blessings on Muḥammad and his progeny (ﷺ) at the beginning and end of the supplication.

Types of supplicants

:People can be divided into four groups in terms of their attention to God

The first group consists of those who in all conditions—both in prosperity and adversity—remember God morning and evening and their supplications are not only limited to the time of afflictions and difficulties.

Perhaps the reason behind it is that they know that in spite of all the blessings God has bestowed upon them, they are still in need of Him. For this group, blessing and calamity makes no difference. They are meritorious servants of God who always remember Him and He also always remember them

(إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ)

Indeed they were active in [performing] good works, and they would supplicate to Us“ (with eagerness and awe, and were humble before Us.”

The second group includes a majority of the faithful who in prosperity and comfort feel a sense of pride and negligence. But once they are in difficulty, they will be reminded of their need and express their need to God. This group also consists of relatively good servants of God but He has complained about them for forgetting Him

:when they are in prosperity, and when they are in difficulty they resort to prayer

(وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ)

When We bless man, he is disregarding and turns aside; but when an ill befalls him, “[he makes protracted supplications.](#)”[\(۳\)](#)

p: ۴۶

۱- Sūrat al-A‘rāf ۷:۲۰۵; Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۱۴۱; Sūrat al-Nūr ۲۴:۳۶ –

۲- Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۹۰ –

۳- Sūrat Fuṣṣilat ۴۱:۵۱ –

Most of those who believe in God are like that. Only a few do not forget and are not negligent of God when prosperous

The third group consists of those who consider some calamities as coming from God. So, once they are afflicted with such calamities, they immediately resort to prayer because believe that they are caused by unnatural causes and due to Divine wrath and anger. For example, when the people of Prophet Yūnus (Jonah) (‘a) saw the signs of Divine wrath, they came to their senses before being afflicted, and repented. God saved them. This group does not pay attention to calamities which they do not consider coming from God. Only when they are totally hopeless and no one can help them, they call upon God

The fourth group is composed of those who do not remember God even if calamities befall them and they are in difficulty. God condemns the attitude of this group and considers it more deserving of Divine wrath compared to the third group. Concerning this group, the Holy Qur’an states

(فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَـكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ)

Why did they not entreat when Our punishment overtook them! But their hearts“ were hardened, and Satan had made, what they had been doing, to seem decorous to (them.”(1)

:In another place, it states

(ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ)

Then your hearts hardened after that; so they are like stones, or even harder. For“ indeed there are some stones from which streams gush forth, and indeed there are some of them that split, and water issues from them, and indeed there are some of (them that fall for the fear of Allah. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do.”(2)

Now, we have to see to which group we belong. God forbid that we belong to the third or fourth group. God has endowed man with ample blessings but sometimes these

blessings are taken away and difficulties beyond expectation ensue. Can they be
 ?considered accidental? Have they nothing to do with God

p: ۴۷

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۴۱ – –۱

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۷۴ – –۲

The magnitude of considering them as related to God depends on the level of our knowledge. For the faithful, none is outside the will and design of God. Even if he has a headache, he first asks relief from God and then resorts to a doctor and his prescribed medicine. It is true that he takes the prescribed medicine but he regards its effect as depending on the decree of God, for without His decree, it will not become effective. In sum, according to him, the origin of all actions is God and no one has an independent authority in the world or the entire dominion of God. For him, the entire universe is God's dominion and in His dominion no one has the right to exercise authority except by His leave

Usually, in our ideological conversations and discussions, we say that the will and design of God are all-encompassing; everything is included and nothing is beyond the jurisdiction of His power and authority

In philosophy, we are also very familiar with the issue of the Unity of Actions [tawhīd-e af'ālī]. Perhaps, like other concepts this topic is very familiar to us but in practice most of us, like many other believers in God, forget this fact. We say that God is Omnipresent and All-seeing but in practice we tend to forget this truth. We prove the Unity of Actions by rational arguments and Qur'anic verses and traditions. Yet, we tend to forget it in practice. Therefore, whenever we encounter problems, they cannot be treated as nothing to do with God. As to what extent these problems originated from God, at least we believe that if He wished, He could have prevented them from happening

According to a view, all afflictions of man, in the words of the Qur'an, are "Our punishment" [ba'sunā].⁽¹⁾ It is wrong to think that some calamities are from God while others are not because everything is within His authority. The ontological decree of God is a calamity to befall upon a person and thus it comes from Him. Anyone who has more knowledge and understands the concept of the Unity of Actions can grasp this point which is elaborately examined in philosophy. Of course, the calamities that God sends down on man are all products of his undesirable actions

:There are many Qur'anic verses and traditions in this regard. In the Qur'an, God says

(ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَهُ أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَى قَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ)

p: ٤٨

Sūrat al-An‘ām ٤:٤٣, ١٤٨; Sūrat al-A‘rāf ٧:٤-٥, ٩٧-٩٨; Sūrat Yūsuf ١٢:١١٠; Sūrat al- — — ١
.Anbiyā’ ٢١:١٢; Sūrat al-Ghāfir ٤٠:٨٤-٨٥

That is because Allah never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people“
(unless they change what is in their own souls, and Allah is All-hearing, All-knowing.”(1)

It is possible that for the sake of the man of God, a calamity is withheld from a community although the community had no hand in this withholding of calamity. Or, just as He sends down a calamity out of His mercy, God also withholds it out of a divine scheme or purpose. Yet, He never takes back a blessing He has bestowed on a .people unless they do something evil that causes this taking away of a blessing

:In another verse, God says

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ)

Indeed Allah does not change a people’s lot, unless they change what is in their“
(souls.”(2)

The meaning of this verse is the same as that of the previous verse, but it is more emphatic. According to this noble verse, we must acknowledge that the changing of some blessings into calamities is the result of our own actions. If we manage our affairs in a different way, the blessing [ni‘mah] will not turn into vengeance [niqmah].

,As the saying goes

از ماست که بر ماست.

.It is from us what is upon us

(وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ)

Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned,“
(and He excuses many [an offense].”(3)

If only Allah wishes to punish all the people for their actions, no living creature will be
:left on the surface of the earth

(وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ)

.Sūrat al-Anfāl ۸:۵۳ – ۱

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۱۱ – ۲

.Sūrat al-Shawrā ۴۲:۳۰ – ۳

Were Allah to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing, He would not leave any“
(living being upon it.” (١)

(وَ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ)

Were Allah to take mankind to task because of what they had earned, He would not“
(leave any living being on its back.” (٢)

By sending down worldly calamities on people, God’s aim is to warn and not punish them, so that they turn to Him and realize that they are living under the dominion of :God

(ظَهَرَ الْفُسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ)

Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people’s“
hands, that He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they
(may come back.” (٣)

,Usually, when there is calamity, everybody is afflicted. As the saying goes

تر و خشك با هم می سوزد.

.The wet as well as the dry catch fire

In this case, for those who are not sinful, the calamity is a trial while it is requital for
.those who are sinful

Motives behind supplication

Supplication is a voluntary act and requires motivation. The motives of supplicants are
.so diverse and the value of their supplications depends on the value of their motives

Sometimes, the motive of man in supplicating is the fulfillment of material needs. .١
For example, he asks for money, house, offspring, health, and the like from God.
.Therefore, his motive is his desire for these things

It is true that this kind of request is an inferior sign of man’s aspiration but it is good in

itself, for it is an indication of the supplicant's belief in God as the Ultimate Cause. So, such a person is not equal to another person who is also interested in those things but .does not pray to God to achieve them

Since the first person recognizes God and regards Him as the Ultimate Cause in the world, he supplicates to God for the fulfillment of his needs but the second person has no belief in these things. He pursues the realization of his requests only through material means. In comparing these two persons, because of calling upon God and expressing servitude and poverty before God, the first person will attain a certain stage of perfection but his aspiration is not high as it is only limited to the confinement of this world. The second person, however, is totally outside the race and he will achieve

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.Sūrat an-Naḥl ۱۶:۶۱ – –۱

.Sūrat Fāṭir ۳۵:۴۵ – –۲

.Sūrat al-Rūm ۳۰:۴۱ – –۳

no perfection. Thus, this is one of the degrees of supplication which in itself is valuable and desirable

A higher degree or stage is that man's motive is higher and loftier in which he requests spiritual success in worship. For such a person, the value of spiritual and otherworldly matters is more than that of mundane and worldly matters. Therefore, material things are insignificant for him. If only man knew that God grants whatever he requests—provided that he really believes in the hereafter—he will not ask for worldly matters unless they are intended for otherworldly purposes or for another motive, which will be mentioned later

For this reason, the recorded supplications of the saints of God [awliyā'] are so sublime and can never be compared to our supplications. It is true that our supplications are desirable and a form of worship as they are based on faith and can contribute to our spiritual perfection, but their contribution to our perfection is weak. If, instead of supplicating for material requests, man supplicates for spiritual requests and success in worship, God will increase his gnosis [ma'rifah] and faith [īmān] and grant him success in doing meritorious works. As such, he can move fast along the path of perfection. The value of such supplication is more than that of supplication for material needs because it is a sign of man's strong faith in God and the hereafter. According to such a person, the hereafter is much better and abiding

(وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى)

“[\(And the Hereafter is better and more lasting.\)](#)”

Sometimes, the motive behind supplication is loftier than that which has been mentioned. In this degree or stage, the motive of the supplicant is merely to talk to God and obey His command. The essence of supplication is his aim. Asking for something is a mere excuse to knock at the Door of the Friend. He supplicates because God commands him to supplicate. In this degree or stage, what is requested is not important. Whether it is spiritual or material makes no difference, although supplication for spiritual matters is better. At this juncture, however, supplication for anything is desirable

Such a person sees himself in the midst of the vast ocean of Divine mercy. So, for the minutest details of his affairs, he supplicates to God

If a person has such a motive, his supplication is of lofty value even though it concerns secondary or trivial affairs. Such supplication is valuable not on account of its being material or spiritual but because he considers God the Ultimate Cause, believing that all things are within His power. Such a

p: ۵۱

.Sūrat al-A‘lā ۸۷:۱۷ – –۱

supplication is valuable because the supplicant is not interested in what is requested
.in supplication but since God loves His servant who supplicates, he thus supplicates

Had only God not obligated supplication—“Call Me, and I will hear you!”⁽¹⁾ and “And ask Allah for His grace”⁽²⁾—he would never ask those things from God, but since God has said that He likes His servant raising his hands towards Him, he thus supplicates. Such a supplication cannot be compared with the rest of supplications. It is only done
.by the one whose heart is attached to none but God

As long as man is attached to worldly and even otherworldly matters, consciously or unconsciously, he is in pursuit of obtaining them. Of course, if a person has faith in God and asks from Him whatever he needs, there is nothing wrong. Evidently, everyone asks God for something, depending on one’s degree of gnosis and faith. But for those who have attained high levels of faith and gnosis, there is nothing wrong to pray to God for trivial matters for the reason that He wants His servant to ask Him.

.Therefore, he also prays to God for his secondary worldly affairs

Thus, sometimes, elaboration in supplication and requesting for secondary matters is desirable because it enhances the spirit of servitude, humility and helplessness before God. Such a supplication shows the depth of belief of the faithful who does not rely on
.other than God even in insignificant matters

:At this point, two points are worthy of mention

Man must always pay attention to his needs and ask for them only from God, the . ۱
Exalted. He must bear in mind, however, that his needs are not limited to mundane and worldly needs. In fact, his main needs are spiritual in nature. Among our greatest and most important needs are the blessings of Islam, wilāyah and guidance [hidāyah].

.They must also be sought from God

:It is reported in traditions that saints of Allah were praying to God for martyrdom

وَقَاتِلًا فِي سَبِيلِكَ فَوْقَ لَنَا.

“(And make us succeed in attaining martyrdom in Your way.”⁽³⁾)

.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu'min) ۴۰:۶۰ – ۱

.Sūrat al-Nisā' ۴:۳۲ – ۲

.Part of a supplication recited in the nights of Ramaḍān – ۳

Such a request shows the extent of their desire to be in the company of their Lord. We must also learn from them. We must also ask God to grant us sincere intention so that we can talk to Him sincerely, truthfully and mystically

Another point which is encouraged in the Islamic culture of people is to supplicate for others—both for their material and spiritual affairs. Apart from enhancing man’s attention to God, praying for others also increases the believers’ love and affection for one another. Even in supplication, the spirit of sacrifice, love and compassion which the faithful must have towards others must be manifested

The following is a famous narration [riwāyah] from Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (‘a): “One night I woke up and heard my mother (Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (‘a)) supplicating only for others up to the end. I asked her, ‘Mother, why do you not supplicate for yourself?’ She answered, ‘Neighbors first, then family’ [al-jāru thumma’d-dār].”

So, supplication for others is loftier than supplication for oneself especially if it is for the spiritual affairs of the faithful

The meaning of arrogance in supplication

:In verse ٦٠ of Sūrat al-Mu’min, God says

(قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ)

Your Lord has said, ‘Call Me, and I will hear you?’ Indeed those who are disdainful of “My worship will enter hell in utter humility.”

Now, we want to know the meaning of arrogance in supplication. Three forms of arrogance in supplication can be identified

Sometimes, a person does not supplicate due to negligence. Weakness of faith makes him negligent of knocking at the Door of Allah. Therefore, in facing problems he first goes to the material means and is heedless of the Cause of causes. For example, whenever he is sick, instead of turning to God, he refers to a doctor and his prescribed medicine. In many cases, if another person would remind him of his

negligence, he will acknowledge it. This lack of attention to God does not stem from
.arrogance. It is rather due to the weakness of his faith

At times, because of a wrong notion a person refuses to supplicate. For example, he .۲
has heard that Allah has inalterable precedents [sunan] which

p: ۵۳

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۴۳, section ۴, p. ۸۱, ḥadīth ۳ – –۱

.Sūrat Ghāfir (or al-Mu'min) ۴۰:۶۰ – –۲

must be followed. He believes that God has provided a solution to every problem. So, he asks himself, “What is the use then of supplication? Headache must be relieved by taking some medicine, and not by supplicating.” This notion does not originate from one’s arrogance. It derives from the defect of his faith. He does not know God correctly and has not grasped the relationship between God and the universe. His .knowledge of tawḥīd and the true effects of supplication is weak

There are also times when a person says to himself: “I will solve every problem I .۳ have and provide my own needs. Why should I turn to God? Why should I wake up at midnight and express humility to God?” This is arrogance in supplication for he .disdains from asking anything from God, regarding it as a sort of defect for him

Some “religious reformers” claim that Islam does not want man to be humble even before God. They even consider recitations in prayer such as Allāhu akbar [Allah is the great] and Bismillāhi’r-rahmāni’r-rahīm [In the Name of Allah, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate] as political slogans. According to them, man should not bow down and express humility in front of anyone. They assert, “Crying is the practice of kids and old women! If a person returns to his primordial self and recognizes himself as strong and .powerful he will never cry. He must never cry even before God

Unfortunately, these individuals attribute this notion to Islam, labeling it as “Islamology” [Islāmshināsī]! They should be asked, “If this is Islamology, what then is .!kufrrshināsī”

The truth and essence of worship is the expression of humility. We read in the Qur’an :thus

(وَعَنْتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ)

“All faces shall be humbled before the Living One, the All-sustainer.” (۱)

(وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ)

While to Him submit whosoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or“
unwillingly, and to Him they will be brought back.” (۲)

.Sūrat Ṭā Hā ۲۰:۱۱۱ – ۱

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ۳:۸۳ – ۲

The pride of man is for him to comprehend the greatness of God and express humility and meekness before Him. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) who knew God well :said

إِلَهِي كَفَى بِي عِزًّا أَنْ أَكُونَ لَكَ عَبْدًا وَكَفَى بِي فَخْرًا أَنْ تَكُونَ لِي رَبًّا.

O Lord! It is enough honor for me that I am Your servant and it is enough pride for “
(me that You are my Lord.”

Expression of servitude to God is the highest degree of servitude and man’s acknowledgment of his being God’s servant is the highest form of human dignity. The more one’s servanthood is expressed to God, the more man attains spiritual perfection and becomes nearer to God. Of course, it is evident that God does not need these things. Rather, as stated earlier, it is desirable to God for the reason that this act .contributes to man’s perfection

Transmitted supplications

It is true that supplication in any language, expression and intonation anytime anywhere, that is based on sincere intention, is wholesome, useful and effective, but the best supplications are those transmitted to us from the awliyā’ of Allah, such as the supplications quoted from Prophets (‘a) and the meritorious servants of God as mentioned in the Holy Qur’an or recorded in the noble traditions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the pure Imāms (‘a). These supplications are superior to other supplications :for two reasons

These supplications are transmitted from those who knew the etiquettes of worship .1 better than us. Their knowledge of God was more than that of others and they were also more acquainted with the ways and manners of supplication compared to the rest of people. In addition, because of their more perfect gnosis [ma‘rifah], whatever they requested is more desirable and better than our requests. Therefore, we must .learn from them how to supplicate and what to ask for

It can be said that the supplications transmitted to us from the Imāms (‘a) in general are different in every aspect with our frame of mind and requests in supplication. In

most cases, their supplications begin with the praise and eulogy of Allah [ḥamd] and glorification [tasbīḥ] by citing “There is no god but Allah” [tahlīl] and “Allah is the great” [takbīr]. Instead of complaint and petition, their supplications contain appeals for forgiveness. Instead of denying blessings or complaining against deficiencies and deprivations, the infinite blessings and graces of God are mentioned. What they rarely

p: ۵۵

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۷, p. ۴۰۲, ḥadīth ۲۳ – ۱

mention are requests for material and worldly possessions, while nearness to God and His pleasure, as well as, human perfections are always highlighted

Meanwhile, much of the lofty and sublime knowledge about God which could not be stated through narrations [riwāyāt] have been transmitted through supplications, especially the supplications of Imām al-Sajjād (‘a). While supplicating, the Imāms of guidance (‘a) were fervently praying to Him, the Divine Essence. So, they used to express by tongue what was in their hearts and talk to Him the way they knew Him, glorifying and hymning His praises. In narrations, however, since most of their addressees were various people, it was impossible for them to express all their knowledge about God. Instead, they were supposed to express the truths according to their levels of understanding

كَلِّمِ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ.

”Talk to the people according to the levels of their intellect“

:The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said

إِنَّا مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نَكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ.

Verily, we prophets have been commanded to talk to the people according to the“
[\(levels of their intellect.\)”](#)

By reading the supplications transmitted from the prophets and the Imāms of guidance (‘a), we are actually following them and are included in the tradition which encourages us to imitate the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and His awliyā’. So, by reading the supplications of the Imāms (‘a), apart from reciting the best of supplications through the best of etiquettes, we are actually acting upon the conduct of the awliyā’ of Allah, which in itself is another virtue added to the act of supplicating itself

Of course, following the holy personages has enormous benefits. The greatest of its benefits, which is relevant to the present discussion, is that man will not be afflicted with arrogance and feel that there are individuals superior and better than him and that he is far behind them. This point has great importance in the purification of the

self. Many of those who were purifying their souls—after purging themselves of the moral impurities and reaching some stages of perfection—when they compared themselves with others, saw themselves superior to them and succumbed to arrogance. This itself is one of the moral impurities of man. But once a person realizes that the caravan of the servants of Allah and wayfarers along His path is the

p: ۵۶

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۱, p. ۸۵, ḥadīth ۷ – –۱

caravan ahead of all others, he will feel humble before God. This realization will prevent man from becoming arrogant

The efforts of those, who have been deprived of the blessing of the wilāyah of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)—even if they have sincere intentions and undergone self-mortifications—in self-purification, have become useless because they committed mistakes mostly derived from their arrogance. Since they do not know the station of the pure Imāms (‘a) who have been leading the caravan of humanity, they sometimes imagine that they have attained the station of qutbiyyah [polarity] and wilāyah. Thus, they sometimes issue statements which never behoove a servant of God. This is while the Holy Apostle (ﷺ) who is the best of creation used to recite till the last moment of his life: “I bear witness that Muḥammad is His Messenger.” Such notions can never be held by those who truly follow the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). This in itself is the greatest blessing of their wilāyah.

The supplications transmitted by tradition [ad‘iyyah ma’t’hūrah] have such virtues. It must be noted, however, that those who have traversed the high stages of humanity and reached lofty stations of proximity to God sometimes say things in their litanies which are unbecoming for us to say because they are inconsistent with our conditions and dispositions; for us to express them will not be based on sincerity. For example, in Du‘ā’ Kumayl which is a noble and valuable supplication, Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) said while addressing God

فَهَبْنِي يَا إِلَهِي وَسَيِّدِي وَمَوْلَايَ وَرَبِّي صَبْرْتُ عَلَى عَذَابِكَ، فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَلَى فِرَاقِكَ، وَهَبْنِي صَبْرْتُ عَلَى حَرِّ نَارِكَ، فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَنِ النَّظَرِ إِلَى كَرَامَتِكَ.

Then suppose, my Allah, my Master, my Protector and my Lord, that I am able to endure Your chastisement, how can I endure separation from You? And suppose that I am able to endure the heat of Your fire, how can I endure not gazing upon Your Generosity?

These statements are only suitable to the accomplished awliyā’ of Allah, and everyone cannot claim them. Only he who knows what a mystical union [waṣl] and separation [firāq] is can express such feelings. But he who is ignorant of a union has

no right to say that he is suffering from separation from God. Only he who knows what union is and for whom it is desirable suffers from separation. So long as we do not know God nor grasp His perfection, we will never feel pain on being separated from Him. So, we cannot say that we can endure His punishment but not separation
?from Him

How can he who cries loudly, (that borders on kufr) for suffering from a common headache or toothache, which is not even one-millionth of the pain

of the chastisement in the hereafter, ever claim that he can endure the torment of the hellfire but not separation from God?! What do we know of the mystical union with
?God that we can endure the hellish punishment

Expression of such points is suitable only to personalities such as the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). For us to express them is so far from reality. Yet, such points can be noticed in many transmitted supplications. If we want to utter these statements with the intention of showing our inner state and condition, it is a lie and telling a lie to God is far worse than lying to His creatures. Therefore, in such supplications we must have the intention of narrating [ḥikāyah]. For instance, with the intention of narrating, we have to quote what Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) uttered in supplication, and not with the intention of expressing it by ourselves because it is unbecoming of us. We should also have the intention of praying to God to grant us the necessary gnosis by which we deserve to
.utter such statements

Need to reflect on religious laws and repercussions of disrespectful acts

Supplication means asking God for something and talking to Him. Man knows the thing he wants and understands what he talks about. Some people have this wrong notion that reading the transmitted supplications brings no benefit to those who cannot understand them because they do not understand what they are reciting and asking God for; they are just uttering some words. It is better for them not to read them, but talk to God in their respective languages according to their cognition of Him. This view has also been raised against the recital of the Qur’an. They assert that reading the Qur’an brings no benefit to those who cannot understand its meaning and
!wastes their precious time

Of course, it is true that there is much difference between an understood supplication and a supplication which is merely a verbal exercise. So is it with the reading of the Qur’an. Further, there is great difference between reading it without the presence of heart and with the presence of heart. Thus, those who do not understand the meaning of the supplications or verses of the Qur’an must learn to understand what they are telling God and what He is telling them. Not to know the meaning of

supplications or verses of the Qur'an, however, cannot be a carte blanche to abandon
.their recitation or recite them in another language

If this notion gains currency, it will reach the point of claiming that it is better for the
ritual prayers to be translated into other languages as well, and for every nation to
pray according to their own language. [\(1\)](#) Thereafter, it will

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.It is said that this point has been raised in Turkey – –١

gradually be asserted that there is essentially no need for the movements and pauses in prayer, to bend and bow down! Is God a dictator who obliges us to bow down in front of Him? Finally, the spirit of obedience [ta‘abbud] to the commandments of God and the Apostle (ﷺ) will be undermined and uprooted altogether

The point of deviation of some political groups claiming to be Islamic and whose many members were truly Muslims started from pseudo-intellectual interpretation of religious matters. We must deal with religious issues with extra care. The limits of devotional matters should not be trespassed; otherwise we will meet the same ignominious fate

Like other revealed religions, Islam has also devotional matters which are not based on our personal understanding, knowledge and philosophy. Basically, the spirit of [Islam is this very submission and obedience to God.](#)

The servant of God is he who submits to Him, obeys Him whether he can comprehend the wisdom behind the command or not, tries to know what his Master wants and do it. If he only acts on a thing which he understands, it is actually self-worship and not servitude to God. If we only abide by the orders which we know to be obviously beneficial to us, it is actually self-worship and not the worship of God. The essence of worship of God is for man to abide by the commandment of God whether it is ostensibly beneficial or harmful to him

When Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (‘a) was commanded by God to sacrifice his son, he never asked himself whether this act was beneficial to himself, his son, the society or not, or even if it was lawful or not. As soon as he received the revelation, he decided to sacrifice his son as he was commanded. This act of Prophet Ibrāhīm (‘a) shows the spirit of his obedience

In essence, the philosophy of religious legislation is to enhance the spirit of unconditional submission to God’s Will by servitude and worship

Of course, we know that the laws of Islam ensure the welfare of individuals and society, but our motive in obeying the commands of God must not be individual or

social interests. Instead, we must worship God with the motive of serving Him [‘ubūdiyyah]. We worship Him because He is the Master [mawlā] and we are His servants. It is evidently clear that the All-wise Master does not command anything .silly. But our motive should not be to ensure personal or social interests

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Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said: “Islam means submission.” [Al-Islām wa huwa’t-taslīm]. Biḥār – ۱
al-Anwār, vol. ۶۸, p. ۳۰۹, section ۳۵, ḥadīth ۱

In most cases, many religious laws and decrees are ordained with the purpose of strengthening our spirit of servitude. Most of the Ḥajj ritual and acts constitute such laws; for example, stationing in certain places at specific periods of time; avoidance of perfume; cutting of hair and the like; circumambulating the Ka‘bah [ṭawāf]; brisk walking or jogging [sa‘y] between the mounts of Ṣafā and Marwah in a certain manner at specific times; and other acts. According to a preacher, such acts serve as (a sort of “training for servitude”.)

By observing the conditions and holding the obligatory ceremonies and rituals, one who goes to Mecca to perform Ḥajj is actually saying, “O God! Since you have commanded me, I am going to Ḥajj. According to your commandments, I stand, run, (cut my hair, and apply no perfume.”)

In performing the Islamic devotional and religious acts, it has been emphasized that the people must obey the commandments of God and the spirit of obedience must be enhanced in man. Instead of entertaining self-worship and false pretexts in his mind, he must think of obeying the commands of God

So, we must not look for the reasons and wisdom behind all the laws and decrees of Islam. According to the Islamic law, by referring to the Book and the Sunnah, we must act upon whatever is commanded therein, and not try to find a reason. We must examine the source of reference of religious decrees and act upon them after their authenticity is proved

Of course, the pioneers of religion have stated the wisdom behind religious laws in many cases but it does not suggest that whenever we do not know the wisdom behind a religious decree, we will not accept it or cast doubt upon it. Religious obligations must be observed unconditionally exactly in the way they are ordained. We must accept anything whose wisdom is explained by the pioneers in religion or proved by science and experiment, and also not reject anything whose wisdom is not explained by the pioneers of religion or proved by science and experiment. However, our knowledge must be improved so as to better understand the positive and negative points of the religious laws

.(It alludes to the late Ḥājj Shaykh ‘Alī Akbar Turbatī (may his soul be sanctified – –\ It is worth-mentioning that while in the state of iḥrām, certain things are – –٢ prohibited for the pilgrim; for example, applying perfume, using a mirror, staying under a shade, removing hair from the body, etc. One of the rituals of Ḥajj and ‘Umrah [optional pilgrimage] is ḥalq or taqṣīr which means shaving of head or trimming of hair and cutting nails. The two must not be confused. Ḥalq or taqṣīr is performed at a specific stage of Ḥajj and by doing so, the pilgrim is no longer in the .state of iḥrām

Therefore, reading of the Qur'an, performance of the ritual prayers and recital of transmitted supplications must be done in exactly the same way as ordained. The movements and pauses in prayer must be observed in the same manner and order. It cannot be asserted that it is better if we perform the dawn [ṣubḥ or fajr] prayer after sunrise as we are more mirthful then, and things like that. These statements are repugnant to the spirit of obedience and a kind of interference in God's work. Inside the prison cells of the Shāh's regime, there were pseudo-intellectuals who spent hours reading the Qur'an or long sūrahs of the Qur'an such as the Sūrat al-Baqarah (which consists of ٢٨٦ verses) in ritual prayers but they used to perform the dawn prayer after its ordained time and did not worry about it. Tresspassing the limits of .obedience [ta'abbud] ends up in such things

Sometimes, some of them would talk about the issue of discipline. They used to say: "Every person must be well-disciplined and perform every prayer at its appointed time. For example, he must perform the dawn prayer at exactly six

١٠'clock in the morning and the noon [ẓuhr] prayer at exactly ١٢ o'clock noon

It is clear, however, that because of the changing religious [shar'ī] times for every ritual prayer, the times for prayers cannot be organized in that way because sometimes, the religious noontime is ١٢ o'clock while at other times it is a few minutes before or after that. If, in the name of discipline and order, we decide to perform our prayers before or after their religiously appointed times, it is equivalent to .disobedience

Even if performance of religious acts in exactly the way they are ordained has no outward benefit, it, at least, enhances the spirit of obedience in man. This reason alone is enough for man, and the greatest benefit of performing religious acts. Even in cases where the decree of God is outwardly harmful to a person or society, the embedded spirit of obedience compensates for it. This is the spirit of protecting the religion, its traditions and laws. One who is committed to observing religious obligations will never allow the divine law to be violated. For example, when socialist or capitalist economy is suggested instead of the Islamic economy, even if he thinks

that it is outwardly more beneficial to society the obedient faithful person will do
.whatever God has ordered him

After trespassing the limits of obedience and the sanctity of divine laws, critics will say
that the social laws of Islam are meant for a particular period of time in the past and
now we have a better code of laws. The ordainment

of khums⁽¹⁾ and zakāt⁽²⁾ accordingly was meant to lessen the class gaps, but nowadays the issue of “public equality” is raised while private ownership has been undermined. As such, khums and zakāt are no more applicable

Many of those who raise these issues are outwardly not against Islam. Instead, they imagine that such laws of Islam were meant for ۱۴ centuries ago. Today, man can formulate laws for himself as the human intellect has developed and is no longer in need of following revealed instructions

Thus, the objection based on the benefit of using non-Arabic languages in supplications on the ground of not understanding Arabic, finally ends up in treating the revelation and heavenly laws as antiquated. The religion is revealed by God and has given none of His servants the right to interfere in it

(إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ)

“Judgment belongs only to Allah.”^(۳)

(وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ)

Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down—it is they who are the “faithless.”^(۴)

The Sabbathians who were among the Israelites were living by the seaside and their main occupation was fishing. A commandment from God was revealed for them not to go fishing on Saturdays and devote it only to the

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Khums: literally means one-fifth. According to the Shī‘ah school of jurisprudence – ۱ [fiqh], this one-fifth tax is obligatorily levied on every adult Muslim who is financially secure and has surplus in his income out of annual savings, net commercial profits, and all movable and immovable properties which are not commensurable with the needs and social standing of the person. Khums is divided into two equal parts: the Share of the Imām [sahm al-Imām] and the Share of the Sayyids/Sādāt (descendants

of the Prophet (ﷺ) [sahm al-Sādāt]. Accordingly, the Share of the Imām is to be paid to the living Imām, and in the period of occultation [‘aṣr al-ghaybah], to the most learned living mujtahid who is the giver’s marja‘ al-taqlīd [source of emulation]. The other half of the khums, the Share of the Sayyids/Sādāt, is to be given to needy pious Sayyids who lack the resources for one’s year respectable living in consonance with their various statuses. For more information, see Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Khums: An Islamic Tax* (Toronto: Islamic Education and Information Center, ۱۹۹۲), <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html>. [Trans

Zakāt: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on the purposes – –۲
[specified in Sūrat al-Tawbah (or, Barā’ah) ۹:۶۰. [Trans
.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۵۷ – –۳
.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ۵:۴۴ – –۴

worship of God. God wished to test them. Fish used to increase on Saturdays as compared to the rest of the week. In a bid to catch more fish and not inflict harm to their economy, they invented crafty methods through which the fish got trapped. They made ponds near the seashore. On Saturdays they would connect these ponds to the sea so that the fish would rush towards them, and then close the connections. The following day, they would catch the fish stranded in the ponds. Outwardly, there was nothing wrong with this practice and it had no conflict with the religious law for they were forbidden to catch fish on the Sabbath and not to fill ponds with fish. It was a trick to circumvent the religious injunctions as our tricks to circumvent God's decrees with our false justifications for the practice of usury [ribā']. Most probably, if we were with them, we would have accepted the same practice, but because of this act of violation God transformed those people into apes and annihilated them shortly afterwards.

This is neither fiction nor part of the distorted [taḥrīf] parts of the Torah [tawrāt] and (the Evangel [injīl]), but mentioned in the Qur'an. (۱)

Those who are God-wary must take lessons from these stories. They must not play with the religion of God and His laws and practice "religious fraud". The religion is that which God has commanded and its laws are exactly those mentioned by the Apostle (ﷺ) and the Imāms (a

Approaching religious laws with fraud will invite calamities to descend upon us. Playing with the religion of God will lead to the annihilation of the players. In any case, it is necessary to perform the prayers, read the Qur'an and make supplications. Praying in Arabic is obligatory [wājib] but reading the Qur'an and making supplications in Arabic are recommended [mustaḥabb]. Again, in spite of the great difference between the supplication whose meaning is understood and whose meaning is not understood by the supplicant, it cannot be asserted that the supplication or reading of the Qur'an by one who cannot understand what he is reciting is useless. Even if it has no benefit except the strengthening of the spirit of obedience to God, it is better than all acts of one who understands their meanings but introduces innovation in religion [bid'ah]. A small act of obedience has preference over hundreds of years of self-formulated acts

.of devotion. The former is servitude to God while the latter is self-worship

So are the transmitted supplications. They contain the basis of enhancing the spirit of obedience in addition to other benefits they might have. Can it be

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.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۶۵-۶۶; Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۱۶۶ – ۱

said that an illiterate person who sits facing the qiblah(۱) and recites the Du‘ā’ Kumayl(۲) while in a state of ablution [wuḍū] pays no attention to God? Does he not want to be encompassed by the noble content of supplication which Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) asked from God? So, remembrance and attention to God is among the benefits of .reading the Qur’an and supplicating in Arabic, which is also very valuable

Reading of the Qur’an by the faithful during the month of Ramaḍān preserves the religion. Similarly, mourning for the Doyen of the Martyrs and other Imāms (‘a) has so far ensured the survival of Islam and Shī‘ism. The way it is performed in some cases is not ideal but a sublime spirit is embedded in them—submission to God, honoring the religion and awliyā’ of religion, etc. Of course, we must also strive to improve the way mourning ceremonies are conducted while, at the same time, preserve the spirit of obedience to God. However, until the more ideal way is not yet achieved, these .traditions must be preserved

Evidently, devotional acts cannot be changed, but things, like mourning ceremonies, which are accidental [‘araḍī] (and not essential [jawharī]), they can be held in better ways. In such cases, the best way is that which emanates from the pure nature of human beings and affirms the religious sentiments of people without being taught by .outsiders to do so

The notion that it is better when mourning ceremonies are held in an organized and peaceful manner like the way demonstrations are held in Western countries is wrong, simply because religious demonstrations must stem from religious enthusiasm, and calmness is incompatible with religious enthusiasm. This can be the case with respect to customs, but those practices whose form and manner of performance have been defined by religion should not be changed in the least. They must be done the way .God has commanded even if we imagine that there is a better way of doing the same

It is reported in a tradition that Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) was teaching someone a supplication, saying to him: “Say, ‘O Transformer of hearts! Make my heart

Qiblah: the direction which the Muslims face at times of prayers and other acts, – –\

[.which is the Ka‘bah in Mecca. [Trans

Du‘ā’ Kumayl [Supplication of Kumayl]: The supplication taught by Imām ‘Alī (‘a) to – –\

one of his loyal companions and staunch supporters of Islam, Kumayl ibn Ziyād. Usually offered on every night preceding Friday [Laylat’ul-Jum‘ah] individually or in congregation after ‘Ishā’ prayers, this supplication envisages divine teachings and solid foundations of religion in order to enable everyone to follow the right path to become a worthy Muslim. The Arabic text, English translation and commentary of this

[.famous supplication are available online at <http://www.al-islam.org/kumayl>. [Trans

steadfast in Your religion'. He said: 'O Transformer of hearts and the All-seeing! Make my heart steadfast in Your religion.' The Imām (‘a) said: 'Recite it as I am teaching you.' The person asked: 'Is God not All-seeing as well?' The Imām replied: 'Yes, He is, but you have to recite it as I have told you'."(1)

If a person changes what an infallible Imām (‘a) tells him or what religion has enjoined, it means he wants to say, "I understand things better than the Imām or the sacred religion." This mentality originates from egoism and arrogance, and is repugnant to worship and servitude. Humility, meekness, helplessness, :submissiveness are requisites of worship. Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) said

Satan said to God: 'O Lord! I swear by Your Might that if You would excuse me from "prostrating before Ādam (Adam), in exchange for it I will worship You in such a way that no one in the world will exceed me.' God said: 'Verily, I want you to obey what I (ask of you'."(2)

If we want to obey God as we wish, it is actually obeying the dictates of our hearts and not obedience to God. In sum, we have to follow exactly what has been ordained by the religion. We must be obedient in obligatory [wājib] and recommended [mustaḥabb] matters and not exceed their limits in the least. Exceeding the limits of .religion is tantamount to the annihilation of religion

This is not in conflict with our endeavor to know the rationality behind religious laws. Many of them have been mentioned in traditions and even the Qur'an. Some may also .possibly be proven through science and experience. This in itself is desirable

Likewise, we must bear in mind that even if one of the rationalities behind religious laws becomes known to us through a saying of the Apostle (ᶜ) or an infallible Imām (‘a) or through science and experience, it must not be imagined to be the totality of the religious laws' rationalities. There might be other rationalities which are unknown .to us

Therefore, the ritual prayers must be performed and the Qur'an and supplications be read or recited in exactly the same way they are ordained by religion. At the same

time, we must strive more to understand their meanings and have the presence of the heart, and bear in mind that the value of the spirit of obedience is far greater than .our own innovated forms of worship

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.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۵۲, p. ۱۴۸, section ۲۲, ḥadīth ۳ – –۱

.Ibid., vol. ۲, p. ۲۶۲, section ۳۲, ḥadīth ۵ – –۲

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Part Two: Commentary on Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ

Point

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اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَبِيحُ الشَّاءَ بِحَمْدِكَ، وَأَنْتَ مُسَيِّدٌ لِلصَّوَابِ بِمَنِّكَ، وَأَيَّقَنْتُ أَنَّكَ أَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْعَفْوِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ، وَأَشَدُّ الْمُعَاقِبِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ النَّكَالِ وَالنَّقِمَةِ، وَأَعْظَمُ الْمُتَجَبَّرِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْكِبْرِيَاءِ وَالْعَظَمَةِ، اللّٰهُمَّ أذْنَتْ لِي فِي دُعَائِكَ وَمَسْأَلَتِكَ فَاسْمَعْ يَا سَمِيعُ مِدْحَتِي، وَأَجِبْ يَا رَحِيمُ دَعْوَتِي، وَأَقِلْ يَا غَفُورٌ عَثْرَتِي.

O Allah! I begin the ‘song of glorification’ with Your praise: You, give truth and “salvation freely from Your bounties. I know for certain that You are the Most Merciful in disposing forgiveness and mercy, (but) very severe in punishing and chastising the wrongdoers, the Omnipotent in the domain of absolute power and might. O Allah! You have given me permission to invoke You and beseech You, so listen, O Hearer of my words of praise, and favorably reply to my supplication, and minimize my falling into ”.misery, O Oft-forgiving

Ramadān as a golden opportunity

Life is passing by swiftly and man is heedless of what capital he accumulates. When he sometimes succeeds in reminiscing his past, he realises that he has spent a lot of .energy and strove hard, but acquired nothing substantial

Throughout the year, we are always looking for an opportunity to think about life, its beginning and end and choose the way that leads to everlasting life. Yet, we rarely find that opportunity. Perhaps the best opportunity to be spent for such a purpose is the blessed month of Ramadān. Once the month of Ramadān arrives, we always pledge to engage more in worship than usual, to abandon the world and its glitters to some extent, to turn to God, and to think who we are, where we have come from, .where we are heading for, and what we must do in this transient abode

Finally, our waiting comes to an end and the month of Ramadān arrives, but Satan strives hard that man should not make use of this blessed period and acquire divine blessings. Satan’s open and hidden hands are at work everywhere so as to corrupt man’s intention with worldly and carnal desires, associate his supplications, litanies and worship with illness and

sluggishness, and deprive him of his desirable spiritual state. In this conflict or struggle between the divine and satanic forces, man has to ask for success [tawfiq] from God, take advantage of every opportunity, and not set aside supplications and other forms of worship for other times. He must strive hard to take a positive step towards his perfection and be closer to God. One of the acts which have highly been recommended for the blessed month of Ramaḍān is supplication and litany. Ramaḍān .and supplication are inextricably interwoven with each other

How to make the most of Ramaḍān

To make the most of this month, initially we must implore God to grant us the opportunity to engage in supplication. Of course, we must also try our best to acquire the conditions necessary to engage in supplication, by lessening our normal daily activities and give more time to supplication and worship. We must be heedful of our sleeping and eating activities. Our sleeping and eating should not make us sluggish in our worship. We must organize our eating activity in such a manner that we can fast and perform our duties and devotion properly. Consuming the necessary amount of food is different from overeating. We must also organize our sleeping time in such a way that we feel enthusiastic at the time of worship, and not continue the daily activities as before and expect to have the energy and enthusiasm to perform night .vigils and devotional acts

Attention to supplication

Before reciting the supplication, it is but proper to think for a while who we are, whom we want to face, what supplication is, etc. It is indeed a sublime station for man to be able to intimately talk with His Creator! It is necessary for us to have a general idea of what we are reciting and not merely read Arabic sentences without understanding them. The supplications transmitted from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) contain lofty and sublime subjects, such that studying them is valuable. Therefore, before reciting the supplications, especially those mentioned for the month of Ramaḍān, those who do not know Arabic are supposed to read their translation, know their contents and thus .benefit from it

Different people benefit from supplications in diverse ways which are beyond our comprehension. Supplicating by a mere utterance of words with utmost observance of proper Arabic pronunciation is so different from supplicating with a presence of heart, and it is beyond explanation. In many cases, two persons are supplicating by observing the outward etiquettes of supplication such as supplicating in a state of ablution, sitting while facing the qiblah with great humility, but the benefits they acquire from

supplicating might be entirely different. To benefit from supplication depends on man's spiritual state and the attention of his heart towards God, the Exalted and His Attributes, especially those mentioned in the supplication

Ramadhān and iftitāh

Many supplications for the month of Ramaḍān have been recorded. In Mafātīḥ al-Jinān(1) alone which is a compendium of supplications transmitted from the Infallibles (‘a), there are so many supplications that perhaps we would not be able to read all of them even once in our lives, let alone other supplications recorded in treatises on supplication like Al-Iqbāl of Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs and other books of supplication. For example, there are transmitted long supplications to be read in the optional prayers [nawāfil] between the noon [zuhr] and afternoon [‘aṣr] prayers in the month of Ramaḍān. We can hardly perform the optional prayers, let alone reading the supplications associated with them. Sometimes, even if we have the opportunity to recite these supplications, the spirit of supplication, i.e. the presence of the heart which we are supposed to have at the time of supplication is absent

One of the most appropriate and substantial transmitted supplications supposed to (be read during the nights of Ramaḍān is the Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāh.(2)

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Mafātīḥ al-Jinān [Keys to the Gardens of Paradise]: a standard manual of Shī‘ī – ١ devotion containing supplications and prayers of the infallible Imāms (‘a) as well as formulae for recitation at particular times or during visits to the shrines of the Imāms (‘a), compiled from Biḥār al-Anwār [Oceans of Lights] and other sources by Shaykh [‘Abbās al-Qummī, a scholar of vast learning who died in Najaf in ١٩٤٠. [Trans Allāmah Majlisī thus writes in Zād al-Ma‘ād: “Based on an authentic chain of – ٢ transmission, it is reported that Ḥaḍrat Ṣāhib al-Amr (‘atfs) instructed his Shī‘ah to recite this supplication (Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāh) every night during the month of Ramaḍān for every supplication recited in the said month is recorded by angels who pray for forgiveness of the sins of the supplicant.” The late Ḥāj Shaykh ‘Abbās Qummī has also

mentioned it in Hadiyyat al-Zā'irīn. While stating the chain of transmission of the supplications for the month of Ramaḍān, Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs in Al-Iqbāl mentioned the famous chain of transmission of this supplication by quoting Naṣr al-Sukūnī who said: "I asked Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Uthmān al-Baghdādī (may Allah have mercy on him) to teach me the supplications of the month of Ramaḍān which Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him), one of the four special deputies [nawwāb] of the Imām of the Time (‘atfs), used to recite. He then showed me a red-covered notebook from which I copied Dū‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ which was recommended for recitation every night of the month of Ramaḍān. It was also stated: "Verily, angels listen to this supplication and ask for forgiveness of the sins of its
".reciter

This supplication teaches the supplicant how to behave and what to be attentive to at
.the time of supplication

Praising God as the beginning of supplication

:This noble supplication begins with the praise of God

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَفْتِيحُ الشَّانَ بِحَمْدِكَ.

”O Allah! I begin the ‘song of glorification’ with Your praise“

In this turbulent world, many impediments prevent man from paying attention to God. The way to man’s happiness lies in servitude and worship of God, yet it is lamentable that most people are unaware of this reality. They pay attention to everything, except
.God and whatever guarantees their true perfection and felicity

With the arrival of Ramaḍān, some impediments are removed and the necessary ground for supplication and worship are provided. In this spring of supplication and worship, those who are eager to remember their Beloved, sing His praise, implore and beseech Him. How should we begin our supplication? The best statement with which one can begin his supplication is by praising God: “O God, to whom all things belong! Whatever a person has is given by You. Whatever stage of perfection a person attains is granted by You. An opportunity [tawfiq] to supplicate must also be bestowed by You. O God! Give us the opportunity to supplicate. So many of Your servants throughout the world are negligent of Your remembrance! O Lord! Had You not held our hands, we would have been amongst the negligent. Whatever exists emanates
”.from Your blessings

(بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

“(All good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things.)”

So, supplication must begin by praising and extolling God who has granted us the
.opportunity to pay attention to Him

Choosing the correct path and divine approval

وَأَنْتَ مُسَدِّدٌ لِلصَّوَابِ بِمَنْكَ.

”You, give truth and salvation freely from Your Bounties“

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.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:٢٦ – ١

If ever a person succeeds in treading the path of truth and salvation, it is actually a blessing bestowed by God, who has helped him along this way. This part of the supplication points to the fact that although man has been created free to choose the path of goodness or evil, God will help him if he chooses the right path. It is narrated in a ḥadīth qudsī, thus

مَنْ تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ شِبْرًا تَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ ذِرَاعًا.

Whoever gets closer to Me by a span [wajab], I will get closer to him by a cubit“
”.[[dharā

.It is an additional grace from God to help whoever chooses His path

God’s mercy and wrath a blessing in disguise

If God is the source of all good and perfection and nothing comes from Him but good and beauty, why are some calamities, difficulties and even eternal punishments inflicted upon some of His servants

The truth of the matter is that we assess the Acts of God according to our limited standards or criteria, expecting God to behave towards us according to our thinking, whereas our intellect and knowledge are limited and deficient

(وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا)

“(And you have not been given of the knowledge except a few [of you].”[\(1\)](#)

All Acts of God are anchored in wisdom and the best order of being, and we are unaware of their nature and mechanism. In places where God must be kind and compassionate to His servants, He is so kind and compassionate that its extent is beyond our comprehension. Yet, there are also times when there is no room for kindness and compassion. Instead, His Might, Power and Greatness are manifested. In such cases, chastisements and wrath are witnessed and the expression of His Might toward those who deserve His punishment is perfected. So, the supplication continues thus

وَأَيَقْنَتْ أَنَّكَ أَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْعَفْوِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ، وَأَشَدُّ الْمُعَاقِبِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ النَّكَالِ وَالنَّيْمَةِ، وَأَعْظَمُ الْمُتَحَبِّرِينَ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْكِبْرِيَاءِ وَالْعَظَمَةِ، أَلَّا هُمْ أَذْنَتْ لِي فِي دُعَائِكَ وَمَسْأَلَتِكَ فَاسْمَعْ يَا سَمِيعُ مِدْحَتِي، وَأَجِبْ يَا رَحِيمُ دَعْوَتِي، وَأَقِلْ يَا غَفُورُ عَثْرَتِي.

I know for certain that You are the Most Merciful in disposing forgiveness and mercy, “
(but) very severe in punishing and

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١ - ٨٥: ١٧ (Sūrat al-Isrā' (or Banī Isrā'īl)

chastising the wrongdoers; the Omnipotent in the domain of absolute power and
".might

The need for fear and hope

The realization that he is a helpless servant who has nothing of his own before God and His Might, brings about the happiness of man. All good belongs to Allah. Every difficulty and misery he is in is a product of his own making. He must understand that he has chosen the wrong himself, and it is actually a declaration of war against God who will subject him to hardship. Man must always stand between fear [khawf] and hope [rajā'] and think that in spite of engaging much in the worship of God, it is possible that because of a wrongdoing, he will succumb to the severest wrath of God and leave this world in ignominy, or notwithstanding many sins he has committed, .God will save him and grant him a pleasant fate

To feel safe from the divine wrath is itself one of the cardinal sins. Even if a person spends his entire life in worship, he must not be contented with it, become arrogant and be certain of the fruit of his labor. To be arrogant and self-conceited is a major sin in the sight of God, the Exalted. Instead, one must always have fear, for if God leaves .him alone for just a moment, he will fall into the lowest ebb

As such, those who are nearer to God [muqarrabīn] like the apostles and awliyā' are more fearful of Allah. They comprehend His Might more, and notwithstanding the station He has granted them, they are afraid lest they should become arrogant for .even a moment

Meanwhile, God has considered hopelessness of His mercy as one of the gravest sins. No matter how sinful a person becomes, he must not be hopeless of divine mercy. Divine mercy is so all-encompassing that if a person really repents and turns to God, he will be forgiven. When His servant expresses his utmost humility before Him and his state of fear [khawf] and hope [rajā'] is at its peak, he has actually taken a step :towards perfection

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ عِبَادِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَّا [و] فِي قَلْبِهِ نُورَانِ: نُورٌ خَافِيهِ نُورٌ رَجَاءٍ، لَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا وَلَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا.

There is no believer who does not have two lights in his heart: the light of fear and“
the light of hope. Were one of these to be measured

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it would not exceed the other, and were the other one to be measured, it would not
(exceed this one.” (1)

The ability to worship as a favor of God

After mentioning the Divine Attributes and praising God for the opportunities He has
granted man, the supplication continues, thus

اللّٰهُمَّ اذْنْتَ لِي فِي دُعَائِكَ وَمَسْأَلَتِكَ.

”O Allah! You have given me permission to invoke You and beseech You“

The point highlighted in this part of the supplication is so elegant, yet we are usually negligent of it. We imagine that by our supplications and litanies, we have done a great thing for which God is indebted to us. In this part of the supplication, however, the Imām (a) said: “O God! What a great blessing You bestowed on me by permitting me to knock at Your Door to supplicate and express my needs.” Perhaps, we are unaware of God’s enormous grace of allowing us to talk to Him, considering the innumerable sins we have committed throughout our life. As such, Imām al-Sajjād (a) :said to God

وَمِنْ اَعْظَمِ النُّعْمِ عَلَيْنَا جَرِيَانُ ذِكْرِكَ عَلَيَّ اَلْسِنَتِنَا، وَاذْنُكَ لَنَا بِدُعَائِكَ، وَتَنْزِيهِكَ وَتَسْبِيحِكَ.

Among Your greatest favors to us is the recurrence of Your remembrance across our “
tongues, and Your permission to supplicate to You, declare You exalted, and call You
(holy!” (2)

To clarify this subtle point—although it must be acknowledged that the truth of the matter cannot be perfectly conveyed in this manner—let us take for example a person who has not failed in the least in loving and helping a friend. Now, his friend not only refuses to respond with gratitude, but opposes and becomes hostile to him. If his friend behaves in such a manner, it is possible that he will be tolerated many times, but finally human patience will end and he will abandon his friend. Yet, notwithstanding all the blessings God endowed us with, if the same servant goes against the will of God, not only will He not abandon him but will also give him the

.opportunity to worship and supplicate to Him

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Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٧٠, p. ٣٥٢, ḥadīth ١. This tradition is also recorded in Al-Kulaynī, – –١
Al-Kāfī, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghifārī, ٢th edition, Dār Mus‘ab Dār at-Ta‘āruf, Beirut, ١٤٠١ AH,
[vol. ٤٧, ḥadīth ١. [Trans
Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – –٢
.”Rememberers

His servant's sin and the perpetuity of God's grace

After mentioning God's grace of permission to be in His Presence, the penitent servant of God asks for forgiveness and enumerates the Divine Attributes and states his requests

فَاسْمَعْ يَا سَمِيعَ مَدْحَتِي، وَأَجِبْ يَا رَحِيمَ دَعْوَتِي، وَأَقِلْ يَا غَفُورَ عَثْرَتِي.

So listen, O Hearer of my words of praise, and favorably reply to my supplication, and“ minimize my falling into misery, O Oft-forgiving

All his bodily limbs—his eyes, ears and other limbs, plus his heart—commit offences against God. In spite of all the blessings God has endowed, he wages war against Him, commits sins in His presence. Now, this servant wants to reconcile with God and expresses his requests, hoping that they will be granted! Such expectation of man from God is inconsistent with his attitude and sins. God is supposed to abandon such a servant and forget him. But not only does God not abandon him but also declines to reject him. Instead, God calls on him to get closer. It is recorded in a ḥadīth qudsī, thus

لَوْ عَلِمَ الْمُدْبِرُونَ عَنِّي كَيْفَ إِشْتِيَاقِي بِهِمْ لَمَاتُوا شَوْقًا.

Had the wretched known how fond I am of them, they would die out of fondness (of“ Me).

Yes, if man reflects seriously, he will realize that it is the greatest grace of God to permit His sinful servant to supplicate to Him and grant his requests

Second Discourse The Essence of Supplication

Point

فَكَمْ يَا إِلَهِي مِنْ كُرْبِهِ قَدْ فَرَّجْتَهَا وَهُمُومٍ قَدْ كَشَفْتَهَا، وَعَشْرُهُ قَدْ أَقَلْتَهَا، وَرَحْمَهُ قَدْ نَشَرْتَهَا، وَحَلَقَهُ بَلَاءٍ قَدْ فَكَّكْتَهَا.

O my Allah many a trouble You have removed, many a sorrow You have dispelled, “many a misery You have mitigated, and at all times Your Mercy was encompassing” .and You cut the tightening cords of the misfortunes

Recounting the blessings of God

After mentioning the innumerable blessings given by God and the permission to talk to Him, Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ enumerates the various blessings of God which man is usually negligent of

One of the blessings man is usually negligent of is the blessing of repelling and dispelling calamities and misfortunes—whether man was afflicted with them and then God relieved him of them, or dispelled them beforehand

Unless man is beset with problems and difficulties, he will not realize the importance of the blessings God has bestowed on him. All of us, more or less, have experienced troubles and predicaments in our life and been relieved of them sooner or later. Yet, we easily forget them without pondering or reflecting on them. Reflecting on the circumstances surrounding those events awakens man and strengthens his relationship with his Creator

Let us assume that a person or one of the members of his family is suffering from a serious illness and cannot afford to consult a doctor and follow his prescription but if he does not immediately undergo medical treatment, his life will be in danger. In such a situation, he resorts to any means available to relieve him and always fails. In such a time when he has no access to anything or any way out and is about to lose hope, he is suddenly provided with means that totally solve his problem

Everyone more or less experiences such events in his life. However, we usually consider them ‘accidental’ and ‘coincidental’, and not God’s scheme. When our

problems are solved, we do not realize that Divine grace has included us. Even if we attribute them to God, it is only lip service

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because we do not actually believe that it was His grace that encompassed us and
solved our problems

In the system of creation, whatever happens—positive or negative—essentially happens by the will of God. Nothing will ever happen except by His leave. If a person receives a blessing, it is His will and permission. Also, if a calamity is removed from him, it is by God’s command. He has provided the natural and supernatural means and conditions for an act, some of which we know while of others we do not. But if our
problems are solved in an unexpected way, we call it ‘chance

It is God who constantly nourishes man either through natural means such as trade, business and the like, or supernatural means such as the heavenly table [al-
(mā’idah)]

and the like. In any case, sustenance comes from Him and He is the Sustainer. Repelling and dispelling of difficulties also lie in His hand. Illness comes from Him; so does the cure, through medical treatment and intake of medicine, or other ways. The
:Glorious Qur’an quotes Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (‘a) saying

(الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ □ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ □ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ □ وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ)

It is God) who created me, and it is He who guides me, and provides me with food)“
and drink, and when I get sick, it is He who cures me; who will make me die, then He
(will bring me to life.”

It is necessary to ponder on events that have not happened to us but happened to others. If we go out in the morning and return home safely at night, it is God’s will to remove hundreds of calamities and difficulties along our way. Just as He has endowed us with eyes, He has also repelled hundreds of threats to our eyes to maintain our sight. Just as He has given us physical bodies, He has also deterred hundreds of
dangers to keep us healthy

Most important of all are the spiritual blessings of God. He has given us the blessing of faith and intellect. Many people leave their homes in the morning having faith but

return back in the evening with weak or no faith at all. They fast during Ramaḍān this year but cannot do so next year. Many people had been on the straight path at the beginning but gone astray after sometime and succumbed to deviant and eclectic ?schools and currents. Don't we all know of people who have lost their way

p: ٧٨

[.See Sūrat al-Mā'idah ٥:١١٢-١١٥. [Trans -- ١
.Sūrat al-Shu'arā' ٢٦:٧٨-٨١ -- ٢

Perpetuity of blessings lies in the hand of God

The blessings of guidance, knowledge of God, His Apostle (ﷺ) and the infallible Imāms (‘a) also come from God. Preserving them also lies in His hand. Our prayer, “Guide us (on the straight path.” (1)

is a request for the perpetuity and continuity of the blessing of guidance. By the will of Allah, we have identified the straight path and follow it, but without the help of God there is no guarantee that we will continue treading this path. So, we must always ask .God to guide us and keep us on the straight path

Many people are on the straight path but given to sins. Initially, they commit only one sin, then two or three and gradually get accustomed to sinful acts and finally deviate from the path. It is only God who keeps man (on the straight path) and keeps him away from sins. Sometimes, a person decides to commit a sin, strives to commit it and even makes the necessary preparation for it, but God out of His mercy prevents His servants from committing it. All these cases are among the blessings and grace of God. If man is grateful for these blessings, God will maintain them for him and not leave him alone. Therefore, if the ground for the commission of sins is open, yet we do not commit them, we must not consider God to be indebted to us but we must instead .be grateful and indebted to Him for keeping us away from them

Thus, during supplication it is necessary for us to be mindful of Whom we are facing— He who engulfs us with His spiritual and material blessings every moment. We have been given thousands of opportunities to make use of the blessings in the right way and if we did not, at least we did not commit any sin. Man, however, is ungrateful and .overlooks all these blessings

If at the time of difficulty a friend helps us, we never forget him and are always thankful to him, although his extended help in solving our problem is actually part of God’s scheme, and he only serves as God’s instrument. Yet, we tend to forget the .innumerable blessings of God and we do not thank Him even verbally

The need to reflect on the blessings of God

Given the innumerable blessings of God, the Exalted, is it not appropriate to think about these blessings for a few minutes everyday? We have nothing to offer Him in exchange for these blessings. At least we can appreciate and acknowledge their being bestowed by God. So, in this part of the supplication the supplicant embarks on :mentioning some of these blessings

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فَكَمْ يَا إِلَهِي مِنْ كُرْبِهِ قَدْ فَرَّجْتَهَا.

”O Allah, many a trouble You have removed“

وَهُمْومٌ قَدْ كَشَفْتَهَا.

”Many a sorrow You have dispelled“

وَعَثْرَهُ قَدْ أَقْلَيْتَهَا، وَرَحْمَهُ قَدْ نَشَرْتَهَا، وَحَلْقَهُ بِلَاءٍ قَدْ فَكَّكْتَهَا.

Many a misery You have mitigated, and at all times Your Mercy encompassed us, and “

”You cut the tightening cords of misfortunes

If a person reflects on the supplication up to this point and on the troubles and difficulties he experienced and how God relieved him, he will readily supplicate and .recite these parts of the supplication

Once a person acknowledges all blessings as coming from God, his heart will incline to God and he will become eager to have intimacy with Him. But if a person does not recognize God as the origin of these blessings, and treats God as a being who hinders his indulgence in licentiousness and merrymaking by threatening him with hellfire, how can he talk to such a God? Given the fact that he does not appreciate the blessings God has given him that could nurture the love of God in his heart, how can ?he become intimate with God

Fear of punishment as a divine blessing .1

Fear of God is also one of the divine blessings, but our ignorance hinders us from understanding this blessing. When God threatens us and shows us some dangers, He actually shows us the ill effects of wicked acts—effects which will impinge on us before anybody else. These requitals and undesirable events which are the result of wicked acts serve as a warning so that we avoid engaging in evil works. It is similar to the case of a father who scares his small child not to play with fire. His warning is not meant to annoy his child but to prevent an undesirable event from happening.

.Therefore, to warn in this context is a kind of grace

Religious duties as divine blessings .۲

The institution of obligations and prohibitions is nothing but a means to repel harm from man. Thus, divine duties are all part of His grace. For example, by enduring hunger and thirst by fasting, which may seem difficult to us, is one of the greatest graces of God. It has many benefits which contribute to our eternal felicity. Had God only mentioned its benefits and utilities, it would not ensure our desire to earn those benefits. As such, He

has obliged us to fast so that we definitely earn its benefits and merits and be recipients of Divine mercy and spiritual virtues and become felicitous. So are other .obligations and prohibitions all blessings

فَمَا أَنْبَأَ عَنِّي عَتَبْتُ بِجَهْلِي عَلَيْكَ، وَلَعَلَّ الَّذِي أَنْبَأَ عَنِّي هُوَ خَيْرٌ لِي لِعِلْمِكَ بِعَاقِبَةِ الْأُمُورِ، فَلَمْ أَرَ مَوْلَاً كَرِيماً أَصْبَرَ عَلَيَّ عَبْدٌ لَتِيمٍ مِنْكَ عَلَيَّ.

A temporary setback, and I, out of ignorance, begin to despair, although perhaps“ slowing down may be a blessing in disguise, because You alone know [all] the consequences. I know no generous master who is more accommodating of ”.unsatisfied servants, than You are to me

Wisdom behind the delay in the acceptance of supplications

The existence of deficiencies in life should not make a servant of God nurse an ill feeling toward Him for He knows best what is good for His servant. In many instances, the delay in the grant of his requests is good for a person. In some cases, it is even good for him that his supplications in this world are not granted but are reserved for him in the next world. So, there is no ground for us to nurse ill feeling .toward God

Unfortunately, we do not pay attention to the wisdom of God and in reality we do not have strong faith in His Attributes. We do not believe that He is the All-compassionate [al-ra'ūf], the All-merciful [al-rahīm]. We imagine that it is out of His stinginess—God forbid—that He does not grant our requests. Yet, as mentioned earlier, whoever knocks at His Door and implores Him, God, out of His grace, takes his real welfare under consideration and pays attention to his petitions according to His infinite .wisdom

Blank

p: ۸۲

يَا رَبِّ، إِنَّكَ تَدْعُونِي فَأُولَىٰ عَنكَ، وَتَتَحَبَّبُ إِلَيَّ فَاتَبَغَّضُ إِلَيْكَ، وَتَتَوَدَّدُ إِلَيَّ فَلَا أَقْبِلُ مِنْكَ، كَأَنَّ لِي التَّطَوُّلَ عَلَيْكَ، فَلَمْ يَمْنَعَكَ ذَلِكَ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ لِي، وَالْإِحْسَانَ إِلَيَّ، وَالتَّفَضُّلَ عَلَيَّ بِجُودِكَ وَكَرَمِكَ، فَارْحَمْ عَبْدَكَ الْجَاهِلَ وَجِدِّ عَلَيْهِ بِفَضْلِ إِحْسَانِكَ إِنَّكَ جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ.

O Lord! You invite me but I turn away; You offer affection while I respond with “disinterest in You; You love me but I do not respond, thinking You are overreaching me, yet You do not abstain from bestowing favors and blessings on me from Your mercy and generosity; so, have mercy on Your ignorant servant and keep him in good favor. Verily, You are Generous and Kind

Man’s arrogance and indifference to God

In this part of the supplication, the supplicant deals with the status of man vis-à-vis God so that he can know his position in relation to God. On one hand, he must consider God’s grace on him, and on the other, he must realize his meanness and ingratitude to God. So, he says

يَا رَبِّ، إِنَّكَ تَدْعُونِي فَأُولَىٰ عَنكَ.

”O Lord! You invite me but I turn away“

That God has permitted us to talk to Him and supplicate to Him shows His greatest grace and magnanimity to us. Without His permission, we have no merit to talk to Him. He has not only permitted us to supplicate to Him but also calls us, notwithstanding all our failings, and asks us to turn to Him. Yet, in exchange for this magnificent grace of God, what do we do? Instead of accepting this cordial invitation, we turn our backs to Him.

وَتَتَحَبَّبُ إِلَيَّ فَاتَبَغَّضُ إِلَيْكَ.

”You offer affection but I respond with disinterest in You“

We are in need of Him and we must be humble in His presence to win His pleasure,
but on the contrary it is He who shows love and compassion to us while we express
!hostility to Him

وَتَتَوَدَّدُ إِلَيَّ فَلَا أَقْبَلُ مِنْكَ.

”You love me but I do not respond to it“

Has it ever happened that when we express interest and love to a person, yet he does not pay attention to us? Will we not regret expressing interest and love because of his inattention and indifference? Perhaps one’s expression of interest to another involves worldly or sensual motives, but are there such motives in God’s love toward His servants? We erroneously interpret God’s expression of love

كَأَنَّ لِي التَّطَوُّلَ عَلَيْكَ.

”As if You are overreaching me“

Instead of expressing our need to earn His pleasure, we do not care for Him and think that we have a right over Him or that He should be indebted to us for supplicating to Him

What an unworthy pride and arrogance we have in return for His infinite mercy! What do we have which we are proud of? Whenever He calls us, we entertain ourselves with something else. In spite of our bad conduct, the perpetuity of God’s mercy and goodness remains

فَلَمْ يَمْنَعْكَ ذَلِكَ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ لِي، وَالْإِحْسَانِ إِلَيَّ، وَالتَّفَضُّلِ عَلَيَّ بِجُودِكَ وَكَرَمِكَ.

Yet, You do not abstain from bestowing favors and blessings on me out of Your “
”mercy and generosity

فَارْحَمْ عَبْدَكَ الْجَاهِلَ وَجُدْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَضْلِ إِحْسَانِكَ إِنَّكَ جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ.

So have mercy on Your ignorant servant and keep him in good favor. Verily, You are “
”Generous and Kind

The value of getting closer and fervently praying to God

Fervently praying to God and having intimacy with Him has such an effect on the human soul that if a person really establishes connection with God, at the time of

supplication, he cannot give attention to mundane and worldly matters and request them from God. It is true that the grace of God dictates that whenever man calls Him for whatever reason He answers him, but the expanse of God's kindness is one thing while man's high aspiration is another. It does not mean that man should not knock at God's Door for the fulfillment of his worldly needs. Rather, the point is that those who have experienced the sweetness of fervently praying to Him will never exchange it for material motives. In addition, the servant who sees himself lacking all these things must ask for each of his needs from Him although the material means for them are available. It is even appropriate that as soon as he feels

the need for them, he asks God for them and considers all things as means only. But the most important thing is to talk to and beseechingly supplicate to God. This is far more valuable than asking Him for mundane things

One of the ‘ulamā’ said: “It is undesirable for a servant to ask his master to provide his material needs—wholesome food, descent clothing and pleasant abode. The wise servant is he who is always preoccupied with acting upon the order of his master. His master knows the set of rules of mastership as well as the needs of his servant. There is no need for the servant to remind his master of his needs.” Asking for such things is below lofty purpose. The servant must be heedful of his master’s order and execute it, and not think for himself. We must ask God for the opportunity to serve Him. We must ask God for an opportunity to become what is pleasing to Him

The ever–open doors of God’s mercy

What is most important for the servant is to acquire merit to talk to his Master. To privately talk to the Worshipped Being [ma‘būd] is more valuable than anything else. If the servant is important in the sight of his Master, He will allow him to beseech and fervently pray to Him. The Master will also listen to him. Among people, such opportunities and chances rarely occur especially if the master is always busy. He hardly finds time to talk and listen to his servants. Even if the servant is extremely fond of his master and eager to talk to him, he will not find any opportunity

But God is such a Master that notwithstanding His immense and indescribable Might, He still accepts His servants no matter how wicked and ungrateful they are and listens to their supplications. Whenever His servant calls Him, He answers and welcomes him. In ḥadīth qudsī, God said to one of the Israelite prophets: “I am very fond of My servants and wait for them to turn to Me. They have turned their backs and kept aloof from Me. In spite of that, I am waiting for their return

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يُهْتَكُ حِجَابُهُ، وَلَا يُغْلَقُ بَابُهُ، وَلَا يُرَدُّ سَائِلُهُ.

Praise be to Allah! None can disclose anything hidden by Him; none can shut the“ doors kept open by Him; no one who makes a request is sent away disappointed by

”Him

It is only in certain periods that the kindness of a philanthropic person benefits others. Even the rulers known for their justice and magnanimity opened their courts to the public only on certain days of the year. They did not entertain everybody, everyday, every moment and everywhere. Yet, the doors of Divine mercy are always open to those who ask for His grace. He answers whenever you call Him

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:In one of his litanies, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) said

نَامَتِ الْعُيُونُ وَعَلَتِ النُّجُومُ وَأَنْتَ الْمَلِكُ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ غَلَقَتِ الْمُلُوكُ أَبْوَابَهَا وَأَقَامَتِ عَلَيْهَا حُرَّاسَهَا وَبَابُكَ مَفْتُوحٌ لِلسَّائِلِينَ
جِسْمِكَ لِنْتَظُرَ إِلَيْكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

Eyes sleep and stars fall, yet You are the Ever-living and Self-existent King. Kings“ keep their castles’ gates closed and assign guards on them, yet Your door is open to all those who knock. I come to You that You may look at me with Your mercy, O Most [\(Merciful of the merciful!\)”](#)

In some supplications, we read: “O Lord! Now is the time when every lover is alone with his partner, talking intimately. And those who are not lovers, as well as the animals, are sleeping. All doors are closed, yet the doors of Your forgiveness and munificence are wide open. No guard hinders anyone from entering Your court of bounty. Whoever wants to call You calls You and You answer him. Moreover, You Yourself call Your servants and Your invitation is always open: ‘Is there anyone who regrets committing wicked acts and intends to return to Me so that I may admit him?’ What mercy and compassion towards sinners who pay no attention to You and commit evil acts with impunity! Instead of the servant entreatingly and earnestly asking for Your acceptance, it is You who invite Your servant: “Come, come that I may ”.accept you

We must see who our Master is. We must know Him. We must acquire more knowledge about Him. He admits everybody without any discrimination. Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) said

لَا يَشْغَلُهُ شَأْنٌ عَنِ شَأْنٍ.

[\(No action hinders Him from engaging in another \(work\).\)”](#)

While the prophets, nearest angels and awliyā’ are busy supplicating Him, He is not negligent of others. If a common person in a certain part of the world calls Him, He will answer him. Is there such an outstanding Master who remembers His servant even after months or years of no contact? Is it then proper to pay attention to everything

except Him at the time of prayer and supplication? Is it not impolite to worship Him sluggishly, heedlessly and despondently, or even think that He is indebted to us
?because of our worship

p: ۸۶

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۴۶, section ۵, p. ۷۸, ḥadīth ۷۵ – –۱
.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۹۰, p. ۱۵۴, section ۹, ḥadīth ۱۱۱ – –۲

Presence of heart needed in worship

If we reflect, we will realize that our prayers and supplications are nothing but commissions of sin. Let us assume that after a long time of separation, we meet a friend and we are supposed to have an hour of tête-à-tête. But during our meeting we turn our back and are busy with other work. Such a behavior is obviously offensive! If we are supposed to meet a prominent figure and do the same, it is more offensive and unpleasant. Our lack of attention to God or presence of heart during prayer is most offensive and shameful. If, after God has given us the opportunity to be in His presence and talk to Him, we do not pay attention to Him, we deserve severe punishment which is worthy even if it kills us. In spite of all these, God does not reject us. In fact, He always invites us to partake in His banquet

God's forgiveness and compassion should not make us arrogant. Commensurate to our knowledge we are bound to discharge our duty in the best possible manner. Prayers and supplications which are mere recitation of some words without the spirit of worship are devoid of grace. We must struggle to make our prayers, supplications and other devotional acts acquire the spirit of worship, understand their meanings and have presence of heart

To delay the performance of acts of worship especially the obligatory ritual prayers is equally wrong. We should not imagine that if the saying of prayer is somehow delayed, we will become more enthusiastic in performing it. In many cases, the delay itself is a satanic insinuation [waswasah] under the guise of tiredness, work and the like. Prayer which is performed after its prescribed time is deficient and spiritless

No matter how low the level of our acts of worship be they should not be abandoned. Instead, we must strive to perform them better, and be more polite and humble in the presence of God. To abandon them is a sin and sign of ingratitude. The solution is not to abandon a devotional act but to improve it

Some narrow-minded people think that prayer or supplication devoid of understanding is useless. This is not true. Besides the outer expressions of worship, we must beseech God to give us presence of heart and the opportunity to increase

.our understanding and love of Him

[Love and affection as a product of gnosis [ma‘rifah

Many subjects mentioned in supplications and prayers are about the knowledge of God. If the love of God is deeply rooted in the heart of man, he will himself be concerned with the performance of worship. As such, whenever the loving servants of Allah have the opportunity, be it a short

period of time, they think of prayer, supplication and remembrance of God. However, it is inappropriate to imagine that since we always worship God in the form of prayer and supplication, we are His meritorious servants. We are fooling ourselves with such assumptions. If a person really loves another, he does not want to separate from her :even for a moment. Ḥaḍrat Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) said

إِلَهِي أَمَرْتِ بِالرُّجُوعِ إِلَيَّ الْآثَارِ.

O Allah! [In order to know You,] You commanded us to refer to the effects [of Your “
(Power).” (1)]

It is true that God has commanded it, but His loving servants’ desire is to be always close to Him. They want to be always in His presence even if they are obliged to pay attention to material means, and outwardly, their hearts seem to be detached from .His remembrance

Does the one who does not want to spend an hour in litany and supplication have any love for God? Can it be said that all our love and hate, struggle [jihād] and other feelings are for the sake of God, without really loving Him? If our actions are indeed for His sake, it is never possible not to love Him and consider something more desirable than prayer. The awliyā’ of Allah were always waiting for the slightest opportunity to supplicate in a corner. After performing their social responsibilities they would seclude themselves in order to hear the Divine invitation in their supplications .and litanies which would give them more energy and enthusiasm

إِلَهِي كَمْ تَتَحَبَّبُ إِلَيْنَا بِالنَّعْمِ وَأَنْتَ عَنَّا غَنِيٌّ وَنَتَبَغَّضُ إِلَيْكَ بِالْمَعَاصِي وَإِنَّا إِلَيْكَ مُحْتَاجُونَ!

p: ٨٨

”Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, “Imām al-Ḥusayn’s (‘a) Supplication on the Day of ‘Arafah – ١

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يُهَيِّتُكَ حِجَابُهُ، وَلَا يُغَلِّقُ بَابَهُ، وَلَا يُرَدُّ سَأْلُهُ، وَلَا يُخَيِّبُ آمَلُهُ.

Praise be to Allah! None can disclose anything hidden by Him; none can shut the“ doors kept open by Him; no one who makes a request is sent away disappointed by ”.Him; and no one who looks long and attentively is deluded in his hopes

Hope and reliance on God

Among the points highlighted in Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ is that God never rejects His servant, closes His door of mercy on him, or allows him to lose hope, provided that he turns, .relies and pins his hopes on God

It is possible that out of personal motives, we do something for a person and remind him of this favor: “I did it for your sake.” But we cannot do this to God for He is aware of our intention and motive. The expression “By the will of God”, is good but we must be sincere in our words and deeds. Usually, out of the hundred times that we make this expression, only once we truly mean it. As stated in the supplication, if a person really pins his hopes on God, “no one who looks long and attentively is deluded in his .”hopes

If we become hopeless, it is because we have not actually pinned our hope on God and done something with reliance on Him. If we like an activity we do it with great enthusiasm. But if do not like it or it requires a lot of effort and patience, either we do not do it or do it sluggishly. For example, in doing something, if the means to do so is accessible to us, we tend to do it, otherwise we consider it impossible to be done. If we do something with the hope that someone will come to rescue or assist us but he does not come, we tend to be discouraged in continuing it. Even in simple worldly matters, we tend to look for a friend or acquaintance to assist us. This only shows that we do not actually pin our hope to God. God has not guaranteed the realization of .such hope

Imām ‘Alī’s (‘a) saying about pinning one’s hope on God

:Ḥadrat ‘Alī (‘a) said

p: ۸۹

يَدْعِي بِرُغْمِهِ أَنَّهُ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ، كَذَبَ وَالْعَظِيمِ! مَا بِاللَّهِ لَا يَتَّبِعُنَّ رَجَاؤُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ؟ فَكَلَّ مَنْ رَجَا عُرْفَ رَجَاؤُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ... يَرْجُو اللَّهَ فِي الْكَبِيرِ، وَيَرْجُو الْعِبَادَ فِي الصَّغِيرِ، فَيُعْطِي الْعَبْدَ مَا لَا يُعْطِي الرَّبَّ!

He claims, according to his own assumptions, he hopes from Allah. By Allah, the“ Great, he lies. Do not one’s hopes become visible through one’s action? The hope of every one who hopes is known through his action... He hopes big things from Allah and small things from men but he gives to man (such consideration as) he does not give to Allah. What is the matter with Allah, glorified be His praise? He is accorded less ((consideration) than what is given to His creatures.”(1)

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said that if a person is hopeful of something, he strives to achieve it. Hope urges man to toil and sweat. A youngster who hopes that by obtaining a degree he will find a suitable job and good social standing will strive hard for years. Day and night, he will endure being away from home and everything else. Why? It is because he hopes that by obtaining a certain degree he will acquire a suitable job. So, hope .produces movement, not laziness and inertia

Under the pretext of relying on God, some people refuse to discharge any duty. They strive neither to perform the recommended acts [mustahabbāt] nor to avoid the dubious [mushtabahāt]. If they are asked, they say: “God’s mercy is infinite and He will treat us mercifully. One must not despair of God’s favor!” Is their hope greater than that of the awliyā’ and prophets? Notwithstanding their total reliance and trust in God, these holy personages would not abandon even the least of duties and responsibilities. Is our hope for God’s favor greater than theirs, such that without !?action we hope that God will admit us into the highest heaven

We usually imagine that we have strong trust in God. But the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) exposed the truth by saying: “You have neither fear [khawf] nor hope [rajā’]”. If you are really hopeful of God’s favor, its effect must be manifested through your action. If you pin your hope on a person and expect him to do something for you, how will you behave with him? You are careful in your action lest you annoy or irritate him; you always show respect; etc. Would you ever dare reviling him or displaying a ?hostile attitude toward him? But how about your attitude toward your Creator

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said: “You rely on this person concerning insignificant and trivial matters but you are not as humble and polite to God as you are to him although your reliance on God involves far more serious and sublime matters

Concerning which matters do you rely on a person? Trivial matters. He solves your problem or serves as your mediator. At most, he protects your honor in times of need or saves your life in times of danger so that you can live longer. In any case, all of these are limited. How valuable is the degree obtained by a young student who has spent the prime of his youth in studies? Is it ۱۰ million, ۱ billion, or ۱ trillion? No matter how much, it is limited and finite. What we are expecting from God is an unlimited eternal life. Do our deeds measure up to this expectation or wish? If we are really hoping for it, why is it not manifested in our action? It is better to be truthful to God and not deceive ourselves. God cannot be deceived although unfortunately some people intend to deceive Him

(يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but“ themselves, but they are not aware.”[\(1\)](#)

We must be truthful to God. The wise man is one who purifies his intentions and is truthful in supplicating to Him

What we do pretentiously for God may possibly deceive people but God cannot be deceived. If we want to change our condition, we must change ourselves. We must rely on God alone or else He will leave us alone and we will reach nowhere. We must bear in mind that only He can be truly relied upon and no one else

:It is reported from Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) that God, the Blessed and Exalted, says

By My Honor, Glory, Greatness and Exaltedness over the Throne! I shall turn into“ despair the hope of one who pins his hope on other than Me and cover him with the garment of contempt in the eyes of people. I shall keep him away from Me and not allow him to meet Me. Has he pinned his hope on other than Me to solve his problems

while [the solution to] problems lies in My hand? Has he attached himself to other than Me and knocks at another's door while the keys of all closed doors are with Me, and My door is open to those who call Me? Is there anyone who in time of difficulties

p: ٩١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:٩ – ١

pinned his hope on Me but I frustrated him? Is there anyone who relied on Me on an [important affair but I deprived him?](#)" [\(1\)](#)

So, one must rely on God alone. Relying on God means to consider all powers to be from Him and to use them while bearing in mind that with His permission nothing can be done. One must consult the doctor and abide by his medical prescription but at the same time he must bear in mind that the healing power lies with God. Without the will of God, a doctor's correct diagnosis could be useless and thus, he would give the wrong prescription. Or, in spite of correct diagnosis and prescription, the sick would not be cured. This does not mean that there is no need to consult the doctor. While relying on God, we must also abide by the doctor's prescription for it is one of the means and manifestations of God's favor. In any case, cure comes from Him

Reliance on God means believing that affairs and their elements are in the hand of God. He must believe in the reality that God manages all affairs and provides all means. In cases where no means are in sight, it is not beyond His power to create new means. He can also do something without any means. Therefore, in no way does the faithful one cease his reliance on God, irrespective of the existence or absence of natural means. He will not be frustrated if he fails through a certain means or way—be it money, doctor, medicine, etc. But, we should not expect that God will always definitely solve our problems through supernatural ways. It is self-worship to disregard natural means and ask God to solve our problems by supernatural means because in certain instances, it is the will of God to solve our problems through a natural way. In this regard, God says

أَبَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يُجْرِيَ الْأَشْيَاءَ إِلَّا بِالْأَسْبَابِ.

Allah does not want things to be materialized through other than their [natural]" [means.](#)" [\(2\)](#)

Yes, if there are no available natural means, God acts through supernatural means. For example, He sent down a heavenly table-cloth full of food and drink to a group of [Israelites,](#) [\(3\)](#)

kept Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm (‘a) alive and safe in the fire, (۴

.and many other cases

p: ۹۲

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۱, p. ۱۳۰, section ۶۳, ḥadīth ۷ – –۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۲, p. ۹۰, section ۱۴, ḥadīth ۱۴ – –۲

[.See Sūrat al-Mā'idah ۵:۱۱۲-۱۱۵. [Trans – –۳

[.See Sūrat al-Anbiyā' ۲۱:۶۱. [Trans – –۴

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغِبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ تُعِزُّ بِهَا الْإِسْلَامَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتُذِلُّ بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ، وَالْقَادَةِ إِلَى سَبِيلِكَ، وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

O Allah we ardently desire that in the kind, just and fair government, You give honor“ to Islam and its followers, and humble and humiliate hypocrisy and the hypocrites, and include us among those who invite people unto Your obedience and lead them to ”.Your approved path, and give us the good of this world and the world to come

(Waiting for the advent of Imām al-Mahdī (‘atfs

One of the points highlighted in Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ is the desire for the Islamic state to be established with the reappearance of Ḥaḍrat Walī al-‘Aṣr (‘atfs).⁽¹⁾

In this supplication, the mission of the Islamic government and our duty in relation to it are also mentioned. Fortunately, we are all encompassed by God’s great favor of .the knowledge about Ḥaḍrat Walī al-‘Aṣr (‘atfs) and waiting for his advent

Belief in the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs) is common to all Muslim schools of thought [madhāhib]—Sunnī or Shī‘ah. Non-Muslims also believe in a sort of waiting for relief with the coming of a savior [maṣliḥ]. We have a difference of opinion with our Sunnī brothers concerning some issues of Imamate, but few differences concerning .(the belief in the coming of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs

Many Sunnī scholars have written books about Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs) and acknowledged that their recorded traditions [aḥādīth] about Imām al-Mahdī (‘atfs) are (mutawātir.⁽²⁾

However, there are differences of opinion

farajahu a-sharīf [may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent], which is
.(invoked after mentioning the name of Imām al-Mahdī (atfs
A mutawātir ḥadīth is one which has been reported by so many different chains of – –
transmission that such a number of narrators in every generation would normally not
be able to agree on fabricating a tradition without the fact of its fabrication becoming
[.known. [Trans

about his personal features. Some Sunnīs believe that at the end of time a descendant of the Apostle (ﷺ) named Mahdī will come but they differ with us on the identity of his parents and whether he has been born or yet to be born. Some of them believe that the Mahdī (‘atfs) will be born in future

Of course, some Sunnīs exactly share our beliefs regarding the Last Imām (‘atfs). That is, they believe that he is an eleventh direct descendant of Imām ‘Alī and Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah (‘a). Some of them have even explained that the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) has already been born and is alive and that some people have been privileged to meet the Imām (‘atfs). In this regard, the names of some of those who were able to meet him have been mentioned

Therefore, not only the Shī‘ah believe in Imām al-Mahdī (‘atfs). Some do not believe in him as an Imām and successor [khalīfah] of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) with cosmic or ontological guardianship [wilāyat-e takwīnī] [\(1\)](#) and divine knowledge and power. For example, some Sunnīs especially the Shāfi‘īs have special devotion to the infallible Imāms (‘a), recognizing them as jurists [fuqahā] and descendants of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), but do not believe in their infallibility [‘iṣmah] and guardianship [wilāyah]. In this regard, their knowledge is deficient

Yet, notwithstanding all these beliefs, the Ahl al-Sunnah have somehow forgotten his advent, and one cannot include them among those who are waiting [muntaẓirīn] for the government of al-Mahdī (‘atfs). So, only the Shī‘ah are waiting every moment for his reappearance. It is we who ponder on these questions

Firstly, what is our motive in waiting for the Imām of the Age (‘atfs) and his government of truth? What incites your desire to be present during his advent

Secondly, what is our duty during this period of waiting [intizār] and occultation [ghaybah]? What must we do so as to be included among those who are truly waiting for him (‘atfs

For further information about the idea of guardianship [wilāyah] and the guardian – –\ [walī], see Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Walīhā wa Wilāyathā* (Qum, ۱۳۵۵ AH/۱۹۷۵) which was translated into English by Mustajab Anṣārī under the title *Master and Mastership* (Karachi: Islamic Seminary Publication, ۱۹۸۰) available online at <http://www.al-islam.org/mastership> and by Yaḥyā Cooper as *Wilāyah: The Station of the Master* (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, ۱۹۸۲) available online at <http://www.wofis.com/asset/Books/۰۴۶.pdf>. [Trans

The carnal state of man is so complex that sometimes he himself is unaware of its intricacies. Sometimes, a person wants something without knowing the reason behind his inclination to it. Similarly, regarding the issue of waiting for the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs) and the establishment of his government, people have also diverse motives. For instance, it is popular among laymen that during the advent of the Imām (‘atfs), the daily needs of man will be provided gratuitously or what is called ṣalawātī. In other words, the needs which require efforts to be met will be met by only invoking blessings upon Muḥammad and his progeny (‘a) [ṣalawāt]. As such, it is possible that for this or similar reasons some people are eager to wait for the reappearance of the Imām of the Age (‘atfs), and basically, for this reason, they are waiting for it

Others are waiting for his coming to set right their affairs and remove the burden of problems from their shoulders. The fact is that it is not easy to perform some religious duties especially social responsibilities such as enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil [amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa nahyi ‘an’il-munkar] and campaigning against injustice and corruption. Thinking that with the coming of the Mahdī (‘atfs) these burdens will be removed from their shoulders, some people are waiting for his reappearance

Perhaps on account of suffering from tyranny and oppression, others are waiting for the establishment of the government that will eliminate the tyrants and everyone will enjoy his right (advocates of justice, equality and fairness

Meanwhile, there are also those who are waiting for the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs) for the victory of the religion of truth, implementation of the divine laws which are yet to be implemented, revival of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) Sunnah, and annihilation of the traces of disbelief [kufr] and polytheism [shirk

We must ask ourselves as to our motive in waiting for the advent of the Imām of the Age (‘atfs). Are we after the gratuitous [ṣalawātī] bread, or are we fed up of the tyrants and oppressors? Is it because the burden of religious responsibility is heavy on us, or is it because Islam and the Muslims are in danger, that we are waiting for that day? We must reflect and identify which of them is our real motive in waiting for

If our motive is one of the first three mentioned reasons, then we are actually only concerned with ourselves and not others! In reality, we are

waiting for our own relief and comfort, and not for the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Ḥujjah (‘atfs)

If a person other than the Imām of the Age (‘atfs) grants our requests, we will follow and incline to him. Therefore, the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) and his advent do not concern us. Our main goal is our own comfort and nothing else. What is the value of ?waiting [intizār] which is motivated by laziness and the pursuit of comfort

If we are waiting for the day of the advent of the Imām of the Age (‘atfs) for him to remove the burden of responsibilities from our shoulders, wage a campaign against disbelief and hypocrisy [nifāq], enjoin the good and forbid the evil, set right our affairs, and finally make us the inheritors of the fruits of his labor so that we can enjoy without difficulty the wealth and other amenities to be provided by his government, .such an act of waiting has no value and merit

The true and valuable waiting is for one to wait for the relief [faraj] with the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs) for the victory and exaltation of Islam and its spread. This is the true and valuable waiting, and many narrations [riwāyāt] speak of its lofty value. It is true that under the aegis of the global revolution and government of Ḥaḍrat al-Ḥujjah (‘atfs), there will be peace, security, abundance of blessings, annihilation of oppression and the oppressors, and uprooting of poverty and misery, but they must .(not be the principal motive of the faithful in waiting for the Mahdī (‘atfs

In this part of the supplication, the motive of man in waiting for the faraj and the :mission of the Imām (‘atfs) in establishing his government are also mentioned

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغِبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلِهِ كَرِيمِهِ تُعَزُّ بِهَا الْإِسْلَامَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتُذِلُّ بِهَا النُّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ.

O Allah we ardently desire that in (his) kind, just and fair government, You give honor“ .to Islam and its followers, and humble and humiliate hypocrisy and the hypocrites

وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ، وَالْقَادَةِ إِلَى سَبِيلِكَ.

And include us among those who invite people unto Your obedience and lead them“ .onto Your approved path

During the advent of the Imām (‘atfs), we are not also supposed to abandon our duties. It is not true that after his advent, without propagation [tablīgh] people will embrace Islam and do righteous deeds. In fact, there will be need for propagation, training and education at that time. At that time, we

hope to be the forerunners and pioneers in materializing the goals of the Mahdī (‘atfs)
:by inviting the people toward him

وَتَرْزُقْنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

”And give us the good of this world and the world to come“

What are our duties as the true muntazirīn? What must we do, so that during his
?reappearance we can rightfully play our role

The most important duty of a true muntazir is for him to know the truth and act upon it as far as he can so that he can easily solve problems. It is such a person who can lead people during the time of the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs). How can one who procrastinates in knowing the truth and acting upon it lead others? Prior to his advent, therefore, we must prepare ourselves by increasing our knowledge and improving
.our actions

[Learning from previous communities (the fate of those who are waiting [muntazirīn

Throughout history, the government of truth has always been promised to the believing communities and they have always been waiting for it. Yet, after the coming of the expected government, it became clear that they were not sincere in their claims. For example, the glad tidings of the birth and coming of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (Moses) (‘a) were given to the Children of Israel during the Pharaoh’s reign, as repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’an. The Pharaoh so persecuted the Children of Israel that perhaps no other nation had experienced their ordeal. They were persecuted to such an extent that their religious leaders gathered together and asked their people to pray for the coming of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a). According to pertinent traditions, it was because of the profuse cry and lamentation of the Israelites that the coming of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a) was expedited. He was born and grew up. After sometime, he rose up against Pharaoh and finally the Israelites were able to cross the sea and were thus delivered from his yoke. They saw with their own eyes that Pharaoh and his legion pursued them but in spite of their military might Pharaoh and his forces were not able
.to cross the sea and drowned

Those, who one day had asked God to expedite the coming of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a) to be delivered from the clutches of Pharaoh and worship God freely, committed the most unscrupulous acts after being delivered from Pharaoh till the passing away of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a)! Instead of gratitude and thankfulness to God, the Exalted, for deliverance, and obediently following the orders of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a), they engaged in committing devious acts and making awkward demands of him. Along their way to

Palestine from Egypt, they passed by a city whose inhabitants were idol-worshippers, and they said to him: “We cannot see the God whom you believe and ask us to :”worship. We want God who is like the deity of these idol-worshippers

(اَجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ)

﴿Make for us a god like the gods that they have.﴾^(۱)

They were the same people who had suffered from Pharaoh and beseeched God to .(hasten the coming of Ḥaḍrat Mūsā ‘a

After this happening, Ḥaḍrat Mūsā ‘a) went to Mount

Ṭūr to engage in worship. He was supposed to stay there for thirty days and it was extended to another ten days. While he was engrossed in worship and supplications, the Israelites went to Sāmīrī and told him, “Make a god for us!” So, Sāmīrī made a :golden calf and said

(هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَى فَتَسْبَى)

﴿This is your god and the god of Moses!﴾^(۲)

That is to say, “This is the same god Moses is referring to.” And the Israelites prostrated before it. Finally, those who had been eagerly waiting for Ḥaḍrat Mūsā ‘a) .did so

There is also a similar account regarding Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). Many of the People of the Book^(۳) in the Arabian Peninsula particularly in Medina had been waiting for the coming of the Apostle (ﷺ). They resided in Medina and its suburbs so that with the coming of the expected prophet, they could pay their allegiance to him sooner than :others. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ)

﴿They] recognize him just as they recognize their sons.﴾^(۴)

However, when the Apostle (ﷺ) invited them to embrace the religion of Islam, they considered his objectives repugnant to their desires. So, they declined his invitation and did not submit to him

p: ٩٨

.Sūrat al-A‘rāf ٧:١٣٨ – –١

.Sūrat Ṭā Hā ٢٠:٨٨ – –٢

People of the Book [ahl al-kitāb]: the respectful title given to the Jews and – –٣

[.Christians in the Qur’an. [Trans

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١٤٤; Sūrat al-An‘ām ٦:٢٠ – –٤

These historical events serve as a lesson for us to avoid meeting the same fate—God forbid—in waiting for the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs). This does not suggest that our good fate is ensured. It is recorded in some traditions that after the advent of Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (‘atfs), some people will write a letter to him, saying, “We do not need
”!you

Therefore, we must mould ourselves according to Islam. We must suppress our carnal desires and prepare ourselves to recognize him as well as his uprising and revolution. If we are fond of him and shed tears whenever we hear his name, we
.must not become arrogant and be negligent of our fate

As such, waiting is valuable provided that we are really inclined to meet the Imām of the Age (‘atfs), feel sorry to see some divine injunctions yet to be implemented and yearn for his advent so that he can restore the glory of Islam and the Muslims and implement the divine laws. We must prepare ourselves to be able to recognize his government and follow his orders, and we must ask God, the Exalted, to grant us this
.[opportunity [tawfiq

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p: 100

(Sixth Discourse The Imām of the Age (‘atfs

Point

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّا نَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ فَقَدْ نَبَّيْنَا صَلَوَاتِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، وَغَيْبَهُ وَوَلِيَّيْنَا، وَكَثْرَةَ عَدُوِّنَا، وَقَلَّةَ عَدَدِنَا، وَشِدَّةَ الْفِتَنِ بِنَا، وَتَظَاهِرَ الزَّمَانِ عَلَيْنَا.

O Allah, we feel uneasy and are disturbed over the departure of our Prophet (ﷺ),“ absence of our guardian-friend, too many enemies, our numerical scarcity, ”.widespread disorder, and vicissitudes of time

The Apostle (ﷺ) and the Imāms (‘a) with the most valuable blessings

From the points stated earlier, it is clear that man must always pay attention to his needs and seek only the help of God, the Exalted, to provide them. As stated earlier, his needs are not only limited to material and worldly needs. One of our greatest needs is our need for the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his successor. Even if all worldly blessings are available to man but he is deprived of the guidance of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), all those blessings compared to this guidance are insignificant and immaterial

We can understand this need only if we grasp the blessing of the presence of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) and we really know who they are and which of the blessings of these holy personages are bestowed upon the Muslim ummah. It is impossible for us to comprehend the greatness and station of the Imāms (‘a). We can only say that the entire universe has been created as the blessings of their existence

لَوْلَاكَ لَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْأَفْلَاكَ.

“Had it not been for you, I would not have created the universe.” (1)

The same is true in the case of the Imāms (‘a). Whether we can grasp or comprehend this tenet or not, depends on the extent of our knowledge about these personages. It is sufficient to say that were it not for the Imāms (‘a), the foundation could not survive. The deviations that took place immediately after the demise of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prove this claim. Were it not for the ۲۵۰ years of effort and struggle of the infallible Imāms (‘a), today we would not witness the truths of Islam

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ١٤, p. ٤٠٤, ḥadīth ١ – ١

Even the truths of Islam that survive among the Ahl al-Sunnah are part of the blessings of the Imāms of guidance (‘a). The caliphs and rulers who used to hold the Friday congregational prayers on Wednesdays and lead the dawn prayer while drunk could have been the protectors and preservers of Islam. The blood of the Doyen of the Martyrs (‘a) and the struggle of other Imāms of guidance (‘a) were responsible for the survival of Islam

Of course, the blessings of the Imāms of guidance (‘a) were and are not limited to their respective lifetimes. In fact, even after their demise they remained a source of blessing. They would solve the problems of not only their followers and lovers but often even those of non-Muslims. If all miracles reported about each of the Infallibles [ma‘ṣūmīn] (‘a) throughout history were compiled, they would constitute a huge book. Nevertheless, the most important and perpetual blessing of the Imāms (‘a) consists of their sayings and traditions [sunan]. These radiant traditions are responsible for the preservation and spread of Islam as well as the felicity of man. That which plays a crucial role in the felicity of man can be found in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Are we not created to attain perfection and eternal felicity? What can significantly assist us in this regard are the recorded traditions of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and the Imāms (‘a). Hence, anyone who pays attention to the main purpose of creation will realize that the blessing of the Imāms (‘a) is incomparable, and an acknowledgment of this blessing must commensurate with the blessing itself

Unfortunately, however, the present state of affairs is such that only a few pay attention to this matter. A majority of the world population is non-Muslim. Most of the Muslims do not believe the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) has already been born and is alive. Only the minority Shī‘ah believe in his being alive, and many of them are only Shī‘ah in name and not in practice. As such, they also do not give much attention to the Imām of the Age (‘atfs), and rarely remember him. Only very few of the Muslims enjoy the opportunity to remember him occasionally and resort to his mediation [tawassul] when they are in trouble. We must recall how many times we remember him every year, month and week. What is the effect of his holy presence on our lives? What affliction are we faced with for not paying homage [ziyārah] to him

Usually, since the Imām of the Time is in occultation [ghaybah] and we are deprived of paying homage to him, we do not feel any deficiency. Our sustenance is provided. We consult the ‘ulamā’ and mujtahidīn regarding religious issues. In view of this, what is our need for the Imām of the Age

atfs)?! Why do we not feel any deficiency? Why we are not worried about his (‘atfs) occultation? The reason is our negligence and weak faith. It is not because we do not really need him (‘atfs). We do, but we cannot comprehend it. We are not aware what tribulation we are suffering from—tribulation which is a product of our own making. The people’s unpleasant attitude and their ingratitude in relation to the existence of the pure Imāms (‘a) has been the reason behind the Imām of the Time’s (‘atfs) occultation. Is the discord among the different parts of the Muslim society not a [tribulation?](#)

The Noble Qur’an states that one of the severest tribulations God will inflict upon a people is the existence of discord and difference among them

(قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ)

Say, ‘He is able to send upon you a punishment from above you or from under your feet, or confound you as [hostile] factions, and make you taste one another’s [violence.](#)”

Nowadays, it is obvious that hearts are separated from one another, heading in different directions. It is evident that these disputes and dissensions are because of the occultation of the Imām of the Time (‘atfs).

During the blessed month of Ramaḍān when we want to supplicate and fervently pray to God, we must read this part of Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ and since we are living in the period of his (‘atfs) occultation and are deprived of paying homage to him (‘atfs), we must express worry and concern. It is but proper to sincerely read this part of the supplication and reflect on the great blessing of his existence, and how our deprivation of this blessing is making us suffer from afflictions and predicaments

The fact, that we do not know how to please God, the Exalted, and the Imām of the Age (‘atfs), is a serious problem. By revealing the Book (the Qur’an), commissioning the Apostle (ﷺ) and the infallible Imāms (‘a), and endowing us with the faculty of reasoning, He has shown us the way. If we observe carefully, we will find out that in all cases of disputes and differences, we can somehow identify the correct path and

choose that which is pleasant to God and the Imām of the Time (‘atfs). However, at this time, we are experiencing internal and external problems. On one hand, we

p: ۱۰۳

It is worthy of note that this series of speeches was delivered prior to the victory – –۱
of the Islamic Revolution in Iran
Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۶۵ – –۲

have internal disputes, and on the other hand, the East and the West oppose us. No sect or school of thought is as alienated as Shī'ism. All sects or schools of thought are inclined either to the East or the West. Only the Shī'ah are attached to their leader and master and are hoping for his coming. We must identify what action the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) wants from us

One of our beliefs is that the Imām of the Age (‘atfs) is aware of the deeds of his ummah especially his Shī'ah. In our books on traditions, there is a section [bāb] called “presentation of actions” [‘arḍ al-a‘māl]. Many traditions belonging to this section, suggest that the weekly (and in some traditions, daily) actions of the faithful are reported to the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) and during the Night of Ordainment [Laylat al-Qadr] all people’s destinies are presented to him. The Imām (‘atfs) is the medium of favor between God and the people and the divine favors are extended to the people through him. Will he not be offended upon knowing our actions? We must ensure that our deeds please him (‘atfs), and that he will not say—God forbid—that he does not .have such followers

We know that the Imām (‘atfs) will be pleased if we obey God’s commands, but they .are repugnant to our carnal desires so we are heedless of them

No one doubts that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the Imāms (‘a) are sent for the preservation of the religion and laws of God. No one doubts that any action that contributes to the preservation of the religion and laws of God is pleasant to the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) and whatever keeps people away from the religion of God and distorts the religion, Islamic beliefs and divine laws displeases and annoys him. Do we doubt that whatever contributes to the abandonment of the Apostle’s (ﷺ) Sunnah and the Qur’anic injunctions irritates him? Do we doubt that those who undermine the religion and weaken the faith of people are abhorred by him? Don’t we know that it is a sin to say that a certain law must be changed as it belongs to the past and is not applicable today, and thereby weakens the faith of people in the ?inalterability of divine laws

Our duty during this period of occultation

If we want to sincerely read this part of the supplication and express worry over the absence of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the occultation of the Imām of the Time (‘atfs), we must strive as much as we can in preserving the religion. Our spiritual condition must be such that if the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) comes, we will unconditionally obey his orders. We must be ready to offer him our life, wealth and family. Do we have such
?readiness

:In one of the supplications for the nights of Ramaḍān, we read

p: ۱۰۴

”!Make us succeed in being martyred in Your way“

We must mould ourselves in such a way that we will not be afraid to be slain in the way of Allah but even yearn for it. We must ask God to give us pure intention, and sincerely and truthfully talk to Him. We must really ask Him to mould us in such a way that our life and death are pleasing to Him and the Imām of the Time (‘atfs). We must pray to God for us to be included among the companions of the Mahdī (‘atfs) and have the opportunity to do whatever pleases him and inform us of whatever we do not .know

We want the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) to lead us and teach us everything we are ignorant of. There are among us who wish to meet the Imām of the Time (‘atfs) even if only in a dream. Another thing to be done is to desire to meet him so as to acquire as much blessing as possible from his presence, and acquire the merit needed to meet him. Even now, the existence of the Imām of the Age (‘atfs) is a blessing which can be :enjoyed by anyone who deserves it

هَيْلُ إِلَيْكَ يَا بَنَ أَحْمَدَ سَبِيلٌ فَتَلْقَى، هَلْ يَتَّصِلُ يَوْمَنَا مِنْكَ بِعَدِهِ فَنَحْظِي، مَتَى تَرُدُّ مَنَاهِلَكَ الرَّوِيَّةَ فَنُرْوِي، مَتَى نَسْتَفِيعُ مِنْ عَيْدِ مَائِكَ فَقَدْ طَالَ الصَّدَى، مَتَى نُغَادِيكَ وَنُرَاوِحُكَ فَنُقِرَّ عَيْنًا، مَتَى تَرَانَا وَتَرَكَ؟

Do you, O son of Ahmad, have means and ways to arrange our meeting? Can you“ once cleverly guide the course of time, so that we may obtain our wish? When shall we bridge the gap that separates us so that we may refer to the authority? How long shall we keep waiting for your pleasing and satisfying essence and quality? The period of expectation has already lasted long! When shall we receive our share from you and have our minds set at rest? For we have fixed our eyes upon you and strive with perseverance. When shall we be happy, and see your beautiful countenance and fine (aspect?” (1)

May God give us the opportunity to recognize and accept the Imām of the Age (‘atfs), to love him and to really wait for the establishment of his government. May He also acquaint us with our duties at this period of occultation and give us the opportunity to

.benefit from his presence during his occultation as well as reappearance

p: ۱۰۵

.Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, part of Du‘ā’ Nudbah – –۱

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَنْجِزْ لَوَلِيِّكَ مَا وَعَدْتَهُ، اللَّهُمَّ أَظْهِرْ كَلِمَتَهُ وَأَعِلْ دَعْوَتَهُ وَأَنْصُرْهُ عَلَى عَدُوِّهِ وَعَدُوِّكَ، اللَّهُمَّ أَنْفَعْنَا
بِحُبِّهِ وَاحْشُرْنَا فِي زُمْرَتِهِ، آمِينَ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ!

O Allah! Bless Muḥammad and his progeny, and grant what You have promised to“
Your walī. O Allah! Manifest his word [of truth] and honor his call. Help him against his
enemy and Your enemy. O Allah! Convey to him our greetings and salutations and
favor us with his pleasure. Grant us his benevolence and mercy. O Allah! Benefit us
with his love and include us among his company under his banner. So be it, O Lord of
[\(the worlds!\)”](#)

p: ١٠٦

.(Ibid., part of Ziyārat Ṣāhib al-Amr (‘atfs – –١

Part Three Commentary on Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī

Point

p: ١٠٧

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p: 108

Ḥamzah? Abū Ḥamzah Thābit ibn Dīnār belonged to the tribe of Thumālah in Kūfah. Some claimed that he belonged to the tribe of Banī Tha‘l but since lived with the tribe of Thumālah, he was known as al-Thumālī. He lived during the time of Imām al-Sajjād, Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) and narrated traditions from them. Some claimed that he also lived during the Imamate of Imām al-Kāẓim (‘a). It is reported that he was one of the close companions and reliable narrators of those Imāms (‘a). Also, Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) is reported to have said: “Abū Ḥamzah is the Salmān of his time.” Najjāshī, Rijāl (Beirut), pp. ٢٨٩-٢٩٠. Shaykh Abū ‘Amrū Kashshī Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz who was a distinguished scholar of rijāl and writer of the accounts of the companions of the Imāms (‘a) mentioned in his book of rijāl that he saw Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Na‘īm al-Shādhānī writing that he heard from Faḍl ibn Shādhān saying that he heard from a reliable companion that Ḥaḍrat al-Riḍā (‘a) said: *أَبُو حَمْزَةَ فِي زَمَانِهِ كَلْقَمَانَ فِي زَمَانِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَنَّهُ خَدَمَ أَرْبَعَةَ مِنَّا: عَلِيَّ بْنَ الْحُسَيْنِ وَمُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ وَجَعْفَرَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَبُرْهَةَ مِنْ عَصْرِ مُوسَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ*. “Abū Ḥamzah is the Luqmān of his time and he served four of us, namely, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī and Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad and he lived up to the time of Mūsā ibn Ja‘far.” In the book on rijāl by Mamqānī, Dāwūd Raqqī from Khurāsān who went to visit [ziyārah] the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) (in Najaf) is reported to have said: “After visiting the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), I went to Kūfah where I saw a group of people sitting around an old man, listening to him. As I got closer, I understood that they were followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). I asked who the man was. They said that he was Abū Ḥamzah. I also sat with them. During his talk, an Arab came and said: ‘I have come from Medina and I saw that Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (‘a) passed away.’ On hearing this news, Abū Ḥamzah cried and lamented. He then asked the man: ‘Did he make a will?’ The man said: ‘He made a will about his sons ‘Abd Allāh and Mūsā as well as Mansūr (the then ruling ‘Abbāsīd caliph).’ Abū Ḥamzah said: ‘Thanks to Allah for not misguiding us. He guided us to the ‘small’, uncovered the ‘big’ and managed the great affair.’ Thereafter, he went to the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and prayed.” I approached and asked him about the meaning of his statement. He answered: ‘The ‘big’ (‘Abd Allāh, the elder son) has a physical defect (so he cannot be the next Imām) and the ‘small’ (Mūsā, the younger son) is mentioned as he is the true successor (and next Imām)...’ Thereafter, I went to Medina and asked Imām al-

Kāzīm (‘a) about the issue. The Imām (‘a) replied: ‘Did Abū Ḥamzah not tell you about it near the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a)? The faithful whose heart is illuminated by the light of Allah has unblemished knowledge.’” These aḥādīth show the high station of Abū Ḥamzah. Moreover, whenever the Imāms (‘a) would give orders to some of their companions, these orders were generally consistent with the merit and quality of those companions. Whoever comprehends the importance and greatness of this supplication will become acquainted with Abū Ḥamzah’s high station and excellence. We narrate this supplication from Mafātīḥ al-Jinān of the late Ḥāj Shaykh

.‘Abbās Qummī from his Misbāḥ

Ontological relationship between God and His creatures

Although the supplications transmitted from the Imāms (‘a) are sometimes expressed in simple terms, they contain sublime points, and everyone is supposed to reflect on and benefit from them. The higher a person’s

spiritual state is, the more he will benefit from these supplications. It is true that the subjects of some supplications, like some Qur’anic verses, can be considered, so to speak, as ‘allegorical’ [mutashābih] and are hard for us to comprehend, but sometimes reflecting on them could also be beneficial to a person. For example, we read in Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ, thus

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي مِنْ خَشْيَتِهِ تَزْعَدُ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَسُكَّانُهَا، وَتَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَعُمَارُهَا، وَتَمُوجُ الْبِحَارُ وَمَنْ يَسْبِيحُ فِي غَمْرَاتِهَا.

Praise be to Allah! In His awe-inspiring fear the heavens and its dwellers tremble and shiver, the earth and its inhabitants shake and quiver, the oceans and all that which float and swim in its waters flow together in excitement and tumult

:It is also said in the Qur’an, thus

(وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ)

“[The Thunder celebrates His praise, and the angels [too], in awe of Him.” (1)

:It also states elsewhere

(يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ)

“[Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Allah and whatever there is in the earth.” (2)

:God also says

(وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَـكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ)

There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.” (3)

These are subjects which are beyond our comprehension. Also, the exegetes of the Qur’an [mufasssīrīn] usually believe that these verses and supplications are allegorical [mutashābihāt]. Some, nonetheless, sometimes try to explain them. In any case, they speak about an aspect of the relationship between God and His creatures. This relationship can be likened to a very strong magnet. Ontologically, God draws His

servants towards Him and every creature intrinsically comprehends the relationship
between itself and God according to its existential radiance [shu‘ā-e wujūdī

p: ۱۱۱

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۱۳ – ۱

.Sūrat al-Jum‘ah ۶۲:۱; Sūrat al-Taghābun ۶۴:۱ – ۲

.Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ۱۷:۴۴ – ۳

knowledge and understanding. Among His creatures, God has endowed man with special faculties with which he can best grasp this ontological relationship. He can strengthen this relationship, if he wishes, and move towards God

Occupations as a hindrance to grasping the ontological relationship

Usually, because of mundane or worldly occupations, people are heedless of this ontological relationship which is embedded in the depth of their existence. In most cases, because of individual and social occupations and engagements, we hardly find time throughout the year to think about this relationship. The month of Ramaḍān, however, in which there are more chances to engage in supplications and worship, is a good opportunity for one to somehow get rid of his worldly affairs and focus his attention on God, look at the manifestation of Divine Greatness, and comprehend the Names and Attributes of His Beauty and Perfection

Comprehending the Divine Attributes of Beauty and Perfection has distinctive attraction. For example, man finds such intimacy with God that he does not want to be deprived of it. He comprehends God's Magnificence and joyfully prostrates before God. By attaining this state—commensurate to one's level of gnosis [ma'rifah]—man enjoys such joy and ecstasy that cannot be compared to any material or worldly enjoyment and happiness. In the past, many people experienced this bliss. There are also many today

When man abandons materiality and focuses his attention on God, he can feel a sort of attraction between himself and God which cannot be explained. In that state, he sees himself closer to God. God reveals in the Qur'an

(وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ)

“(And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”)

But because of our reprehensible deeds, we move away from Him. If man abandons his wicked acts and carnal desires, he will get closer to Him

:In this Du'ā' Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (a) says

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَخْتَجِبُ عَنْ خَلْقِكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَحْجِبَهُمُ الْأَعْمَالُ دُونَكَ.

Verily, You do not conceal Yourself from Your creation unless they shut You off while “
”carrying out their daily functions

p: ۱۱۲

.Sūrat Qāf ۵۰:۱۶ – ۱

Paying attention to His kindness increases one's love for God

The supplicant ought to reflect on the contents of this supplication and imagine how Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) would raise his hands in supplication at midnight during Ramaḍān, supplicating and imploring God

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا أَدْعُو غَيْرَهُ وَلَوْ دَعَوْتُ غَيْرَهُ لَمْ يَسْتَجِبْ لِي دُعَائِي.

All) praise be to Allah (alone) other than whom I turn to no one, and if I invoke)“
”.anyone other than Him my supplications will remain unfulfilled

If we are sometimes frustrated, it is because we have relied on other than God. So,
:Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا أَرْجُو غَيْرَهُ وَلَوْ رَجَوْتُ غَيْرَهُ لَأَخْلَفَ رَجَائِي.

All) praise be to Allah (alone) other than whom I do not ask for anything, and if I ask)“
”.from one other than Him, my hopes and expectations will be lost

:In another place, the Imām (‘a) said to God

كَيْفَ أَرْجُو غَيْرَكَ وَالْحَيْرُ كُلُّهُ بِيَدِكَ؟

How should I have hope in other than You, when the good—all of it—is in Your “
(hand?”

These words must be uttered the way Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) uttered them. Only someone like him could talk to God in such a manner and make such a supplication.

:We have not yet reached the stage where we supplicate in this way

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يَحْلُمُ عَنِّي حَتَّى كَأَنِّي لَا ذَنْبَ لِي.

All) praise be to Allah (alone) Who is so gentle and considerate towards me as if I had)“
”.not sinned

Of course, it must be noted that all this forgiveness and compassion of God is meant for this world, by delaying the consequences of man’s evil deeds lest he repents and

feels sorry for his evil deeds. So, He shows His mercy and compassion to His sinful servant so that this servant returns to Him, as a friend. God does not say, “You rebelled against Me many times and committed many offenses.” Not only does He refuse to abandon His sinful servant but also treats him as if he had not committed any sin at all

p: ١١٣

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – –١
”.Hopeful

Once a person gives attention to these realities, the attraction between him and God will be strengthened and his love for God will increase. So, he loves to talk longer to God, have intimacy with Him and be prepared to abandon his mischievous deeds and get rid of his inclinations to materiality or worldly matters. He knows that no one else but God has a true and lasting relationship with him. Only God can turn his hopes into reality and only He can fulfill his wishes. Paying heed to these subtle points will gradually lift the veils between man and God, and according to his station, he will feel that God is near. God listens to him and is willing to grant his requests. In Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ, God is described in this manner

الْبَاسِطِ بِالْجُودِ يَدَهُ.

His distinct overflowing generosity is freely available through His unlimited“
”.bestowals

The extent of God’s favors is vast. We, out of freewill, must create such an inner condition that we can benefit from those Divine favors. God is not negligent of His servants. Because of problems, engagements and blemishes which we create within ourselves, we hardly find time to think about these favors, while God is ready always, everywhere, to answer our call. In fact, it is recorded in a ḥadīth qudsī that God says

أَتَا جِيهِ فِي ظُلْمِ اللَّيْلِ وَنُورِ النَّهَارِ.

“[I](#) whisper to him in the darkness of the night as well as the brightness of the day.”[\(1\)](#)

That is, God talks to His servant whenever He wants to. Once a servant becomes a beloved of God, whenever he is negligent, God Himself reminds him. The open and hidden favors of God are so abundant that they are beyond explanation. We have become acquainted with these favors and stations by the blessing of the pure Imāms (‘a). In order to reap some of these Divine favors, we supplicate and express our feelings with the hope that He will grant His grace and purge us of our impurities. Our hands and feet are so tied up that without the hope in God and His awliyā’, we cannot redeem ourselves. Once man acquires such spiritual states and tastes their sweetness, he will no more pay attention to anything else. The awliyā’ of Allah who

:have savored this sweetness say as such

p: ۱۱۴

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۴, ḥadīth ۶ – –۱

إِلَهِي مَا أَلَمَدَ خَوَاطِرَ الْإِلْهَامِ بِإِدْكَرِكَ عَلَى الْقُلُوبِ، وَمَا أَحْلَى الْمَسِيرَ إِلَيْكَ بِالْأَوْهَامِ فِي مَسَالِكِ الْغُيُوبِ، وَمَا أَطْيَبَ طَعْمَ حُبِّكَ،
وَمَا أَعَذَّبَ شَرِبَ قُرْبِكَ.

My God, how agreeable for hearts are the thoughts inspiring Your remembrance, “
how sweet traveling to You through the imagination upon the roads of unseen worlds,
(how pleasant the taste of Your love, how delightful the drink of Your nearness!” (1)

Therefore, we must fervently supplicate, and if we cannot, as indeed we cannot, at least try to be among the true supplicants, i.e. those who sincerely supplicate. Perhaps, God will also grant us His favor. Sometimes, God is pleased with those who behave like His true servants. It is stated in a ḥadīth that there was a hermit who used to impersonate Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a) to entertain Pharaoh in his court. He would clad himself in wool, walk with a staff, stand in front of Pharaoh, and say: “I am a prophet sent by God. Believe in me...” When God drowned Pharaoh and his legion, He did not drown the hermit. He said: “He lovingly impersonated My servant and beloved. For
”this reason, I did not drown him

So, we also imitate the awliyā’ of Allah, repeating what they recited so that by
(imitating His awliyā’, (2)

.God may grant us His grace and favor

إِلَهِي إِنْ كَانَ قَلَّ زَادِي فِي الْمَسِيرِ إِلَيْكَ، فَلَقَدْ حَسَّنَ ظَنِّي بِالتَّوَكُّلِ عَلَيْكَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ جُزْمِي قَدْ أَخَافَنِي مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ، فَإِنَّ رَجَائِي
قَدْ أَشْعَرَنِي بِالْأَمْنِ مِنْ نِقْمَتِكَ.

My God, though my provisions for traveling to You are few, my confidence in You has “
given me security. Though my sin has made me fear Your punishment, my hope has
(let me feel safe from Your vengeance.” (3)

p: ۱۱۵

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ۱۵ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – ۱
”.Knowers

Whoever imitates a community is one of them.” Biḥār al-Anwār, vol.۱۱, p.۱۷۴, “ – ۲

ḥadīth ١٩. Imām ‘Alī (‘a) also said: “Whoever imitates a community unless he is
.doubtful of it is one of them.” Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, vol. ١٩, p.٢٧
Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – ٣
”.Beseechers

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p: 116

Second Discourse Paying Attention to the Attributes of Allah

Point

أَدْعُوكَ يَا سَيِّدِي بِلِسَانٍ قَدْ أَخْرَسَهُ ذَنْبُهُ، رَبِّ أَنْاجِيكَ بِقَلْبٍ قَدْ أَوْبَقَهُ جُزْمُهُ، أَدْعُوكَ يَا رَبِّ رَاهِباً رَاعِباً، رَاجِئاً خَائِئِفاً، إِذَا رَأَيْتُ
مَوْلَايَ ذُنُوبِي فَرَعْتُ، وَإِذَا رَأَيْتُ كَرَمَكَ طَمَعْتُ، فَإِنْ عَفَوْتَ فَخَيْرٌ رَاحِمٍ، وَإِنْ عَذَّبْتَ فَغَيْرُ ظَالِمٍ.

I invoke You, O my Chief, confessing that I have drunk from the casket of sins. O Lord! I lay open my heart before You to show that I have transgressed Your boundaries many times. O Lord! Terrified, eager, hopeful, afraid, I invoke You. O my Master, when I look into my record of sins it frightens me, when I look up to Your kind generosity I long for it greedily. Therefore, if You forgive me, it will be the height of mercy, and if I am punished, it will not be unjust

Paying attention to the Attributes of Allah at the time of supplication

Supplication is actually man's attention to God and strengthening of the relationship of servitude [‘ubūdiyyah]. In this relationship, on one side is God, the Exalted, and the other side is His sinful servant. The supplicant always sees himself between fear and hope. On one hand, when he remembers his sins, he is dumb and regretful. On the other hand, when he thinks of the infinite mercy of God, he becomes hopeful, experiences a state of rapture, opens his mouth, and beseeches God's mercy

The Imām (‘a) also expressed these points in his ۱۵ whispered prayers [munājāt :khamsah ‘asharah

إِلَهِي ارْحَمْ عَبْدَكَ الذَّلِيلَ، ذَا اللِّسَانِ الْكَلِيلِ.

“O God, have mercy upon Your lowly slave of silent tongue and few good deeds.”^(۱)

:Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) also expressed similar points in Du‘ā ‘Arafah

p: ۱۱۷

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ۱۵ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly – ۱

”.Poor

إِلَهِي كُلَّمَا أَخْرَسَنِي لِوَمِي أَنْطَقَنِي كَرَمُكَ وَكُلَّمَا آيَسْتَنِي أَوْصَافِي أَطْمَعْتَنِي مِنْكَ.

O my God, my abjectness makes me dumb but Your magnanimity makes me “expressive: my (miserable) conditions disappoint me but Your favors give me hope

Manifestations of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah

In general, the states of the awliyā’ with their Beloved are of two types. Sometimes, their attention is focused on the Divine Attributes and Names of Glory and they are frightened by the Divine Power, and fear of Divine wrath envelops their entire being. In this state which is technically called ‘seizure’ [qabḍ], the tongue of the servant is tied up and he is heavy-hearted as if covered by a veil. But, sometimes, they give attention to the Beautiful Names of Allah and are enthralled by witnessing them. As they experience a state of ‘exhilaration’ [inbisāṭ], they want to talk and open their hearts to God. In this state, the servant’s tongue is untied and enjoys conversing with the Beloved. This state is technically called “dalāl”; that is, a sort of coquetry and amorous gesture. In the same Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says to God

وَلَيْنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِي النَّارَ لَأُخْبِرَنَّ أَهْلَ النَّارِ بِحُبِّي (إِيَّاكَ) لَكَ.

”O Allah! If You make me enter hellfire, I shall tell its dwellers that I love you”

:The Imām (‘a) says elsewhere

إِلَهِي إِنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِي النَّارَ فَفِي ذَلِكَ سُرُورٌ عَدُوِّكَ، وَإِنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِي الْجَنَّةَ فَفِي ذَلِكَ سُرُورٌ نَبِيِّكَ، وَأَنَا وَاللَّهِ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ سُرُورَ نَبِيِّكَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ سُرُورِ عَدُوِّكَ.

O Allah! If You admit me into paradise, Your Prophet will be glad but if You send me to “hell, Your enemy (Satan) will be happy, and By Allah! I know that for You the pleasure of Your Prophet is more pleasing than the delight of Your enemy

In this state, those who have perfect gnosis [ma‘rifah] sometimes even faint and swoon. Many instances, in the life of Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī and Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), have been narrated. In the supplications transmitted from these holy personages, one can find

traces of these two states of ‘seizure’ and ‘exhilaration’. Especially in Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Du‘ā’ Kumayl, Du‘ā’ al-Şabāḥ, Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a), Munājāt Khamsah ‘Asharah [Fifteen Whispered Prayers], and many other .supplications in al-Şaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah and other books on supplication

:In Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ أَسْوَأَ حَالًا مِنِّي إِنْ أَنَا نُقِلْتُ عَلَى مِثْلِ حَالِي إِلَى قَبْرِي.

If You send me to the grave while I am in this state, is there anyone who could be in a “
”?worse state

Confession of sin brings nearness to God

God wants His servant to confess his sins. Whether His servant confesses his sins or not, nothing is added to or taken away from God’s dominion and sovereignty. But God likes His servant to confess his sins because he will become conscious of his .abjectness, meanness and sins, and feel God’s forgiveness more intensely

In reality, unless man realizes his meanness, he cannot savor the taste of God’s forgiveness because the more he becomes heedful of his sins and meanness, God’s forgiveness becomes more pleasant to him and he realizes His mercy more .profoundly

In some supplications, there are various expressions and wordings that make man reach a station that makes him deserve Divine mercy. For example, it is said in one supplication: “O God! How will You punish this servant of Yours on whom You bestowed all these blessings? On the very moment when You created him, nay even prior to his creation, You provided everything he needed. You nurtured him with Your diverse blessings. While he was committing sins, You gave him the glad tidings of forgiveness, pardon and compassion, and invited him to repent and feel sorrow and be hopeful of Your grace and mercy. You invited him and instilled Your love in his heart so that he would hasten to worship You. He expected Your mercy and cried in
”.fear of Your wrath

Indeed, these supplications make man’s heart heedful of God and instill in him the .faculty of comprehending Divine mercy. In other words, they ‘stimulate’ God’s mercy

Therefore, it is indeed commendable for man to recall his sins and be heedful of God’s infinite mercy. By doing so, we will realize how many sins he committed and went

against God's order—sins, the commission of any of which is enough for one to deserve years of punishment. Yet, God disregarded all of them and incessantly .extended His mercy upon him

The more man realizes his poverty and helplessness vis-à-vis God, he becomes more .humble and deserving of Divine grace or favor

إِلَهِي أَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكَ بِفَقْرِي إِلَيْكَ.

“(O Allah! I seek Your help through my poverty (in relation to You)).” (1)

Our arrogance and I-ness or egoism [anāniyyah] stands between us and God. If man sees himself as he is and realizes his helplessness and abjectness, he will be encompassed by God’s infinite mercy and obtain greater blessings

The Qur’an states that when Ḥaḍrat Yūnus (Jonah) (‘a) confessed his mistake, he received the help and mercy of God

(وَذَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ)

And when the Man of the Fish, left in a rage, thinking that We would not put him into hardship. Then he cried out in the darkness, ‘There is no god except You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers!’ (2)

:Then, God answered his prayer

(فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ)

So We answered his prayer and delivered him from the agony; and thus do We “deliver the faithful.” (3)

:In Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah, Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) says to God

إِلَهِي تَقَدَّسَ رِضَاكَ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَكَ عِلَّةٌ مِنْكَ فَكَيْفَ يَكُونُ لَكَ عِلَّةٌ مِنِّي.

O Allah! It is beyond Your station to have created a means that will earn Your “pleasure, let alone my action earning Your pleasure

God is too great to be influenced by the actions of His servants. God’s way of doing things is fixed. By doing wholesome works, repenting, entreating and supplicating, we must create from within ourselves the merit to comprehend God’s mercy. Commensurate to our inherent constitution, we must generate the capability to receive God’s mercy, and this cannot be realized except by realizing one’s bondage

.Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, Supplication of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) in ‘Arafah – –۱

.Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۸۷ – –۲

.Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۸۸ – –۳

One who recognizes himself as rich does not turn to God to ask for something. Thus, he will not be encompassed by God’s mercy. As such, a confession of abjectness in relation to God is actually an improvement of our capability to receive His mercy. For this reason, God says in the Qur’an

(وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ)

“I did not create the jinn and humans except that they may worship Me.” (1)

God is not in need of the worship of His servants. But servitude [‘ubūdiyyah] is realized through the same expression of poverty, need and bondage which leads to our perfection. Through servitude and devotion to God, we can receive more of His grace. Just as we pray to God in relation to material affairs, we must also pray to God in relation to spiritual affairs, for this and the next world as whatever is in them belongs to Him who is the Lord of the worlds

In order to comprehend our abjectness and helplessness, God has commanded us to take His saints [awliyā’] as our mediators. (They are means [wasā’it] for the descent of Divine favor upon creatures including human beings.) As such, nearness to the awliyā’ of Allah is in reality nearness to Him

إِنَّ ذِكْرَنَا مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.

”Indeed, remembering us is part of remembering Allah“

By servitude to God, they have attained such stations. Once we see what stations they have, we will realize the value of servitude to God and understand which stations can be attained under the aegis of servitude to Him

In identifying our duties, God must help us know which acts are pleasing to Him and liked by His awliyā’. God must also provide us the means to understand them. Moreover, opportunity [tawfiq] must also be granted by Him so that we can discharge our responsibilities. If we ever succeed in doing good deeds, it is God’s grace that encompasses us. The ideal result lies in the will of God. The Qur’an points to these truths in numerous verses. In a certain verse, after saying, “We sent angels to help

:you fight the unbelievers,” God states

p: ۱۲۱

.Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt ۵۱:۵۶ – ۱

(وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

Allah did not send it but as good news, to reassure your hearts. Victory (or help)“
comes only from Allah. Indeed Allah is All-mighty, All-wise.”(1)

Even angels cannot do anything by themselves. The coming down of angels that led to the victory of Muslims was based on God’s will and permission. It should not be imagined that contrary of the will of God or irrespective of it, one can do anything. If ever we experience an affliction, it is a result or consequence of our wicked acts. Meanwhile, we must be hopeful of God’s grace to remove our afflictions. But God will remove our afflictions provided that we feel remorse for our wicked acts and stop denying His blessings

In any case, we must be hopeful of God’s grace and not be arrogant of ourselves and our deeds. As long as the early Muslims relied on God, they were recipients of His mercy and defeated the enemies in battles, but when they became arrogant, they were defeated, notwithstanding their greater number and equipment. The Qur’an states

(وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ)

“Certainly Allah helped you at Badr, when you were abased [in the enemy’s eyes].”(2)

:But elsewhere it says

(وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا)

And on the day of Hunayn, your great number impressed you, but did not avail you in“
(any way.”(3)

The purpose of these passages is that we must only rely on Allah, and neither on material causes nor our works. God has left the faithless with material causes but not the faithful [mu’min]. He Himself ensures the victory of the faithful provided that he keeps his faith in Him

(وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ)

Do not weaken or grieve: you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful.” ﴿٤﴾

p: ١٢٢

.Sūrat al-Anfāl ٨:١٠ – ١

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:١٢٣ – ٢

.Sūrat al-Tawbah (or, Barā’ah) ٩:٢٥ – ٣

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:١٣٩ – ٤

Therefore, we must think of strengthening our faith. We must be hopeful of God's grace and mercy and never be arrogant because of our trivial works. We must not be afraid, no matter how bad the conditions are, because we believe that one must only
.[discharge his duty and God has ensured victory [for the faithful

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p: ۱۲۴

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي كَلَّمَا قُلْتُ قَدْ تَهَيَّأْتُ وَتَعَبَّأْتُ وَقُمْتُ لِلصَّلَاةِ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَنَاجَيْتُكَ أَلْقَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نُعَاسًا إِذَا أَنَا صَيَّئْتُ، وَسَلَبْتَنِي مُنَاجَاةَكَ إِذَا أَنَا نَاجَيْتُ، مَالِي كَلَّمَا قُلْتُ قَدْ صَيَّلَحْتُ سِرِيرَتِي، وَقَرَّبَ مِنْ مَجَالِسِ التَّوَابِينَ مَجْلِسِي، عَرَضْتَ لِي بَلِيَّةً أَزَالَتْ قَدَمِي، وَحَالَتْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خِدْمَتِكَ سَيِّدِي لَعَلَّكَ عَنِّ بِابِكَ طَرَدْتَنِي، وَعَنِّ خِدْمَتِكَ نَحَيْتَنِي.

O Allah! Each time I got ready to speak, took pains and stood up to perform prayer“ before You, and enter into familiar conversation with You, You overwhelmed me with slumber at the time of prayer, and restricted my supplication as soon as I began to entreat You. Why is it thus for me? Each time I spoke, in my secret thoughts, and decided to be good, and sat in the company of those who turn repentant to You, You gave me over to sorrow and grief, unsettled me, and created a gap between me and my desire to serve You. O my Master, perhaps I have been pushed away from Your ”.door and removed or dismissed from Your services

Being in the Divine Presence as higher than worship of the common man

Man’s occupations in the world are such that they make him unmindful of God, the Exalted, and the unseen worlds. Whenever man wants to step out of the mundane world and pay attention to the celestial world, worldly thoughts and engagements distract and deprive him of the state of supplication and litanies. But in spite of many wasted moments, there are times when man succeeds in heartily engaging in litanies, .prayer and supplication. These moments become extremely precious for him

Sometimes, by observing human societies and millions of people who are thinking of everything except God, man thinks that Divine Dominion is so alien! The majority of Muslims are unmindful of God and the next world, let alone those who do not believe .in God at all or follow deviant religions

It is known that when one of the mystics woke up for a night vigil and supererogatory prayers he saw people sleeping, and it came to his mind that Divine Dominion was so empty! Later on, he learned through inspiration [ilhām], however, that it is so lofty that .not everybody can enter it

Therefore, in spite of many problems and afflictions, if sometimes God gives an opportunity to a person to be able to engage in prayer and supplication, he must be grateful to Him for it. At the same time, someone who has these opportunities must not become arrogant thinking of his importance in the sight of God. These opportunities are part of the immense blessings of God which must duly be appreciated and acknowledged

وَمِنْ أَعْظَمِ النِّعَمِ عَلَيْنَا جَرِيَانُ ذِكْرِكَ عَلَيَّ أَلَسْتِنَا، وَإِذْنُكَ لَنَا بِدُعَائِكَ.

Among Your greatest favors to us is the running of Your remembrance across our “[\(1\)](#) tongues and the permission to supplicate to You!”

These blessings are granted to us not because we are dear to God but to test the extent of our gratitude. Every blessing which is not appreciated by man will be taken away from him. Thus, a person must be conscious of God and bear in mind that the value of spiritual and otherworldly blessings cannot be compared to mundane and worldly blessings

[\(2\)](#), (a) In the ziyārah to Ḥaḍrat Ma‘shūmah

:we say to God

فَلَا تَسْلُبْ مِنِّي مَا أَنَا فِيهِ.

”So, do not take away from me that which is with me“

Although most of our prayers and supplications are nothing but imitations of the awliyā’ of Allah, the mere opportunity to do so is so valuable a blessing that it must be appreciated, and we must ask God not to take it away but increase it. There are many who have been deprived of divine blessings because of their ingratitude

Reasons behind man’s failure

:In a certain part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (a) says to God

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي... نَحَيْتَنِي أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي مُسْتَحْفَافًا بِحَقِّكَ فَأَقْصِ يَتْنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي مُعْرَضًا عَنْكَ فَقَلَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ وَجَدْتَنِي فِي

مَقَامِ الْكَاذِبِينَ فَرَفَضْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي غَيْرَ شَاكِرٍ لِنِعْمَائِكَ فَحَرَمْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ فَقَدْتَنِي مِنْ مَجَالِسِ الْعُلَمَاءِ فَخَذَلْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي فِي الْغَافِلِينَ فَمِنْ رَحْمَتِكَ آيَسْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي آلفَ مَجَالِسِ الْبَطَالِينِ فَبَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ خَلَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ لَمْ

p: ١٢٦

Mafātih al-Jinān, The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – ١
.”Rememberers

Fāṭimah al-Ma‘šūmah (‘a): the sister of Imām al-Riḍā (‘a) who was buried in Qum. – ٢

[.Trans

تُحِبُّ أَنْ تَسْمَعَ دُعَائِي فَبَاعَدْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ بِجُرْمِي وَجَرِيْرَتِي كَافَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ بِقَلْبِي حَيَائِي مِنْكَ جَازَيْتَنِي.

O my Master, perhaps I thought that Your claim was of no importance and consequence, so You kept me at a distance; or perhaps I looked the other way avoiding You, so You held me in contempt; or perhaps I tried to find what was lost in the company of liars, so You left me in the lurch; or perhaps I showed ungratefulness for the bounties I received from You, so You expelled and banished me; or perhaps I stopped visiting the gatherings of scholars, so You forsook me; or perhaps I sat in the company of the forgetful careless, so You withdrew Your mercy; or perhaps I enjoyed the conversation of vain jesters, so You kept up my friendship with them; or perhaps I did not crave for what I asked for, so You sent me away; or perhaps because of my offences I was chased away; or perhaps it was my lack of conscience that made You
".cut me off

By closely examining this part of the supplication, we find out that it is true that whenever we want, we can have the inner state of supplication, litanies and devotion to God. Experience has also proved that this state is not totally at the disposal of man. Many times, although a person wants to seriously engage in supplication and prayer, when the time for it comes he realizes that he has been in another state, forgetting that he is in the state of supplication or prayer. It can be deduced from this part of the supplication that our past actions contribute to the emergence and deprivation of
.opportunities for worship

A person who spends day and night in vain activities cannot totally concentrate in his prayer and supplications and prevent futile ideas from entering his mind. Mingling with people engaged in unwholesome work or vain talk affects one's inner state and behavior and deprives him of the state of supplication and litany. Like commission of sins, keeping aloof from the 'ulamā' and upright servants of Allah results in one's deprivation of opportunities to worship God. It is mentioned in some narrations [riwāyāt] that sometimes God deprives His servant of the opportunity to engage in the night vigil and supererogatory prayers [tahajjud] because of his commission of sins
.during the day

Therefore, if a person wants to succeed in sincere supplications, prayers and reading of the Qur'an, he must provide the preliminaries beforehand. Without preconditioning the heart, one cannot find the desired state in prayer and supplication

This part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī urges us to be very careful of our actions lest the presence of heart in worship is taken away from us. Those who want to have the opportunity to engage in the night vigil and supererogatory prayers must be careful of their thoughts and actions during the day. They must keep their eyes and ears from whatever they are not supposed to see and hear. Their hearts must not give attention to futile affairs. They must not entertain worthless ideas in their minds. It is because these things stand in the way of presence of heart. As such, it can be said that all afflictions of man are products of his actions. It is he who, because of his actions, keeps spiritual blessings away from himself. The solution to all these problems can also be found in him

The consequence of actions

Volitional actions done by man in this world have two outcomes. One outcome manifests itself in this world and the other outcome will surface in the next world. The mundane outcome of good actions done by a person is an opportunity to perform more good deeds. Conversely, the repercussion of wicked actions being committed leads to the deprivation of the opportunity to do good deeds, on one hand, and stronger inclination to commit more sins, on the other. For these two reasons, therefore, one must avoid doing wicked actions. Paying attention to these consequences prompts man to be watchful of his actions and always be wary of God [taqwā]—not to eat prohibited food, not talk about anything without forethought, nor do every thing thoughtlessly. In fact, he must always take the pleasure of God into consideration. Not everyone is admitted to an intimate meeting. There are many Muslims who do not have the opportunity to have intimacy with God. Only those who are truly wary of their actions, behavior and interaction with others and always remember God are admitted to an intimate meeting with God

Those who are tainted with some shortcomings and deviations throughout their life must strive to purge themselves of these pollutions during the month of Ramaḍān, when they are invited to the divine banquet and an intimate meeting with Allah. In this blessed month, they must try to get accustomed to being wary of God so as to maintain piety even after Ramaḍān

One of the best blessings of this month is the opportunity for man to perform the most sublime forms of worship. During this month, he is more careful of his actions. He does not eat every food, tries not to utter anything that comes to his mind, controls his eyes and ears, etc. As such, the more he trains himself in controlling these things, the more will he benefit from the blessings of this month. After this month, he must also strive to keep

everything he achieved from the spiritual training throughout the month, so that he
.can succeed henceforth, in his spiritual journey of love

There are many people who are devoted and pious but they die impious and sinful. There are also many people who are sinners but they leave this world felicitous. So, one must not even look down upon the sinners. Arrogance or self-admiration is most detestable to God; therefore, He does not give some people the opportunity to
[\(1\).perform night supererogatory prayers \[tahajjud\].](#)

It is because arrogance [ghurūr] is so harmful to man that it cannot even be
.compensated by supererogatory prayers

اللَّهُمَّ احْمِلْنَا فِي سُفُنِ نَجَاتِكَ، وَمَتَّعْنَا بِلَذِيذِ مُنَاجَاتِكَ، وَأَوْرِدْنَا حِيَاضَ حُبِّكَ، وَأَذِقْنَا حَلَاوَةَ وُدِّكَ وَقُرْبِكَ، وَاجْعَلْ جِهَادَنَا
فِيكَ، وَهَمَّنَا فِي طَاعَتِكَ.

O God, carry us in the ships of Your deliverance, give us to enjoy the pleasure of the “whispered prayer to You, make us drink from the pools of Your love, let us taste the sweetness of Your affection and nearness, allow us to struggle towards You, [and]
[\(2\).preoccupy us with obeying You.”](#)

p: ١٢٩

Al-Kulaynī: Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. ٢, bāb al-riḍā bi'l-qaḍā', ḥadīth ٤ – –١

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān: The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – –٢
.”Obedient towards God

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p: ۱۳۰

إلهي لو قرنتني بالأصيفاد، ومنعتني سبيك من بين الأَشهاد، ودللت علي فضايحي عُيون العباد، وأمرت بي إلى النار، وحلت بيني وبين الأبرار، ما قطع رجائي منك وما صيرت تأملي للعفو عنك، ولا خرج حُبك من قلبي، أنا لا أنسى أيديك عندي، وسترك علي في دار الدنيا.

O Allah! If I had been yoked to and tied with chains and cut off from the flowing“ stream of Your bounties in the presence of witnessing people, and they were all eyes to see how I was exposed to infamy and disgrace, and I was ordered to proceed to Hell, and a barrier was put between me and the blessed pious, even then I would not cease to have hope and it would not stop me from expecting Your pardon, and would not take away Your love from my heart. I have not forgotten the bounties and the ”.protection You made available for me in this world

Fear and hope as a requisite of faith

One of the subjects emphasized in various ways in the noble supplications related to the blessed month of Ramaḍān is the issue of fear and hope [khawf wa rajā’] and the .striking of a balance between them

(Perfect expression of the state of fear and hope in Imām al–Sajjād (‘a

The prayer of Imām al–Sajjad (‘a) is a perfect expression of the needed state of fear and hope. Naturally, when a person comprehends the greatness of Allah, he will feel abjectness and express humility. So, one who truly comprehends the greatness of Allah cannot remain fearless of Him. The holy saints [awliyā’] were so fearful that sometimes their faces would turn pale. At times, their trembling would be beyond description! Could we faithfully describe Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī, Imām al–Sajjād and the other ?infallible Imāms (‘a) without considering their states of fear

Of course, while having such fear, the faithful [mu’min] must be as hopeful of God’s .mercy as if he has not committed any sin

Imām al–Ṣādiq (‘a) said one of the admonitions of Luqmān the Wise (‘a) to his son was

:as follows

p: ۱۳۱

خَفِيَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَيْفَهُ لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِبِرِّ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَعَذَّبَكَ. وَارْجُ اللهُ رَجَاءً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِذُنُوبِ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَرَحِمَكَ.

Have such a fear of God Almighty that were you to come to Him with the virtues of the two worlds [thaqalayn] He would still chastise you, and pin such a hope on God that were you to come to Him with the sins of the two worlds He would still have [\[compassion for you.\]](#)⁽¹⁾

The Imām (‘a) also said in another ḥadīth

نَجْوَى الْعَارِفِينَ تَدُورُ عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَصُولٍ: الْخَوْفِ وَالرَّجَاءِ وَالْحُبِّ؛ فَالْخَوْفُ فَرْعُ الْعِلْمِ وَالرَّجَاءُ فَرْعُ الْيَقِينِ وَالْحُبُّ فَرْعُ الْمَعْرِفَةِ.

The whisper (prayer) of the mystics is based on three principles: fear, hope and love. “Fear is the outcome of [perfect] knowledge [of God and His Attributes]. Hope is the [\[fruit of certainty \[yaqīn\] \[to God\].](#) Love is the offshoot of gnosis [of Allah].”⁽²⁾

There are many similar passages in other supplications and litanies transmitted from the infallible Imāms (‘a). In a poem attributed to him, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said

إِلَهِي لَنْ عَذَّبْتَنِي أَلْفَ حِجَّةٍ فَحَبْلُ رَجَائِي مِنْكَ لَا يَنْتَقِطُ

,O God, even if You chastise me for a thousand years

[\[The rope of my hope in You\[r mercy\] will never be cut.\]](#)⁽³⁾

In Du‘ā’ Kumayl, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) says

يَا مَوْلَايَ فَكَيْفَ يَبْقَى فِي الْعَذَابِ وَهُوَ يَرْجُو مَا سَلَفَ مِنْ حِلْمِكَ، أَمْ كَيْفَ تُؤَلِّمُهُ النَّارُ وَهُوَ يَأْمُلُ فَضْلَكَ وَرَحْمَتَكَ.

My Protector, how should he (Your servant) remain in chastisement while he has “hope of Your previous clemency? Or how can the Fire cause him pain while he expects “?Your Bounty and Mercy

While reading these lines, we must reflect a bit on ourselves and ask, “Can we really make such a supplication? Can we talk to God with such

.Al-Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. ۲, p. ۶۷, ḥadīth ۱ – ۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۲, ḥadīth ۲۲ – ۲

.Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, p. ۲۳۸ – ۳

sincerity? Is it really true that on the Day of Judgment if God exposes our sins before His creatures, enchains us and sends us to hell, we will still hope for His mercy, and more than this, can we supplicate in such a way that our love for Him is not removed
”?from our hearts and we still love Him

Such a supplication is hard to make. And we cannot sincerely make such a claim. The way we behave and think in this world bears testimony to this fact. If we encounter a problem which is not easily solved, we complain to God. Not only that love of Him has not remained in our hearts but we also nurture an ill feeling toward Him—God forbid!

.We are so attached to the world that separation from it is unimaginable

It can be said, therefore, that our spiritual state is not attuned to such supplication. We cannot utter by ourselves this part of the supplication as with so many other parts of such supplications. Only the likes of Ḥaḍrat Amīr (‘a) and Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) can talk to God in such a manner and make such a claim. We must utter these statements as a way of quoting them. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to create states close to
.them

Way of nurturing love for God

A. Paying attention to the blessings of Allah: Nurturing the love of God keeps a person away from disobeying Him and violating His orders. What shall we do to keep this love of God in our heart so that we remain near to Him even if we experience affliction and adversity? What shall we do to be so hopeful that even if we are thrown into hellfire,
?the hope of God’s mercy is not removed from our hearts

What is the way of nurturing love of God and hope in Him? In this part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī quoted earlier, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) said that “If ever my love for You is not removed from my heart, it is because I do not forget Your blessings. Neither do I forget Your concealment of my sins and lapses.” It can be inferred from these statements that if man wants the love of God to remain in his heart, he must
.constantly remember God and His ample blessings

:The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said

أَحِبُّوا اللَّهَ لِمَا يَغْذُوكُمْ بِهِ نِعْمِهِ.

“Love Allah as He nourishes you with His blessings.” (1)

It is mentioned in a ḥadīth qudsī that God, the Exalted, said to Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān (‘a): “O Mūsā! Express your love for Me in the presence of people

p: ۱۳۳

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۰, p. ۱۶, ḥadīth ۷ – ۱

Ḥaḍrat Mūsā (‘a) asked: “What should I do?” God said: “Mention My blessings to [\(them.\)”](#)

Therefore, in order to nurture the love of Allah in our hearts, we must remember each of His blessings and favors. God’s blessings are so abundant and we are so enveloped by them that we cannot comprehend their existence and are unaware of their value, except when we encounter problems and are deprived of a blessing or blessings. We then realize its or their value

Du‘ā’ Jawshan Ṣaghīr mentions the afflictions experienced by people—and possibly us. At the outset, it points to the hostilities of the ill-wishers and enemies—and how :God has protected us from them

إل-هى كُفْم مِنْ عَدُوِّ انْتَضَى عَلَيَّ سَيْفَ عداوَتِهِ وَشَحَذَ لى طُبَّهَ مُدَيَّتِهِ، وَأَزْهَفَ لى شَبَا حَدِّهِ، وَدَافَ لى قَوَاتِلَ سُمُومِهِ، وَسَدَّدَ إِلَيَّ (نَحْوِى) صَيَوَاتِبَ سَهَامِهِ وَلَمْ تَنَمَّ عَنى عَيْنُ حِرَاسَتِهِ، وَأَضْمَرَ أَنْ يَسُومَنى الْمَكْرُوهَ وَيُجَرِّعَنى دُعاَفَ مَرَارَتِهِ نَظَرَتَ (فَنَظَرَتَ) إِلَى ضَعْفى عَنِ احْتِمَالِ الْفَوادِحِ.

My God, many an enemy drew up the sword of hostility against me, honed the“ dagger’s edge, sharpened the arrows’ points, prepared deadly poisons, leveled his bow at me, and keeping an eye on me, planned to force me to swallow, against my ”.will, the deadly bitter poison. You knew that I was too weak to bear hardships

:It continues, thus

وَاجْعَلْنى لِنِعْمائِكَ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ وَاللَّاكِرِينَ مِنَ الدَّاكِرِينَ.

And let me be among those who thank Thee for Thy bounties and remember Thee“ ”.for Thy favors

Thus, it is necessary to set a certain time during the day or night to think about and remember God’s blessings and His concealment of our lapses. Let us remember His blessings and Him for these blessings although, as stated by Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a), even if a person spends his entire life thanking God for His blessings, he will not be [\(able to duly thank Him for even a single blessing except through His permission.\)](#)

– ١ – Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٢, p. ٤, bāb ٨, ḥadīth ٤ –

– ٢ – In Du‘ā’ ‘Arafah, Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) said –
ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِمَنَّكَ الْمُوجِبِ عَلَيَّ بِهِ شُكْرُكَ أَيْدَاءً جَدِيداً. “Were my life to be extended through them to deliver thanks for one of Your blessings, I would not have been able to do so, except by Your grace, which alone makes incumbent upon me never-ending and ever renewed gratitude for You”.

attain the station of the grateful [shākirīn] is a status given by God to His faithful servants, otherwise who could be able to duly express gratitude for His blessings?

:Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says

فَالأُوْكَ جَمَّهُ ضَعْفَ لِسَانِي عَنِ إِحْصَائِهَا، وَنِعْمَ أُوْكَ كَثِيرَةٌ قَصِيرَ فَهْمِي عَنِ إِدْرَاكِهَا فَضْلاً عَنِ اسْتِثْقَائِهَا، فَكَيْفَ لِي بِتَحْصِيلِ الشُّكْرِ، وَشُكْرِي إِيَّاكَ يَفْتَقِرُ إِلَى شُكْرِي، فَكُلَّمَا قُلْتُ: لَكَ الْحَمْدُ، وَجَبَ عَلَيَّ لِذَلِكَ أَنْ أَقُولَ: لَكَ الْحَمْدُ.

Your boons are abundant—my tongue is too weak to count them! Your favors are “many—my understanding falls short of grasping them, not to speak of exhausting them! So how can I achieve thanksgiving? For, my thanking You requires thanksgiving. Whenever I say, ‘To You belongs praise!’ it becomes thereby incumbent (upon me to say, ‘To You belongs praise!’)

از دست و زبان که بر آید کز عهده شکرش به در آید

?Whose hand and tongue is able To duly thank Him for His blessings

One of the ways through which we can better realize the blessings of God is to compare ourselves with those who are deprived of those blessings. By doing so, we will find out what great blessings God, the Exalted, has endowed us with, which others are deprived of. Paying heed to these blessings engenders love of God and a sense of gratitude and hope in our hearts

In another part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) mentions the blessings of God, thus

أَنَا الصَّغِيرُ الَّذِي رَبَّيْتَهُ، وَأَنَا الْجَاهِلُ الَّذِي عَلَّمْتَهُ، وَأَنَا الضَّالُّ الَّذِي هَدَيْتَهُ، وَأَنَا الْوَضِيعُ الَّذِي رَفَعْتَهُ، وَأَنَا الْخَائِفُ الَّذِي آمَنْتَهُ، وَالْجَائِعُ الَّذِي أَشْبَعْتَهُ، وَالْعَطْشَانُ الَّذِي أَرْوَيْتَهُ، وَالْعَارِي الَّذِي كَسَوْتَهُ، وَالْفَقِيرُ الَّذِي أَعْنَيْتَهُ، وَالضَّعِيفُ الَّذِي قَوَّيْتَهُ، وَالذَّلِيلُ الَّذِي أَعَزَّزْتَهُ، وَالسَّقِيمُ الَّذِي شَفَيْتَهُ.

O Master! I am the young one whom You raised, and I am the ignorant one whom “You educated, and I am the misled one whom You guided, and I am the humiliated one whom You elevated, And I am the frightened one whom You safeguarded, and the hungry one whom You fed, and the thirsty one whose thirst You quenched, and the naked one whom You dressed, and the poor one whom You

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān: The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – –١
.”Thankful

made wealthy, and the weak one whom You strengthened, and the insignificant one
”whom You honored, and the afflicted one whom You cured

Apart from increasing one’s love for the Beneficent [mun‘im], paying heed to these blessings also kindles hope in his heart. The God who has endowed all these blessings does not want to send him to hell for no reason at all. He opens the way of felicity to man, but the ingratitude and disobedience of His servants demands that God the All-wise must make a distinction between them and His righteous servants. As such,
.those who are disobedient shall be punished

B. Paying heed to God’s concealment of our sins: Concerning the sins we commit in private, God has provided the ground for other people not to become aware of them. This is also one of the great blessings that God has given man. Sometimes, when he is alone, a person commits a wicked act, but God, the Exalted, conceals his sin from public view. Had it not been for this blessing, he could not afford to be present in
:public. For this reason, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says

أَنَا لَا أَنْسَى أَيَادِيكَ عِنْدِي، وَسِتْرَكَ عَلَيَّ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا.

”I do not forget Your helping Hand upon me, and Your protection of my secrets in life “

If during the holy month of Ramaḍān we do not prepare ourselves for such a program, we will not find any time more suitable than this. If we do not benefit from these opportunities, a time will come when we will regret and be at a loss. Suddenly, we will come to our senses and realize that another month of Ramaḍān has passed but we did not repent for our sins, are not relieved of the afflictions we got ourselves into, and we did not put off the fire we ignited in ourselves. We did not fulfill the rights
.of people, nor give up backbiting, lying, and other sins we committed daily

أَفَلَيْسَانِي هَذَا الْكَمَالُ أَشْكُرُكَ، أَمْ بِغَايَةِ جُهْدِي فِي عَمَلِي أَرْضِيكَ، وَمَا قَدْرُ لِسَانِي يَا رَبِّ فِي جَنْبِ شُكْرِكَ، وَمَا قَدْرُ عَمَلِي فِي
جَنْبِ نِعْمِكَ وَإِحْسَانِكَ.

Can I, with this heavy tongue of mine, thank You, or with my utmost effort satisfy
You? And what is the value of my tongue, O Lord, when it comes to thanking You? And

[\(what is the value of my good deeds compared to Your gifts and patience with me?\)](#) [\(1\)](#)

p: ١٣٦

.A part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī – –١

Fifth Discourse Remembrance of Allah

Point

يا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَّذْتُ أَلَمَ الْخَوْفِ عَنِّي.

O my Master! In Your remembrance my heart takes delight; through prayers I hold “
” communion with You; this eases the pain of fear that torments me

Remembrance of Allah

The main purpose behind all religious obligations, especially different forms of worship, is to establish and strengthen the relationship between God and man, and the spirit of all these is to “remember” and be heedful of God, while performing them. Regarding ritual prayer [ṣālah] which is the highest form of worship and highly :enjoined, the Qur’an states

(وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي)

“(And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”) (١)

Concerning other acts of worship, fuqahā [jurists] are of the opinion that if they are done without the remembrance of and attention to God, His commandments are not .discharged

The essence of Allah’s remembrance

What does dhikr mean? In Arabic, dhikr is applied to many cases. It can be said that the root of all these cases is identical with what we call yād [remembrance] in Persian. Of course, dhikr is sometimes applied to the heavenly books and prophets. Regarding :the Torah [tawrāt], for example, the Qur’an states

(وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ)

Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the dhikr [Torah]: ‘Indeed My righteous “
(servants shall inherit the earth’.”) (٢)

.Sūrat Ṭā Hā ۲۰:۱۴ – ۱

.Sūrat al-Anbiyā' ۲۱:۱۰۵ – ۲

:In many verses, the Qur'an itself is also referred to as dhikr. For example, it says

(إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ)

“Indeed We have sent down the Reminder and indeed We will preserve it.”

Perhaps the reason why heavenly scriptures and prophets are sometimes referred to as dhikr is that they make the people aware of God. People tend to remember God by reading these books and seeing these holy personages

Hence, the main lexical meaning of dhikr is remembrance and attention. To remember someone or something is sometimes only a matter of the heart. At times, it is also expressed by the tongue. When you say, “I remember my friend,” this remembering is a matter of the heart that flashed in your mind. Sometimes, this remembrance flows from the heart to the tongue. For example, when you tell your friend, “We mentioned you favorably,” it means talking about him in addition to remembering him. Remembrance by the tongue follows remembrance by the heart. Unless something is in one's mind, he cannot mention or talk about it. Thus, to mention something shows remembrance of it by the heart which is the essence of dhikr

It is worth-mentioning that remembrance of the tongue is always accompanied by attention of the heart. It is regrettable, however, that in remembering Allah, our acts of remembrance [adhkār] lack the presence of heart. We sometimes pray or read the Qur'an but that which is absent in our mind is the “remembrance” of Allah. This is while the essence and philosophy of prayer is nothing but attention to God. While supplicating and asking God for something, we are not even mindful of Him. If a man with spiritual insight observes many of us while praying, he will see that we are thinking of our spouses, children, occupations, houses, car, positions, etc. We are entangled with them. That which is totally absent is the remembrance of Allah

In any case, the essence of dhikr is the attention of the heart. In this regard, the Qur'an states

(وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ)

And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without“
[\(being loud.\)”](#)

p: ١٣٨

.Sūrat al-Ḥijr ١٥:٩ – ١

.Sūrat al-A‘rāf ٧:٢٠٥ – ٢

It is not proper for a person to shout while mentioning the Name of Allah. This verse enjoins us to remember Allah silently or whisperingly. Of course, in cases where “remembrance of Allah” [dhikr Allāh] is considered a slogan, such as in the call to prayer [adhān] and reciting Allāhu akbar [takbīr] in the battlefield, it must be loud to .serve its intended purpose

Peace of mind lies only in the remembrance of Allah

The life of man in this world is accompanied by anxieties. Some anthropological schools of thought even consider anxiety as the appraiser of man’s life and existence, or his deciding factor, maintaining that, “Man’s being human lies in the fact that he must be agitated and anxious.” Of course, this view is extreme but partially true. Because of various factors, human beings usually experience different forms of agitation and anxiety. They are always anxious about the future. It seems that this condition is useful for some reasons and can have positive effects, but it is basically an undesirable state. Man is inherently in pursuit of peace of mind. Whenever he is anxious, he needs peace of mind. The depth of the human heart must also be tranquil and serene, and anxieties must be like short and momentary waves, otherwise the .life of man becomes gloomy

What factor can give tranquility and peace of mind to a person? The Qur’an states :that only remembrance of Allah can calm agitated and anxious hearts

(أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ)

“Look! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!” (۱)

Those who truly remember Allah and in whose souls this remembrance is deeply rooted are so calm and tranquil that no event can make them anxious and agitated. In our time, Imām Khomeinī is an example of such personalities. Great events would happen—events that shake mountains—but this holy personage would not lose his calm and sobriety, as if nothing happened. What kind of a heart was his? What was the source of its strength? The East and the West were at logger heads with him but he was steadfastly and firmly pursuing his objective. The stronger the remembrance

.of and attention to God is, the more a person has tranquility of heart

Traditions have likened the believer to a mountain and described him as stronger than it. It is because storms may make stones on top of the mountain roll down, but .the hurricane of events can never weaken the faith of the believer

p: ۱۳۹

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۲۸ – –۱

الْمُؤْمِنُ كَالْجَبَلِ الرَّاسِخِ لَا تُحَرِّكُهُ الْعَوَاصِفُ.

﴿The believer is like a mountain that cannot be shaken by winds.﴾⁽¹⁾

Why? It is because his heart is connected to something that cannot be shaken, transformed and extinguished. Therefore, in addition to eternal felicity, remembrance of Allah gives peace of mind in this world, which in itself is a blessing beyond .description

'Allah's special attention to His awliyā

:In the Qur'an, God uses an excellent expression which is worthy of reflection. He says

(فَادْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ)

﴿Remember Me, and I will remember you.﴾⁽²⁾

This expression can be analyzed in different ways according to various views and levels of understanding. Of course, God is aware of everyone and everything at every .moment

(وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ)

﴿Your Lord is not oblivious of what you do.﴾⁽³⁾

(وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا)

﴿And Your Lord is not forgetful.﴾⁽⁴⁾

Allah has perfect knowledge of the past, the present and the future, and nothing is .hidden from Him

(وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ)

﴿Not an atom's weight escapes your Lord in the earth or in the sky.﴾⁽⁵⁾

Now, it is clear that when God says, "Remember Me, and I will remember you," this 'remembrance' is something else. It is a special remembrance of God towards His

.friends [awliyā’]. It does not refer to His general attention towards all creation

p: ۱۴۰

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۲۴, p. ۱۰۴, ḥadīth ۵ with a slight variation – –۱

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۲ – –۲

.Sūrat Hūd ۱۱:۱۲۳ – –۳

.Sūrat Maryam ۱۹:۶۴ – –۴

.Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۶۱ – –۵

In interpreting this verse, some exegetes of the Qur'an have opined that God wants to say, "Remember Me by doing good deeds so that I remember you through My mercy and wholesome reward." This expresses a portion of the truth, but it is possible that this verse points to a deeper and more profound subject. Those who have tasted the sweetness of love always like their beloved [maḥbūb] to pay attention to them. For example, in a gathering where they and their beloved are present, they wish their beloved glances at them sometimes. The true lover [muḥibb] is truly delighted by this attention and it is more valuable to him than all material enjoyments. God, the Exalted, has many such friends

As such, God says: "If you want Me to pay special attention to you (and so to speak, to take an occasional glance at you), then remember Me

گرت هواست که معشوق نگسلد پیوند نگاهدار سر رشته تا نگهدارد

, (If you want the beloved not to sever the bond (of love

.You must keep the union so that she will do so, too

So, those who have somehow tasted the sweetness of divine love do not forget God for even a moment. Even in sleep, they are heedful of Him. As they wake up, the first thing they utter is a remembrance [dhikr] of Allah. Some 'ulamā' said that as the effect of constant practice, a person will reach a stage where not only when he is alone will he remember Allah. In fact, while working for others, attending to daily affairs and interacting with others, attention to God will persist in his heart. Possibly, this state of attention to God remains in his heart or becomes even stronger while in sleep. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the sleep of a believer is said to be a form of worship .[[ibādah

Therefore, remembrance of God leads to His special attention towards His remembering servant [dhākir]. During the latter part of the blessed life of the late 'Allāmah (Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī), he was often requested for advice. Such a request was repeated many times in which he would always recite the same noble verse

(فَادْكُرُونِي اَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ)

“Remember Me, and I will remember you.” (1)

We can fully comprehend the importance and value of God’s attention towards His servant when we realize that the greatest loss of the faithless [kuffār] on the Day of Judgment will be God’s inattention to them. In

p: ١٤١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١٥٢ – ١

expressing the severity of the loss and chastisement of the faithless on the Day of Judgment, God says

(وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ)

﴿And Allah will not speak to them nor will He [so much as] look at them.﴾^(۱)

This is the severest and most painful chastisement for them. Presently, we cannot comprehend how painful God’s inattention is, but in the hereafter when the veils will be lifted, the importance of this issue will be clarified in such a manner that even the faithless will comprehend it

Remembrance of Allah under all conditions

We shall end this section with traditions stating that remembrance of Allah in all conditions is good. Since man has physical and animalistic dimension, he has no option but to do certain things that are related to this dimension. Initially, he thinks that remembrance of Allah in such conditions is unpleasant, but God enjoins us to remember Him even in such conditions. As such, in some of these conditions, we are commanded not to face the qiblah

Numerous supplications for most or perhaps all conditions have been transmitted from the Infallibles (‘a). In most cases, the holy personages themselves recited those supplications. As such, the servant of God must never forget Him

:Regarding the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), it has been reported, thus

وَكَانَ لَا يَجْلِسُ وَلَا يَقُومُ إِلَّا عَلَيَّ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ جَلَّ إِسْمُهُ.

He would neither sit nor rise up without remembering Allah, may His Name be “glorified.”^(۲)

Whenever he would wear a new garment, he would recite a specific dhikr. At the time of sleeping, he would recite a certain dhikr or the Verse of the Throne [āyat al-kursī]^(۳) according to some traditions. At the time of waking up, he would first perform prostration and praise Allah. Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) said

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ۳:۷۷ – ۱

.Ṭabarsī, Makārim al-Akhlāq, p. ۱۴ – ۲

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵۵ – ۳

مَا اسْتَيْقَظَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ مِنْ نَوْمٍ إِلَّا خَرَّ لِلَّهِ سَاجِدًا.

“The Messenger of Allah would not wake up without having prostrated to Allah.” (1)

:After waking up, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would say

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانِي بَعْدَ مَوْتِي.

”All praise is due to Allah who revived me after being dead“

Many other adhkār transmitted from the Imāms of guidance (‘a) all indicate that the believer must remember Allah in all conditions and begin every work with the remembrance of Allah

God said to Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān (‘a): “Forget Me not in any condition and be not heedless in remembering Me.” Mūsā (‘a) said: “O God! In some conditions, I am ashamed to be aware of Your presence.” God said to him

إِنَّ ذِكْرِي حَسَنٌ عَلَيْكَ حَالٍ.

“Indeed remembrance of Me is good in all conditions.” (2)

Moreover, according to the Qur’an, nothing should obstruct the believer from remembering Allah. In describing the true believer, it states

(رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ)

men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of...

“Allah, and the maintenance of prayer.” (3)

Outwardly, they are engaged in trading, business and interactions with people but God is always present in their minds. Nothing makes them neglectful of Him. In describing such believers, God said to His Apostle (ﷺ) during the night of ascension

:[[mi‘rāj

ثُمَّ يُعَالُ لَهَا: كَيْفَ تَرَكْتِ الدُّنْيَا؟ فَتَقُولُ: إِلَهِي وَعِزَّتِكَ وَجَلَالِكَ لَا عِلْمَ لِي بِالدُّنْيَا، أَنَا مُنْذُ خَلَقْتَنِي خَائِفٌ مِنْكَ. فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ صَدَقْتَ عِنْدِي؛ كُنْتَ بِجَسَدِكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَرُوحُكَ مَعِي.

When the believer departs from this world, he will be asked: ‘How did you leave the“ world?’^(۴) He will answer: ‘O Allah, by Your might and glory! I have no knowledge of it.

Since You created me, I have

p: ۱۴۳

.Makārim al-Akhlāq, p. ۳۹ – –۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۱۳, p. ۳۴۳, ḥadīth ۲۱ – –۲

.Sūrat al-Nūr ۲۴:۳۷ – –۳

”?That is, “How’s the world when you left it – –۴

been conscious of You.’ Allah will say: ‘You speak the truth, My servant. Your body was
in this world but your spirit was with Me.” (1)

Intimacy with Allah as [source of] the joy of the awliyā

Yes, if ever the true believer pays attention to the world, it is a superficial attention paid for lack of an alternative, but the heart is heedful of God. If ever he pays attention to the blessings of this world, it is because they are a gift of his Beloved to him.

The awliyā’ of Allah are not only heedless of the material enjoyments in this world but also in the hereafter where, while the average believers enjoy the divine blessings, they are in intimacy with their Lord.

In a ḥadīth qudsī on the Prophet’s night ascension [mi‘rāj], it is thus stated

وَإِذَا تَلَذَّذَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ بِالطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ، تَلَذَّذُوا أَوْلِيَّكَ بِذِكْرِي وَكَلَامِي وَحَدِيثِي.

While the dwellers of paradise enjoy heavenly food and drink, they enjoy My“
remembrance, My words and My narration.” (2)

The heavenly food and drink are far superior to their worldly counterparts and those who have a strong determination disregard the unlawful enjoyments of this world so as to enjoy them. Yet, those who have savored the sweetness of attention to God and intimacy with Him do not pay attention even to that heavenly food and drink

دوست ما را و همه نعمت فردوس شما را

Let the Friend be for us, and all the blessings of paradise for you

Even if sometimes these believers enjoy something other than intimacy with God, they seek His forgiveness. In his litanies, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) says to God

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ مِنْ كُلِّ لَذَّةٍ بَغَيْرِ ذِكْرِكَ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ رَاحَةٍ بَغَيْرِ أُنْسِكَ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ سُرُورٍ بَغَيْرِ قُرْبِكَ.

I pray forgiveness from You for every pleasure but remembering You, every ease “ but intimacy with You, every happiness but nearness to You, every occupation but

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٧٧, p. ٢١ – –١

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٧٧, p. ٢٣, ḥadīth ٤ – –٢

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.”Rememberers

What have they found in His remembrance that they do not pay attention to other pleasures? The answer to this question can be sought from the verse, “Remember Me, and I will remember you” and it is expressed in clearer terms in a ḥadīth qudsī on [the Prophet’s night ascension [mi‘rāj

أَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً.

”I look at them seven times a day“

This is actually the very thing they have found in the remembrance of God: their Beloved’s attention towards them. May Allah provide us and you with it by His will

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ لِسَانَنَا بِذِكْرِكَ لَهْجاً وَقَلْبَنَا بِحُبِّكَ مُتِّمًا وَمَنْ عَلَيْنَا بِحُسْنِ إِجَابَتِكَ.

O Allah! Make my tongue remember You constantly and make Your love enthrall my “[heart](#)! Be gracious to me by answering me favorably.”[\(1\)](#)

p: ۱۴۵

Adapted from Du‘ā’ Kumayl – ۱

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p: 146

يا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَّدْتُ أَلَمَ الْخَوْفِ عَنِّي.

O my Master! In Your remembrance my heart takes delight, with prayers I hold
”communion with You; it benumbs the pain of fear that torments me

Some features of the heart

Remembrance of Allah or dhikr Allāh has been emphasized in noble verses of the Qur’an and sayings of the purified Imāms (‘a). It has been mentioned as an elixir that gives infinite value to man’s temporary and short life and enlightens his heart in accepting the truths

One of the features of a pure and sound heart is its being a perfect reflection of the truth. The human heart is in a pure state of nature and if it is not stained by sins and excessive attention to the world, it will reflect the truth. If it is no longer in its state of nature it will no more reflect the truth and exemplify a ‘remembering’ heart. In this regard, Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) said

إِنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ جَعَلَ الذِّكْرَ جِلَاءً لِلْقُلُوبِ، تَسْمَعُ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْوَقْرِهِ، وَتُبْصِرُ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْعَشْوَةِ.

Certainly, Allah, the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance the light for“ hearts which hear with its help, despite deafness, and see with its help, despite blindness.”(1)

Polish” [jalā] is applied to something to remove its rust or stains. As a result, its“ metallic lustre is revived. The human heart also rusts. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is reported to have said

إِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَصْدَأُ كَمَا يَصْدَأُ الْحَدِيدُ قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا جَلَاؤُهَا؟ قَالَ قِرَاءَةُ الْقُرْآنِ وَذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ.

Verily the heart rusts like iron.” It was asked, “O Messenger of Allah! What is its“ polish?” He (ﷺ) said: “It is reading of the Qur’an and remembrance of death.”(2)

۱- (Nahj al-Balāghah: Sermon ۲۲۲ (Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ – –)
۲- Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۴, ḥadīth ۱۵۴۸ – –

Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) said that the heart has eyes and ears. It rusts and cannot grasp the truth. With the remembrance of Allah the heart regains its sight and hearing. Then

يَتَنَسَّمُونَ بِدُعَائِهِ رَوْحَ التَّجَاوُزِ.

﴿They call Him and breathe in the air of forgiveness.﴾^(١)

.So, those who remember God can smell the fragrance of Divine mercy

It becomes clear that our hearts malfunction as they do not perceive many things perceivable to the awliyā’ of Allah. If ever they could perceive a little, they would feel the burden of their sins. The awliyā’ of Allah know the consequences of sin and its weight makes them very anxious and agitated

When sins are multiplied—one, two up to one thousand—they will realize that they shoulder a truck of gravel or even more. Once they feel this, they will involuntarily shout because they cannot endure it. If ever our shout is not loud, it is because we do not understand. Our hearts do not function properly. The sense of smell of our hearts is suspended as it cannot smell the stench of sin; otherwise it would smell a corpse.

!We eat corpses without sensing their smell

(أَيْحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا)

﴿Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother?﴾^(٢)

Not only we do not abhor backbiting but in fact enjoy indulging in it. It is evident that our hearts’ sense of smell is weak. Remembrance of Allah does not mean mere tongue twisting. In fact, the criterion and axis is related to the remembrance that is rooted in the heart and enlightened by it

Of course, the essence of dhikr is the attention of the heart but verbal adhkār are not without effect and use and are better than vain or useless talk. Except at the time of talking to their companions or answering their questions, the Imāms of guidance (‘a) used to perform dhikr. Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) said: “The tongue of my father (Imām al-Bāqir (‘a)) was stuck to his palate.”^(٣) It alludes to his constant recital of Lā ilāha illāllāh

.[[There is no god but Allah

The heart is like a sea in which dhikr exerts influence. Sometimes, this dhikr is like the sand on the seashore that creates normal waves and footprints that

p: ۱۴۸

.(Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon ۲۲۲ (Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ – –۱

.Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt ۴۹:۱۲ – –۲

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۴۶, p. ۲۹۷, ḥadīth ۲۹ – –۳

easily disappear. Many adhkār and acts of worship we perform are like normal waves and the depth of our hearts is elsewhere. Sometimes, however, dhikr is like a strong wind that turns the heart upside down and exerts a lasting effect. So, one of the features of the heart is that it can correctly grasp the truth

The other feature of the human heart is that it can become the temporary abode of anything or anyone, and turn into a fair which is unknown to man. If he only reflects for a few minutes and take note of whatever enters his heart, he will see the tumult taking place in his heart! Sometimes, in a short devotional act, for example a two-cycle [rak‘ah] prayer, the mind is preoccupied with many things. Man is astonished as soon as he comes to his senses. This is not only in wakefulness as it is also present in sleep, and in sleep it is reflected as a dream

The value of the heart

The value of the heart depends on that which enters it. As such, it sometimes falls and becomes as valueless as garbage! At other times, it so ascends that it becomes the “throne of the All-beneficent” [‘arsh al-raḥmān

قلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ.

”The believer’s heart is the throne of the All-beneficent“

Is the heart of a person who always thinks of wealth, livestock and farm something other than garbage? Is the heart of a person who always thinks of this estate, that property, so-and-so mansion, trade, fraud, etc. something other than a real estate agency? If we describe the heart of a person who is preoccupied with this car and that car as a parking lot, are we exaggerating

Meanwhile, the heart can also become the “throne of the All-beneficent”. In the words of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), if God has a place in the hearts of some, “They pass their life in it (remembrance of Allah),” (1) such hearts have a divine status

Therefore, if the heart is left alone, it will become a doorless abode (caravanserai). Caravans from different directions and regions come and go, and it is possible the

person himself is unaware of what is going on. But if the person controls his heart, he will realize how valuable it is and what capability it has for growth and evolution. It is a precious diamond hidden under the flesh and a brilliant mineralogist wants to dig it out and know its value

p: ۱۴۹

.(Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon ۲۲۲ (Şubḥī Şālih – –۱

The mineralogists of this desert are the prophets and infallible Imāms (‘a). Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a) said: “Polish the heart with the remembrance of Allah so that its truth be revealed.” Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) said: “The life of the heart lies in the remembrance of Allah.” If the remembrance of Allah is not present in the heart, its value is equivalent to that which is the focus of its attention. One of its most important effects pointed out by Imām al-Ṣajjād (‘a) is the “life of the heart

The spiritual life of man

Life exists on various levels. One level is plantlife. Accordingly, we classify plants into “living” and “dead” (dry). A plant is living and some indications of this life are growth, development and reproduction. Other characteristics of life are movement and perception. Man has both the “flora” and “fauna” levels of life. He grows and develops as well as moves, perceives and senses. Therefore, he is similar to the plants and animals. This is what we call “life”. Whenever we find movement and perception in a person, we say that he is alive

As can be deduced from the Noble Qur’an and traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), man can have a life higher than that of the plants and animals—“spiritual” life. This superior life has some signs and if a person does not possess them, he cannot truly be called “human”, although he is alive from the perspective of animal life. We usually take animal life as “human life”. Reproducing, breathing, eating and drinking, perceiving, moving and the like, are conditions of plant and animal life, but human life is something else. In this regard, the Qur’an states

(أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا)

Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which“ he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darkness which he [\(cannot leave?\)](#) (1)

It can be inferred from this verse that man can have a kind of life whose requisite is luminosity [nūrāniyyah]. Thus, if man possesses this luminosity, he is alive otherwise .he is “dead”, even if he possesses plant and animal life

فَالصُّورَةُ صُورَةُ إِنْسَانٍ، وَالْقَلْبُ قَلْبُ حَيَوَانٍ، لَا يَعْرِفُ بَابَ الْهُدَى فَيَتَّبِعُهُ، وَلَا بَابَ الْعَمَى فَيُضِدُّ عَنْهُ، فَذَلِكَ مَيِّتُ الْأَحْيَاءِ!

His shape is that of a man, but his heart is that of a beast. He does not know the door of guidance to follow or the door of misguidance to avoid. These are living dead (bodies.)⁽¹⁾

In this line of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī—“In Your remembrance my heart takes delight”—Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) also points to this superior life—the life whose essential element is the remembrance of Allah. Just as man will die within a short span if oxygen is not available, the heart of the believer will also die if it ceases to remember Allah and becomes immersed in materiality

One of the levels of life is the “life of faith”, and perhaps it can be said that it is the true life of man. According to transmitted traditions, the “spirit of faith” [rūḥ al-īmān] is the source of life in the believer. Given this spirit, so long as he has not committed a sin, he possesses a different life, but as he commits a sin this spirit separates from him. As he repents and returns to God, this spirit returns to him

Apart from the spirit of faith, there are other types of spirits exclusive for the prophets and awliyā’ of Allah, such as the “holy spirit” [rūḥ al-qudus] possessed by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the pure Imāms (‘a)

Apart from what we can see and perceive with our animal perception, there are other things known to God, His Apostle (ﷺ) and the pure Imāms (‘a). Since we believe in God and His Apostle (ﷺ) we must also believe in those things. The value of such levels of life can be known only to those who possess them

The difference in the levels of life

When we compare a living plant—that is, a plant that breaths, grows and develops—with a dead plant, i.e. dry, we can see that they do not differ much. But if we compare a living animal with a dead one, we can observe the considerable difference

This difference is far greater between a living and dead person. The physical life of man is so valuable (at least to the person himself) that if he is wealthy he is willing to

spend his wealth to extend his life. He is even ready to spend huge amounts of money
.to keep his bodily limbs such as eyes, ears and physical life, healthy and sound

p: ۱۵۱

.(Nahj al-Balāghah: Sermon ۸۷ (Şubḥī Şālih – –۱

The same difference, nay even more than this, also exists between his physical and spiritual life. His spiritual life is far more valuable than his physical life. Those who have grasped the value of spiritual life and tasted its savor are willing to sacrifice the entire world for a moment of remembrance of Allah. How can we find out this value? We have to exert efforts to prepare ourselves to spend a few minutes daily remembering the Lord, performing our prayers and complaining to Him how far we are away from
!these people

Many people are deprived of this “human life”. To comprehend this fact is even difficult for them. How can heedless persons who know nothing but whims and caprice understand that the life of man is not limited to plant and animal life? How can they understand that the humanity of man is not confined to eating, sleeping and
:physical and animalistic enjoyments? In describing this type of people, God says

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ.

“They are like cattle, nay more misguided.”

Just as the plants are unaware of the life of animals and their perceptions, animals are ignorant of the dynamics of human life. We also suffer the same condition in relation to a higher and loftier life of man, which the awliyā’ say is so pleasant that it cannot be equaled by any material pleasure. The essence of human existence is other than eating, sleeping and passion. In comparison to the spiritual enjoyment and higher sphere of life, these are like toys with which a child plays. One who is alien to
!these subjects cannot comprehend them. He may even consider them ridiculous

Since God has guided us and we know that these things are true, we must not be indifferent to them. We must bear in mind that the pure Imāms (‘a) and pioneers in religion have conveyed these things to us to draw our attention to them and urge us to strive to acquire them. We must remind ourselves that these things also exist and not imagine that enjoyment is confined to materiality, eating and sleeping. His human perfection is far higher than animal enjoyments. It is hoped that as we pray to always
.follow God, Islam, the Apostle (ﷺ), and the Imāms (‘a), we can also enjoy a spiritual life

.A part of Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī – –١

أَللّٰهُمَّ اشْغَلْنَا بِذِكْرِكَ، وَأَعِدْنَا مِنْ سَخَطِكَ، وَأَجِرْنَا مِنْ عَذَابِكَ، وَأَرْزُقْنَا مِنْ مَوَاهِبِكَ، وَأَنْعِمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلِكَ.

O Lord! Occupy our time with Your remembrance, and guard us from Your wrath, and“
protect us from Your punishment, and grant us from Your rewards, and award us
”.from Your bounties

p: ١٥٣

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p: ۱۵۴

Seventh Discourse Degrees of Remembrance of Allah

Point

يا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَّدْتُ أَلَمَ الْخَوْفِ عَنِّي.

O my Master! In Your remembrance my heart takes delight, with prayers I hold
”communion with You; it benumbs the pain of fear that torments me

The discussion is about dhikr and some of its effects. One of its effects pointed by Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) is the “spiritual life” of man. The spiritual life of man needs specific
.”nourishment, which is the “remembrance of Allah

Different degrees of the remembrance of Allah

Concerning dhikr and attention to God, people are of various types and can be classified accordingly. There is a group of people who not only fail to earn pleasure in remembering Allah but it even engenders displeasure and aversion in their hearts.

:Regarding them, the Holy Qur’an states

(وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ)

When Allah is mentioned alone, [thereat] shrink away the hearts of those who do not“
(believe in the Hereafter.” (1)

As to the second group of people, they remember Allah whenever they feel in need of Him to solve their serious problems that cannot be solved through usual means or
:cannot be solved at all

(فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ)

When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when“
He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him], being ungrateful for
(what We have given them!” (2)

The third group of people is concerned with their fate on the Day of Resurrection.
They want their sins to be forgiven. So, they turn their

.Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٤٥ – ١

.Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt ٢٩:٦٥ – ٢

attention to God to forgive their sins and grant them blessings and rewards in the hereafter. They focus their attention to God as they aspire for paradise, damsels and heavenly palaces. In reality, they remember Allah to escape punishment and attain otherworldly blessings. This kind of attention to God is desirable in its own right as it shows the existence of their faith in God. However, this kind of remembrance to God is actually attention of man, first and foremost, to his own needs and then attention to God. If through other than God, his needs can be met, he will have nothing to do with .God as well as attention to and remembrance of Him

The fourth group of people consists of those who feel that they need to remember Allah not to meet the abovementioned personal needs. They rather feel that without the remembrance of Allah, they are lost and only through remembering Him do they find tranquility. In other words, to breathe the remembrance of Allah is indispensable for them but not as a means to meet needs. In the words of Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), they feel that by remembering Him, their hearts are enlivened and without it, they feel .they have dead hearts

The edifice of their life is built on the remembrance of God. When a person’s respiration is obstructed, he will experience tension and be exasperated, and his life will be threatened. Similarly, without the remembrance of Allah, they worry and are agitated. But if the remembrance of Allah finds its way into their hearts, they :experience a strange tranquility and peace of mind. In this regard, the Qur’an states

(الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ)

Those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah....“
[\(Look! Their hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!\)](#)

This state is a high stage of dhikr and far more valuable than the previous stage, but “I” is still the focus of attention. That is, in this state man wants to remember Allah and enjoys doing it. In reality, by remembering God, his heart finds rest. In other words, even in this state man turns his attention to God in order to meet certain needs although they are of a higher level than the previous ones. He pays attention to God .to meet certain needs and finds solace. So, there is still a speck of self-love

But if man moves forward in knowing God, he will reach a point where he is not even aware of his own existence and needs. All his attention will be focused on God, and totally heedless of himself and his desires, self-love

p: ۱۵۶

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۲۸ – –۱

loses all meaning. For him, everything is love of God. At this stage, instead of paying attention to God for oneself, man sees nothing but Him

During the Night of Ascension [mi'rāj], God said to His Apostle (ﷺ): “My servants can reach stages where My remembrance and gratefulness for My favors are their occupation and they do not care for anything else.” God then said

وَأَسْتَعْرِفَنَّ عَقْلَهُ بِمَعْرِفَتِي وَلَا قَوْمَنَّ لَهُ مَقَامَ عَقْلِهِ.

“I shall fill his intellect with My gnosis and I shall settle in place of his intellect.” (1)

These are truths mentioned in traditions, and for many of us it is hard to perfectly comprehend these states. It is hoped that out of His grace God increases our gnosis [ma'rifah] and makes us attain such states

Attachment to the world as a hindrance to the remembrance of Allah

That which hinders man from thinking of his spiritual perfection is attachment to the world and worldly pleasures. So long as these attachments exist, we cannot expect such perfection. In a ḥadīth on the Prophet's (ﷺ) ascension [mi'rāj], God said to His Apostle (ﷺ):

يَا أَحْمَدُ لَوْ صَيَّأَ الْعَبْدُ صَيَّأَةَ أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَصُومُ صِيَامَ أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَطْوَى عَنِ الطَّعَامِ مِثْلَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَلَبَسَ لِبَاسَ الْعَابِدِينَ ثُمَّ أَرَى فِي قَلْبِهِ مِنْ حُبِّ الدُّنْيَا ذَرَّةً أَوْ سِيمَةً أَوْ رِئَاسَةً أَوْ صِيَّتَةً أَوْ زِينَتَةً لَا يُجَاوِزُنِي فِي دَارِي وَلَا أَنْزَعَنَّ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ مَحَبَّتِي وَلَا ظَلَمَنَّ قَلْبَهُ حَتَّى يَنْسَانِي وَلَا أُذِيقُهُ حَلَاوَةَ مَحَبَّتِي.

O Ahmad! If a servant prays as the dwellers of the heaven and the earth pray, and“ fasts as the dwellers of the heaven and the earth fast, treats foods the way the angels treat them, and wears the garment of the worshippers, but has a speck of love of the world in his heart, carnal desire, position, merriment or adornment of the world, he will find no place in My neighborhood. I shall take love of Me out of his heart and make his heart dark such that he will forget Me and not let him taste the sweetness of (loving Me.” (2)

The awliyā' of Allah have such loftiness of purpose that they are heedless of what we

are attached to, even the otherworldly blessings and pleasures, as these are valueless for them. Their loftiness of purpose is such that they say

p: ١٥٧

Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, vol. ١٢, section ٤١, p. ٣٤, ḥadīth ١٣٤٤٤, as quoted in Daylamī, – –١

.Irshād al-Qulūb

.Ibid – –٢

to God: “O Allah! If You throw us into hell while love of You is still in our hearts and You are pleased with us, we prefer it to paradise if it is devoid of Your pleasure.” Unless
.the love of God is nurtured in the heart of man, one cannot make such a claim

In order to nurture the love of God in the heart, one must keep aloof from worldly attachments and affections and think of earning Divine pleasure. On waking up in the morning, the believer must think of serving Allah by knowing what He wants from him. When he takes food, studies a lesson, engages in a transaction, and does the usual chores of life, it must be to obey the commandments of God and to seek His pleasure. It is possible to do so but it requires a strong will and purpose. If a person lives in this manner, worldly enjoyments and blessings as well as his comfort and welfare will not decrease. Even his pain and suffering will not be less than that of others. Such a person will no longer be attached to position, wealth and the like and not worry if he
.loses or does not attain them. His only concern is God and His remembrance

The believer considers himself a servant of Allah. He believes that whatever he has belongs to Him, and he has nothing of his own—wealth, offspring, position, status, or anything else. Everything belongs to Him. So, he is in pursuit of earning the pleasure of Allah. Such a person is a true servant of God. He wholeheartedly accepts whatever He commands. He avoids the forbidden and acts upon His commands. Hence he attains a
.higher level of life, or rather, finds the real life

Man’s attitude toward material and spiritual deficiencies and needs

By nature, man is in pursuit of his perfection and felicity. As much as possible, he wants to remove his defects and shortcomings. In essence, God has created man in such a way that he is innately in pursuit of perfection and avoids whatever is obstructive to his attainment of perfection and felicity. This is called “love of oneself”.
.That is, every living creature loves itself, its life, and perfection

More or less, we all find deficiencies in ourselves. We can see defects and shortcomings in ourselves and we want to remove them as much as we can. But there are two problems here. Firstly, we do not properly comprehend our defects and shortcomings and we do not exactly know our basic needs. Secondly, when there is

contradiction in meeting these needs, we commit errors in identifying our priorities. Usually, we give preference to material needs over spiritual ones for they are more .tangible to us

Conversely, in trying to remove a material or spiritual defect, our minds and efforts are focused on material defects and deficiencies because we

understand them better. We suffer more from physical pain and are more familiar with material and worldly enjoyments and pleasures. If ever we become heedful of some of our spiritual defects and otherworldly needs, we do not express an inclination .to address them nor have much interest in dealing with them

As such, God commissioned the prophets (‘a) firstly, to inform the people of their true needs and defects; let them know that there are greater and more important defects apart from the animalistic, material or worldly defects they are acquainted with, and let them understand that they must strive harder to remove spiritual defects and meet otherworldly needs. Secondly, the prophets (‘a) were commissioned to make .people aware of the spiritual affairs and the insignificance of material affairs

The prophets (‘a) informed man that compared to animals, he has more potential for development and perfection and more deficiencies and needs. There is a great distance between us and the highest point God has considered for us and the potential to reach it. Therefore, they made man aware of this point and urged him to strive hard to attain this ultimate perfection and remove his own defects and .shortcomings

So, we must realize that our defects and shortcomings are not limited to material and worldly affairs. Worldly shortcomings—whether they are individual or collective—are all trivial and insignificant as compared to spiritual affairs and shortcomings which .threaten our eternal felicity

If we really believe in God and the prophets (‘a) and consider truly whatever they said; if we really accept that there is another life apart from animal life—life which is associated with the humanity of man—our actions must attest to this belief. There must be difference between the action of one who believes in such a life and that of one who considers life limited to the animal life. We believe in such a human life but because of weakness of faith and will, we fail in our practice. Our faith is weak and, as a result, this faith has an insignificant effect on our actions and behavior. However, there have been individuals who have strong faith and attained certain stations of .perfection and felicity

Worldly allurements as a hindrance in the attainment of spiritual life

We, ourselves, decrease the degrees of our perfection, shoulder burdens that bend our backs, enchain our hands and feet and become immobile. Perhaps the :Commander of the Faithful (‘a) wants us to tell God in Du‘ā’ Kumayl, thus

اللَّهُمَّ عَظُمَ بِلَائِي، وَأَفْرَطَ بِي سُوءُ حَالِي، وَقَصِيرَتْ بِي أَعْمَالِي، وَقَعِيدَتْ بِي أَغْلَالِي، وَحَبَسَنِي عَنْ نَفْعِي بُعِيدُ آمَالِي، وَخَدَعَتْنِي الدُّنْيَا بِغُرُورِهَا، وَنَفْسِي بِخِيَانَتِهَا، وَمِطَالِي.

O Allah! My sufferings have increased and my evil condition has worsened, my good“ deeds have diminished and my yokes (of misdeeds) have become firm, and remote hopes restrain me from profitting (by good deeds) and the world has deceived me ”.with its allurements and my own self has been treacherous and procrastinating

Are we sincere in reciting these lines? Do we really realize that our backs are bent on account of the burden of our sins? Do we know that we enchained our hands and feet ?by our evil deeds and that the world and its allurements have deceived us

:In this regard, the Qur’an states

(وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ)

“[\(1\)](#) The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion.”

:It also states elsewhere

(فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ)

“[\(2\)](#) So do not let the life of this world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver

[\(3\)](#) deceive you concerning Allah.”

How does the deception of the life of this world deceive man? When adults want to dupe a child, they distract him with a chocolate bar, or anything else, in lieu of a valuable thing he seeks. We have interests which we must obtain and safeguard. However, as the world and its pleasures seem attractive and valuable to us, they deceive us and hinder us from obtaining real pleasures and true interests. Regrettably, not only do the world and its allurements deceive us, but we dupe ourselves by suggesting that what the prophets (‘a) said is what our hearts dictate, or !what Satan says is what God has said

If what the prophets and Imāms (‘a) have said is true, and it is, then we are very far

from the truth. We are in gross error and misguidance. If Du‘ā’ Kumayl is transmitted from Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (‘a), and it is, and if Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī and the supplications in Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah are

p: ١٤٠

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:١٨٥ – -١

That is, Satan, or anything that diverts a human being from the path of Allah. [Q. – -٢

[.Trans

.Sūrat Luqmān ٣١:٣٣ – -٣

transmitted from Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), and they are, then how do we follow them as we have no commonality with them? Do we believe in the contents of these supplications? Are they true or not? Is the world that is deceiving us and its outward adornments that hinder us from getting our true interests nothing but transient pleasures with which we are attached? Everyday we want to taste more delicious food compared to what we have tasted so far, don’t we? Everyday we want to change our lifestyle and the outward forms of our homes—carpet, car model and other ?amenities in life—don’t we

Is the deception or trick of the world other than these things? We must reflect on what they have taken from us in exchange for other things. We have the potential to get more valuable things but we are negligent of them and are attracted to fleeting things. In reality, we are deprived of human life or “life of faith”, and we have been .heedless of a higher sphere of life whose foundation is the remembrance of Allah

Blank

p: ۱۶۲

Eighth Discourse Provisions for the Hereafter

Point

وَارْحَمْنِي صَرِيحاً عَلَى الْفِرَاشِ تُقَلِّبُنِي أَيْدِي أَحِبَّتِي، وَتَفْضَلْ عَلَيَّ مَمْدُوداً عَلَى الْمُغْتَسَلِ يُقَلِّبُنِي صَالِحُ جِيرَتِي، وَتَحَنَّنْ عَلَيَّ مَحْمُولاً قَدْ تَنَاوَلَ الْأَقْرَبَاءُ أَطْرَافَ جِنَازَتِي، وَحَيِّدْ عَلَيَّ مَنْقُولاً قَدْ نَزَلْتُ بِكَ وَحِيداً فِي حُفْرَتِي، وَارْحَمْ فِي ذَلِكَ الْبَيْتِ الْجَدِيدِ غُرْبَتِي، حَتَّى لَا أَسْتَأْنِسَ بِغَيْرِكَ.

Have mercy on me when I am thrown on the deathbed, my friends trying to calm“ down my restlessness; do a favor to me when I am laid stretched on the naked floor for the religious washing, my neighbors performing the necessary functions; move with compassion when I am carried to the graveyard, my kith and kin accompanying my funeral; be with me when I am put into the grave, alone and abandoned; take pity on me in that new abode where I will be a forsaken miserable, because I did not ”.cultivate consistent friendship with any one other than You

The reason behind man's negligence of the hereafter

Because of the instincts God has endowed in him, man knows his material needs and resorts to material ways and physical means to meet them and seeks the help of his fellow human beings. Instinctively, man knows hunger, thirst, sexual urge, housing need, and his other material or worldly needs and endeavors to address them. As such, he will be attached to the means that meet such needs, as well as, those who help him in this regard and lessen his pain and suffering. Usually, it is also the reason behind a person's fondness and affection for his spouse, offspring, friends, and relatives, and in general to all who in one or another way share his life. However, man's attachment to material or worldly affairs distracts his attention from spiritual matters and makes him heedless of them. On one hand, he supposes that his needs are limited to these material or worldly needs, and on the other, he assumes that his needs can be met through the same means and individuals he is attached with. Yet, he is unaware of the fact that the needs he is usually acquainted with is but a small portion of his total needs—needs which are related only to the temporary life in this world. He does not know that his primordial needs are something else—needs which are related to the eternal domain of the hereafter. He imagines that the individuals he

.is familiar with in this world will always be with him

p: ۱۶۳

However, he must bear in mind that a time will certainly come when all of them will
.leave him alone

A time will come when we have to leave this transient abode. Now, we must think of the eternal abode and know which needs we shall have in that world, and through which ways they can be met? Are our needs in that world the same as ours in this world? When man leaves this world, will he need food, clothing and other material needs, just as there was a time when some people used to bury their dead ones with food and other amenities of life, with the notion that they will need these amenities in
?the next world

It is clear that the next world is different from this world. The prophets (‘a) came to inform man that his needs in that world are different from worldly needs. Worldly things will be of no benefit to him and he will not even take them there. At that moment, his bodily limbs and faculties will cease to function one after the other and finally his soul will separate from his body. The soul will witness events after death. Then he will be left alone in the grave—grave which is described by Imām al-Sajjād
:(‘a) in this manner

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ اسْتَوْأَ حَالًا مِّنِّي إِنَّ أَنَا نَقَلْتُ عَلَى مِثْلِ حَالِي إِلَى قَبْرِي، لَمْ أَمْهَدُهُ لِرَقْدَتِي، وَلَمْ أَفْرُشْهُ بِالْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ لِضَجْعَتِي، وَمَالِي لَا
أَبْكِي وَلَا أَذْرِي إِلَى مَا يَكُونُ مَصِيرِي، وَأَرَى نَفْسِي تُخَادِعُنِي، وَأَيَّامِي تُخَاتِلُنِي، وَقَدْ خَفَقَتْ عِنْدَ رَأْسِي أَجْنِحَةُ الْمَوْتِ، فَمَالِي لَا
أَبْكِي، أَبْكِي، لِخُرُوجِ نَفْسِي، أَبْكِي لِظُلْمَةِ قَبْرِي، أَبْكِي لِضَيْقِ لَحْدِي.

Woe unto me] if now I am passed on in my present state to a grave that I have not]“
prepared for my repose, and I did not line with good deeds for my sleep. And why
should I not weep, for I have no knowledge of my fate and I observe my self
deceiving itself, and my days fading away, and the wings of death flapping close by;
so why shouldn’t I cry? I cry for giving up life, I cry because of the darkness of my
”.[grave, I cry because of the narrowness of my hole [laḥad

A whole life of sweat and toil, to accumulate wealth, build mansions, provide amenities of life, and attachment with others, will come to an end. He will be totally alone. How long will this state last? It is very long and can never be compared to the frame of time in this world. In this long period, which he must spend in purgatory

[barzakh] and then the Resurrection and hereafter, his assets will be of no avail to
?him. What must he do? What can he do

p: ۱۶۴

Nearness to God as the best provisions for the hereafter

If man does not want to experience the grief of loneliness after leaving this world and not depart from this world empty-handed, he must think of the day while he is still in this world, prior to death, and collect suitable provisions

تَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى.

Prepare for [your] provisions for verily the best of provisions is God-wariness“
”.[[taqwā

He must not focus all his efforts on this world and its pleasures. From now on, he must know to whom he must be attached, who will not leave him at the moment of loneliness. He must be intimate with the One who can address his primary need, just as by providing the means and ways in this world, He paved the ground to meet his material and spiritual needs. Elsewhere in Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) dwells on these truths and says to God

وَارْحَمْنِي صَرِيحاً عَلَى الْفِرَاشِ تُقَلِّبُنِي أَيْدِي أَحِبَّتِي، وَتَفَضَّلْ عَلَيَّ مَمْدُوداً عَلَى الْمُغْتَسَلِ يُقَلِّبُنِي صَالِحُ جِيرَتِي، وَتَحَنَّنْ عَلَيَّ مَحْمُولاً
قَدْ تَسَاوَلَ الْأَقْرَبَاءُ أَطْرَافَ جِنَازَتِي، وَجِدْ عَلَيَّ مَنُفُولاً قَدْ نَزَلَتْ بِكَ وَحِيداً فِي حُفْرَتِي، وَارْحَمْ فِي ذَلِكَ الْبَيْتِ الْجَدِيدِ غُرْبَتِي،
حَتَّى لَا أَسْتَأْنِسَ بِغَيْرِكَ.

And confer Your benevolence on me when I am (lying) motionless on the (death) bed“
so that those beloved of my relatives surround me, and grant me Your bountifulness when I am stretched on the funeral bath so that the good-deeded of my community may wash me, and bestow Your kindred tenderness upon me when I am carried while my relatives hand over the extremities of my coffin, and award me Your generosity when I am transported and finally delivered and left alone in my hole, and have mercy on my solitary confinement in this new residence so that I may not be comforted by anyone but You

The most important point in this part of the supplication is when the supplicant says:
“[O God!] Have mercy on my solitary confinement in this new residence so that I may not be comforted by anyone but You.” Is it possible for a person who has tasted the sweetness of intimacy with God in this world to be intimate with other than God when

he is in the grave? Is it possible for a person who has been intimate with other than
?God to be intimate with God when he enters the grave

: (God said to Prophet Dāwūd (David) (‘a

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يَا دَاوُدُ أبلغ أَهْلَ أَرْضِي إِنِّي حَبِيبٌ مَنْ أَحَبَّنِي وَجَلِيسٌ مَنْ جَالَسَنِي وَمُونِسٌ لِمَنْ أَنَسَ بِدِكْرِي وَصَاحِبٌ لِمَنْ صَاحَبَنِي.

O Dāwud! Convey to the dwellers of the earth that, indeed, I love him who loves Me; I accompany him who accompanies Me; I am intimate with him who has intimacy with [My remembrance](#); and I go along with him who goes along with Me.”[\(1\)](#)

The heart of man is inclined towards whoever he is intimate with in this world, and :with whom he will also be gathered on the Day of Resurrection

أَنْتَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّيْتَ وَلَكَ مَا اكْتَسَبْتَ.

[\(2\)](#)“You shall be with him whom you love and it shall be for you whatever you earn.”[\(2\)](#)

If one of our friends or relatives is separated from us for a long time, we will miss him, but have we ever missed our prayers? Have we ever waited for an opportunity to ?engage in supplication and litany and sit in a corner to beseech and implore God

Usually, if we are alone we feel lonely and frightened. We look for somebody to talk to. If we fail to find anyone, we talk to ourselves in the world of imagination and make ourselves busy in whatever way. We who are naturally like that cannot easily forget .everything once we are buried and have intimacy with God

Therefore, if we do not want to grieve and be sorrowful in that world, we must take the initial steps to have intimacy with God so that He will be with us in that world and not leave us alone. We must set a program for ourselves. We must have time for retreat in which we do not pay attention to anything other than God; we forget the world and all its contents—wealth and property, occupation, offspring, friends, relatives, and all things and we remember and pay attention to Him alone. If we do not do so, we will be in great loss in the purgatorial world. Alienation and loneliness as .well as grief and sorrow will engulf us for which no one and nothing can compensate

In her testament to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah (‘a) is :reported to have said

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۶, ḥadīth ۲۸ – –۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۲۷, p. ۱۰۵, ḥadīth ۷۵ – –۲

إِذَا أَنَا مِتُّ فَتَوَلَّ أَنْتَ غُسْلِي وَجَهَّزْنِي... وَاجْلِسْ عِنْدَ رَأْسِي قِبَالَه وَجْهِي فَكَثِّرْ مِنْ تِلَاوَةِ الْقُرْآنِ وَالِدُّعَاءِ.

When I die, wash and bury me yourself... And [after you bury me] sit beside my head“
(facing me and supplicate and read the Qur’an aloud.”(1)

Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah’s (‘a) ears had attachment to the Word of Allah as her heart was also
.intimate with Him

There are those who wait for a moment, however short it may be, to read the Qur’an. They enjoy reading the Qur’an and listening to it. They engage in prayer and worship with zeal and enthusiasm. Is there any lover who is tired of talking to his beloved? But our hearts are somewhere else at the time of praying, just as a bird inside a cage is waiting for it to be opened. We are also eager to finish our prayers as fast as we can or to see the month of Ramaḍān come to an end. Even while praying, our attention is here and there, trying to know who comes and who goes. All these testify that we
.have no intimacy with God and His remembrance

?How can we have intimacy with God

One simple way is to set a program and allocate a certain period everyday to turn our attention away from anything other than God. This can be done by engaging in supplication, prayers, litany, reading the Qur’an, and the like. What is important is for us not to forget that God is Omnipresent and All-seeing. He can see us all the time and is beneficent to us. We must sincerely ask His forgiveness for all our sins. As much as we can, we must continue this program so that we can be hopeful of His favors in the
.next world

When a person departs from this world, he will see the fruit of his deeds, and then he
:will say

(رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِي □ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ)

(My Lord! Take me back, that I may act righteously in what I have left behind.”(2)

He will be told in reply, “By no means! Your time has already passed.” Therefore, we

must treasure every moment in our life. Amid thousands of worldly engagements, at least we must engage in work which is for the hereafter. Among thousands of objects of our love and affection, we must

p: ۱۶۷

Azīz Allāh ‘Aṭārudī, Musnad Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’ (Intishārāt-e ‘Aṭārud, first edition), – –۱

.p. ۴۰۱

.Sūrat al-Mu’minūn ۲۳:۹۹-۱۰۰ – –۲

allocate a place in our heart for God and His remembrance. If we do not give all our heart to Him for intimacy with Him, at least we can give a portion to God in our activities

It is known that one day, the late Shaykh Ja‘far Shūshtarī mounted the pulpit and said: “O people! Today I want to say something which is contrary to all that the prophets and awliyā’ have said.” The people were astonished. He continued: “All the prophets invited the people to believe in the Unity of God [tawḥīd], but I want to invite you to shirk [association of partners to God]. All the prophets and awliyā’ said that any action must be done solely for God but I want to say: “Let God also be a partner in your works!” That is to say, “You are not true monotheists as your hearts are not solely with God (that is, filled not only by His remembrance). At least, designate to God a certain place in your hearts. Don’t give the key to your hearts to anyone other than God as you will regret it one day

[إلهي] وَاغْرِسْ فِي أَفْئِدَتِنَا أَشْجَارَ مَحَبَّتِكَ، وَأَتْمِمْ لَنَا أَنْوَارَ مَعْرِفَتِكَ، وَأَذِقْنَا حَلَاوَةَ عَفْوِكَ، وَلَدَّةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ، وَأَقْرِرْ أَعْيُنَنَا يَوْمَ لِقَائِكَ بِرُؤْيُوتِكَ.

O Allah! Plant in our hearts the trees of Your love, complete for us the lights of Your knowledge, give us to taste the sweetness of Your pardon and the pleasure of Your forgiveness, gladden our eyes on the day of meeting You with the vision of You.”⁽¹⁾

p: ١٤٨

Mafātīḥ al-Jinān, The ١٥ Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the – ١
.”Abstainers

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ إِيمَانًا تُبَاشِرُ بِهِ قَلْبِي وَيَقِينًا حَتَّى أَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُصَيِّبَنِي مَا كَتَبْتَ لِي وَرَضُّنِي مِنَ الْعَيْشِ بِمَا قَسَيْمْتَ لِي يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

O my Lord! I ask You to grant me a faith that You make my heart endure on, and a “true certainty in believing, so that I may ascertain that indeed nothing will happen to me except for what You have destined for me, and award me contentment in my present living (and circumstances) with whatever You have apportioned for me, O the
”Most Merciful of the merciful

These are the last lines of the noble Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī. After supplicating and entreating God, it is as if Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) summed up his last and primary
”.request in two sentences. He asked for “firm faith” and “submission to divine decree

The value of faith

The importance of faith can be inferred from the fact that after this long litany, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) asked God to grant him “faith”. Similarly, since faith is always under threat, he asked God to give him faith that will endure in his heart. If ever man acquires faith, he must not become arrogant and think that faith will always remain in
.his heart

Human language is incapable of describing the value of faith. Faith is a precious gem which is the source of man’s tranquility of heart. It is man’s refuge in times of adversity and affliction. Most important of all, it leads to his eternal felicity and
.salvation from punishment in the hereafter

Faith—however weak it may be—is the greatest blessing God, the Exalted, grants a person. Although the effect of such a faith is so weak and little, it is so valuable and important for his felicity in this world and the hereafter. The similitude of man in relation to faith is like that of fish to water. So long as it is in water, it does not know the value of water but once it is taken out of water, it will realize its value. Thanks to

God, we also enjoy this great divine blessing. It is weak but nevertheless our life depends on it. If the same weak faith is taken from us, God forbid, and a state of doubt and

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skepticism comes into being, we will realize the great blessing we had and are now
.deprived of

Someone narrated in a travelogue that he became acquainted with a person whose actions were mostly common except the fact that on Thursday nights, it was his practice to engage in night vigil till dawn. He asked the reason behind it. He was told: “Once I had a problem and when it was solved, I made it incumbent upon myself to engage in this night vigil for the rest of my life.” He inquired about the problem. (Perhaps some of us may think that his problem had something to do with poverty, ailment and the like.) He was told: “There was a time when I had a doubt or skepticism in my belief and my faith was shaken. I tried my best to be relieved from such a state but to no avail. I consulted many people. Each of them referred to certain books. I engaged in many discussions but none of these solved my problem. In fact, my skepticism intensified until such time that I heard that in the holy city of Mashhad there was a scholar [‘ālim] named Shaykh Ḥasan ‘Alī Iṣfahānī (r)([1](#)) who enjoyed a lofty spiritual station and solved the problems of people. I wrote a letter to him narrating [\(my condition. As I was then living in Ahwāz,](#)
([2](#)

he wrote in reply: “On so-and-so day and time, go near Kārūn River and take your seat somewhere in the palm-grove. Perhaps God will show you the solution to your problem.” So, on the specified day and time I went there and hesitantly sat in a corner. While I was busy looking at the river, I saw a buffalo in the river taking a dip. It gradually surfaced and moved in my direction. For a few minutes it stayed in the palm-grove and gave birth to an offspring. It cleaned it and then fed it with milk! On witnessing this scene, all my skepticism was dispelled and I found peace of mind. In gratitude for my requisition of faith, I made it incumbent upon myself to engage in a
”.night vigil every Thursday night

People who have been deprived of faith for sometime but regain it afterwards by the grace of God know the value of this blessing. Those who experience the adverse effect, the pain of faithlessness and doubt, treasure it. But since faith is never taken away from us, we do not know how valuable the faith we have is—no matter how weak it may be. To put it in another way, “I have not experienced faithlessness to

understand what blessing faith in God is!" We must strive to keep our faith firm and strong and depart from

p: ۱۷۰

The abbreviation, "r" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, raḥmatullāh ‘alayh, – –۱ raḥmatullāh ‘alayhā, or raḥmatullāh ‘alayhim [may peace be upon him/her/them], [which is mentioned after the names of pious people. [Trans Ahwāz: city in southwestern Iran, the administrative center of Khūzestān – –۲ (Khūzistān) Province. Ahwāz is one of Iran’s largest cities and the center of the region’s oil industry. It is located at the confluence of the Kārūn and Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab [rivers on the lowland plain of Khūzestān. [Trans

this world while having faith, God willing. If one day man's relationship with God is severed, he loses the way and tries to find it but he cannot, he will then realize what calamity he has succumbed to

Sin and its danger to faith

We must not imagine that we will always have faith, given its value. In fact, like other blessings, it can also be lost. We must seek refuge in God from the day when this blessing is taken away from us. Many people have faith and perform good deeds but after sometime their faith weakens due to certain factors or they totally lose faith and depart from this world without faith. God has never guaranteed anyone, once granted with a blessing, that it will never be taken away from him. In fact, God has stated

(لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ)

If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing], but if you are ungrateful, “[\(My punishment is indeed severe.\)](#)”

Therefore, it must be noted that the faith of man is always subject to attack and extinction. On one hand, skepticism and satanic insinuations, and on the other, wicked or evil deeds seriously pose a threat to his faith. It is mentioned in traditions that when a person commits a sin, a black spot emerges in his heart. If many sins are committed, [\(black spots will engulf his entire heart and he will not be saved anymore.\)](#)

We must pray to God to strengthen our faith and keep it safe from the enticements of devils from among the jinn and men. If ever we commit a sin, God forbid, we must repent and compensate for it as soon as possible, so that black spots will not spread over our hearts. Blackening of the heart has an effect on man which he is unaware of while he thinks that everything is fine. Sin hardens the heart. Consequently, the person will not earn pleasure in supplicating and entreating God, reading the Qur'an, and seeking the mediation [tawassul] of the pure Imāms (‘a), and will be inclined to indulge in sins, sexual gratification and debauchery. Companionship of the sinful replaces companionship of the righteous and upright servants of Allah, and the person is inclined to be in the company of those who are more or less like him. This is a

.sign of the blackening and hardening of the heart

The heart which is luminous and has a connection with God is hurt by things that keep it away from God and His remembrance. If the owner of

p: ۱۷۱

.Sūrat Ibrāhīm ۱۴:۷ – ۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۳, p. ۳۲۷, ḥadīth ۱۰ – ۲

such a heart happens to be in the company of debauchees and mammonists, he is as
.if a prisoner longing for his release

چو طوطی کلاغش بود هم نفس غنیمت شمارد خلاص از قفس

,Like a parrot in a cage with a crow

.He considers freedom from the cage a blessing

Therefore, we must bear in mind that firstly, faith—however weak it may be—is a very precious gift endowed by God upon us. Secondly, we must not forget the fact that it is always under threat. So, we must consistently endeavor to strengthen it. We must engage in strengthening our beliefs and keep aloof from skepticism and whatever causes it. If a certain doubt arises, we must strive to address it immediately .and not allow our heart to become a hippodrome of satanic insinuations

Similarly, we must avoid sin and whatever leads to it. If, God forbid, we commit a sin we must immediately seek forgiveness for it. Most important of all, with all humility and sincerity, we must pray to God to protect and strengthen our faith, and for this .(purpose, we must also seek the intermediation of the pure Imāms (‘a

Some effects of faith

Certainty .۱

Certainty [yaqīn]: When faith is well established in the heart, it bears fruit. Imām al- .۱
:Sajjād (‘a) has mentioned two of its fruits

certainty in what God has destined for a person, and (۱)

:contentment with divine decree (۲)

...حَتَّى أَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُصِيبَنِي مَا كَتَبْتَ لِي وَرَضُّنِي مِنَ الْعَيْشِ بِمَا قَسَمْتَ لِي.

so that I may ascertain that indeed nothing will happen to me except for what You...“
have destined for me, and award me contentment in my present living (and

”circumstances) with whatever You have apportioned for me

Certainty [yaqīn] is the highest and most perfect form of faith [īmān]. Faith is based upon gnosis [ma‘rifah] and perfect gnosis leads to the emergence of a sign of certainty in a person. For one who attains the stage of certainty, it makes no difference if he is in a state of prosperity or adversity. The believer entrusts his works to God knowing that his interest lies in what God apportions for him. In a ḥadīth on the :ascension [mi‘rāj] of the Prophet (ﷺ), God says

فَإِذَا اسْتَيْقَنَ الْعَبْدُ لَا يُبَالِي كَيْفَ أَصْبَحَ بِعُسْرٍ أَمْ بِيُسْرٍ.

So, when the servant attains certainty it does not matter to him whether he is in ease“
(or hardship.” (1)

Imām al-Riḍā (‘a) was once asked about the meaning of ‘certainty’ [yaqīn] and he
said: Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) described it in this manner

أَلْتَوَكَّلُ عَلِيَّ اللَّهِ وَالتَّسْلِيمُ لِلَّهِ وَالرِّضَا بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ وَالتَّفْوِضُ إِلَى اللَّهِ.

Certainty means] trust in Allah, submission to Allah, contention in the decree of Allah,]“
(and delegation [of the affairs] to Allah.” (2)

As such, the first effect of faith on a person is to be certain that he will get whatever is
apportioned for him and he will not get whatever is not apportioned for him

:Imām ‘Alī (‘a) is reported by Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) to have said

لَا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ مَا أَصَابَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَهُ وَأَنَّ مَا أَخْطَأَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبِهِ وَأَنَّ الضَّارَّ النَّافِعَ هُوَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

No servant will attain faith unless he has certainty that whatever reaches him is“
impossible not to reach him and whatever does not reach him is impossible to reach
(him.” (3)

(And only Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, can give benefit and harm.” (4)

.The notion that whatever we acquire by our efforts comes from us is polytheistic

The monotheistic person must bear in mind that his existence comes from God. His
physical strength and intellectual power also come from Him as well as the elements
involved in them. In addition to all this, his use of them also depends on the will of God.
One who accumulates wealth and property cannot spend them without the
permission of God. There were many who accumulated wealth through lawful and
unlawful means but they were

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۷, ḥadīth ۶ – –۱

.Ibid., vol. ۷۰, p. ۱۳۸, ḥadīth ۴ – –۲

That is, whatever is supposed to reach him has reached him or will reach him and – –۳

.whatever is supposed not to reach him has not reached him and will never reach him

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۰, p. ۱۵۴, ḥadīth ۱۲ – –۴

.unable to enjoy them. Thus, even to enjoy one's wealth depends on God's leave

Of course, it must be noted that the attainment of the station of certainty does not mean belief in predetermination [jabr]. That is, it does not mean that a person will not work anymore and promote laziness and then take religious beliefs as his excuse saying that he will get whatever is apportioned for him whether he will work or not. Here, it is impossible to deal lengthily with the issue of predestination and freewill [jabr wa ikhtiyār], but it suffices to say: "Effects come into being by means of causes." In apportioning things, God has taken factors and ways into consideration. One of .these causes and factors is the determination and efforts of man

For example, if a person is supposed to live for fifty years, it means that God knows what he will do and not do during his lifetime that will lengthen or shorten his lifespan such as observation of the bonds of relationship [ṣilat al-raḥim] or severance of the same [qaṭ' al-raḥim], observance of the rights of parents, observance of health rules, .and the like

Therefore, based on His absolute knowledge of the attitude and character of the person in question, God has decreed that he will live for fifty years, for instance. But this does not warrant the claim that since it is decreed that he will live for fifty years, his actions have no impact at all. What God has decreed is based on the same .voluntary actions of the concerned person

Attributing the voluntary actions of man to God, the Exalted, is not contradictory because both attributions are parallel and do not intersect with each other. In other words, attributing an action [fi'l] to the human agent or doer [fā'il] is at a certain level, and attributing the same to God, the Exalted, is on a higher level in which the existence of the agent himself, the object of action and the means through the action is done is attributed as a whole to God. So, the effect of man's will as "another part of the Ultimate Cause" in his action does not contradict attributing the existence of all parts of the Ultimate Cause to God, the Exalted. It is God in whose Hand are the existence of the world, man and all aspects of his existence, and He perpetually gives existence to them. No being is independent of Him. Thus, voluntary actions of man are

also dependent on God and not beyond the domain of His will. It is wrong to argue that an action must be attributed to either will of man or the will of God because these two wills are not of the same level and thus can be combined together. Instead, the will of man, like his very existence, depends on Divine will, and the will of God, the :Exalted, is needed for its materialization

(وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

﴿But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah, the Lord of the worlds.﴾⁽¹⁾

:The Glorious Qur'an also states

(مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ)

No affliction visits the earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it about“

﴿—that is indeed easy for Allah.﴾⁽²⁾

:It then continues

(لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ)

So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your“

﴿way.﴾⁽³⁾

If in this world a blessing is taken from us, for example we lose one of our nearest of kin or are subjected to poverty, illness and the like, we must bear in mind that these are ordained by God and thus, we should not be adversely affected or blame ourselves. We must know that it is a blessing granted by God and then taken away from us according to a higher purpose

God said to Prophet Mūsā (‘a): “My most beloved servant is he who submits and does

﴿not complain to Me when I take one of his beloved persons.﴾⁽⁴⁾

Hence, the believing person must not be attached to the blessings of the world and grieve on account of losing them. Rather, he must focus on worship and the performance of his religious obligations, and not on what he must get and what he has lost

Contentment with God's decree .۲

:The second effect of faith is contentment with Divine decree

وَرَضْنِي مِنَ الْعَيْشِ بِمَا قَسَمْتُ لِي يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

And award me contentment in my present living (and circumstances) with whatever“
”You have apportioned for me, O the Most Merciful of the merciful

p: ١٧٥

.Sūrat al-Takwīr ٨١:٢٩ – -١

.Sūrat al-Ḥadīd ٥٧:٢٢ – -٢

.Sūrat al-Ḥadīd ٥٧:٢٣ – -٣

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ٨٢, p. ٩٠ – -٤

God, the Exalted, has apportioned certain things to His servants and these are sometimes consistent with their desires. There are also instances when they are not satisfied with them. What God wants is for them to be contented with whatever He apportions and submit to His decree. This decree pertains to both legislative [tashrīfī] and ontological [takwīnī] affairs

In the legislative affairs, this decree refers to the religious obligations—what is commanded [wājibāt] and what is prohibited [muḥarramāt]. Contentment [riḍāyah] here means performance of what is commanded and shunning of what is prohibited

In the ontological affairs, one must be contented with whatever transpires—whether it is desirable or undesirable. In facing undesirable events, people are put on trial with the aim of knowing their reaction. Some trials are related to the first stage of faith to see whether a person observes the divine laws or not in the face of pressing circumstances. A higher level is exclusive for the outstanding servants of Allah with the aim of knowing whether they will endure difficulties or complain about them. This is the station of “patience” [ṣabr]. The station higher than the station of patience is that of “contentment” [riḍā’]. That is, the people of contentment endure pain, suffering and affliction and are contented with them at the same time. Their hearts do not have any complaint or grudge because these events emanate from God. This is the highest stage of faith in which man is completely contented with the decrees of God, firmly believing that these decrees are based on Divine wisdom. Thus, during the Night of Ascension, God said to His Apostle (ﷺ): “The most beloved acts for Me are trust (in God) [tawakkal] and (then) ‘contentment’ [riḍāyah] with what I have decreed.”⁽¹⁾

Of course, this does not mean that man must not work anymore. In fact, his endeavor is considered one of the elements of Divine decree. It means that we must be contented with whatever happens and bear in mind that there is wisdom behind it

:God addressed Prophet Mūsā, thus

يَا مُوسَىٰ مَا خَلَقْتُ خَلْقًا أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ وَإِنِّي إِنَّمَا ابْتَلَيْتُهُ لِمَا هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ.

O Mūsā! No creature is more beloved to Me than My faithful servant. Verily, if I send“

﴿him an affliction it is good for him.﴾^٢

p: ١٧٤

.Ibid., vol. ٧٧, p. ٢١ – –١

.Ibid., vol. ١٣, ḥadīth ٣٤ – –٢

The mother who gives unpleasant and bitter medicines to her sick child evidently loves her child, and she does so not on account of animosity or hostility but out of love and affection. The same is true in the case of God

We have many traditions [riwāyāt] where it is mentioned that sometimes God sees in poverty what is good for His servant and that religious affair will not be set right except through poverty and indigence. Out of His love for this servant, God makes him poor. Sometimes, the faith of a servant will not be preserved except through prosperity. So God makes him rich. There are also instances when poverty and prosperity are means of testing His servants. (1)

It must be emphasized again that man must not surrender and give up working, but say: “O God, give to me whatever is good for me!” In fact, to perform one’s obligations is one story and to entrust the affairs to God and be contented with His decree is another

In any case, man must be contented with what God has apportioned for him—be it little or plenty. This contentment has good effects both in this world and in the hereafter. In this world, he will find peace of mind and tranquility of the heart. In the hereafter, he will attain the station of the people of contentment

Regrettably, because of the weakness of faith, most people are not contented with what God has given them and complain about it. As such, they do not enjoy peace of mind and are always unhappy. The faithful person, however, is aware of the fact that many things wished and striven for by people are not good for them and will even cause them trouble and problems

:In Du‘ā’ al-Iftitāḥ we read

وَلَعَلَّ الَّذِي أَبْطَأَ عَنِّي هُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّي لِعِلْمِكَ بِعَاقِبَةِ الْأُمُورِ.

Perhaps slowing down [in the grant of my requests] may be a blessing in disguise“
”.because You alone know [all] the consequences

:The Holy Qur’an also states

(وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ)

Yet it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that“
[you love something while it is bad for you.”](#)

p: ١٧٧

.Ibid., vol. ٧٢, p. ٣٢٧, ḥadīth ١٢ – –١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:٢١٦ – –٢

This happens frequently. Sometimes, a person himself realizes later that if he had been given the things he liked so much and strove to get, it would not have been good for him. On the contrary, one might dislike certain things and express displeasure at them but when he acquires them, he realizes that they were beneficial for him

:Regarding spouses, the Glorious Qur'an states

(فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا)

And should you dislike them, maybe you dislike something while Allah invests it with“
(an abundant good.”[\(1\)](#)

At any rate, man must entrust his works to God and be contented with whatever is apportioned for him. As such, one of the fruits of perfect faith is certainty [yaqīn] and contentment and satisfaction with the decree of God

p: ١٧٨

.Sūrat al-Nisā' ٤:١٩ – ١

Part Four Commentary on Du‘ā’ Makārim al–Akhlāq

Point

p: ۱۷۹

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p: ۱۸۰

(First Discourse Invoking Blessings on the Apostle (ﷺ

Point

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ.

”O Allah, bless Muḥammad and his Household“

Supplication of the righteous

The supplications transmitted from the pure Imāms (‘a) are all precious means for one to attain nearness to God, the Exalted, but some of these supplications have other peculiarities. Treasures of knowledge and gnosis of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are embedded in them. By carefully reciting them, one can acquire lofty and sublime knowledge from them, according to his capability, understanding, knowledge and assiduousness. Du‘ā’ Makārim al-Akhlāq is one of such supplications. (1)

Every line of this noble supplication is full of important messages and moral lessons for man

The name of this supplication reminds us that in requesting something from God, the Exalted, one must not only pay attention to material or worldly affairs. Perhaps, most of those who supplicate pay more attention to their material, physical, social and similar needs. Only a few are aware that acquisition of moral virtues also needs to be supplicated from God. In fact, just as moral virtues are superior to material things, we must engage in supplication more sincerely and fervently to acquire them

Usually, we supplicate and seek the help of God when we feel that the material means to solve our problem are not at our disposal

(فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ)

“When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him.” (2)

When a person is in the middle of a raging sea and about to be drowned, he will resort to prayer. When he faces a big problem which he cannot solve, he will seek the help of

God. We ask God for everything we want and the preservation of whatever we have
.because the universe is under His control

p: ١٨١

.Al-Şahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah, Supplication ٢٠ – –١

.Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt ٢٩:٤٥ – –٢

He is the Source of all causes and effects. Whatever God gives us cannot guarantee its own perpetuity and it is in His hand. In this sense, there is no difference between
.the physical and fundamental spiritual needs of man

A worker who leaves home in the morning to earn a lawful living must bear in mind that his hands, feet, eyes, mind, life, and many other blessings come from God. If there will be a problem with any one of them, he will not be able to work properly or
.work at all. So, along with sweat and toil, he must ask God for his needs

A student who is busy studying must strive hard but he must remember that the teachers, lessons, books, ears to listen, mind to understand, health, and the like are all from God. Without the existence of any of them, he cannot pursue his studies. So he
.must ask God to provide the means for the acquisition of knowledge

One of the fundamental needs of man is the acquisition of noble moral traits and excellent human qualities. It is true that one must strive to remove bad traits and replace them with noble ones, but since the control over all causes and effects lies in God, they must be sought from Him. These causes and means that exist are all
.channels of Divine bounty

Invoking blessings on the Apostle (ﷺ) for the acceptance of supplication

Invoking of blessings [ṣalawāt] on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a) is a sign of respect towards the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and contributes towards the acceptance of a supplication. It is recommended in some traditions that for a supplication to be accepted, it must begin with the invocation of blessings upon Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a) because ṣalawāt is always accepted and God, the Generous, would
(certainly not reject the second after accepting the first supplication (i.e. ṣalawāt).)[\(1\)](#)

It is mentioned in other traditions, thus: “Begin and end your supplication with ṣalawāt so that your supplication in between be accepted because God is more generous than
(that He would accept the beginning and end of a supplication but not its middle.)”[\(2\)](#)

– ١ – The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) is reported to have said – إِذَا كَانَتْ لَكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ حَاجَةٌ فَابْدَأْ بِمَسْئَلَةِ الصَّلَاةِ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ)، ثُمَّ سَيَلْ حَاجَتِكَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَكْرَمُ مَنْ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ حَاجَتَيْنِ، فَيَقْضِيَ إِحْدَاهُمَا وَيَمْنَعُ الْأُخْرَى. “If you have a need toward Allah, the Glorified, then begin by seeking Allah’s blessing on His Prophet (ﷺ) then ask your need, because Allah is too generous to accept one of the two requests made to Him and deny the other.” Nahj al-Balāghah, Saying ٣٤١.

– ٢ – Abū ‘Abd Allāh (Imām al-Ḥusayn) (‘a) is reported to have said – مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ عِزٌّ وَجَلٌّ حَاجَةٌ، فَلْيَبْدَأْ بِالصَّلَاةِ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ، ثُمَّ يَسْأَلْ حَاجَتَهُ، ثُمَّ يَخْتَمُ بِالصَّلَاةِ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ؛ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عِزٌّ وَجَلٌّ أَكْرَمُ مَنْ أَنْ يَقْبَلَ الطَّرْفَيْنِ وَيُدْعِ الْوَسْطَ، إِذَا كَانَتْ الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَا تَحْجِبُ عَنْهُ. “Whoever has a need toward Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, then he must begin by seeking Allah’s blessing on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a) then ask his need and then end by seeking Allah’s blessing on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a), because Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, is too generous to accept the two ends and not the middle. Whenever there is invocation of Allah’s blessing on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a), it is acceptable.” Wasā’il al-Shī‘ah, vol. ٤, ḥadīth ١١٣٧.

At the beginning and end of this noble supplication, as well as in between, Allah’s blessing on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a) has been invoked

Way of attaining the most perfect faith and highest decree of certainty

After invoking Allah’s blessing on Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his progeny (‘a), Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) says

وَبَلِّغْ بِإِيمَانِي أَكْمَلَ الْإِيمَانِ وَاجْعَلْ يَقِينِي أَفْضَلَ الْيَقِينِ.

Cause my faith to reach the most perfect faith and make my certainty the most“
”excellent certainty

When a person asks for something spiritual from God, he must ask for its best and most excellent form. Concerning our material or worldly needs, we usually look for the best and ask for it from God but for acquiring excellent human qualities, we are contented with their average forms or levels. If we have high aspirations, we will strive to perform all our religious obligations and avoid what is unlawful so as to avoid being thrown into hellfire. But in this supplication, Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (‘a) teaches us not to be of low aspirations and ask God in our supplications for faith [īmān] like that of the prophets (‘a), and certainty [yaqīn] like that of the truthful [ṣiddīqīn], so that in case we do not deserve the highest form, God will grant it to us according to our
.merit

Great material blessings are always accompanied by some hassles. The greater a material blessing is, the greater are its associated difficulties, troubles and grief. But that is not the case with spiritual blessings. The loftier they are, the more will be their associated pleasure, felicity and perfection. Therefore, in the realm of spiritual affairs we must aim at the highest form of faith and certainty and seek the help of Allah in
.attaining them

Faith has many levels and can be increased or decreased. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states

(وَإِذَا تُلِيتُ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا)

“And when His signs are recited to them, they (Allah’s signs) increase their faith.”

In this supplication, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) prays for the impeccable and highest form of faith. The reason why the Imām (‘a) used the term “best” [afḍal] with respect to certainty is that its essence is perfect and absolute belief without any blemish. As such, it cannot be said that certainty has different levels but different types can be mentioned. The quality of certainty has some differences. One type of certainty is that which is acquired through logical reasoning and argumentation and it is called “informational certainty” [‘ilm al-yaqīn]. The second type of certainty is that which is acquired through intuition and mystical witnessing [kashf wa shuhūd] and it is called “visual certainty” [‘ayn al-yaqīn]. The third type of certainty is that which is acquired through the discovery of the truth and acceptance of it and it is called “true certainty” [ḥaqq al-yaqīn].

For the sake of clarity, one can compare it to a wholesome sherbet in a glass. The first person has not seen it but through a reliable source he knows that it exists. The second person can see it in a glass and the third person has not only seen it but even tasted it. In this case, all the three persons are certain that it exists, but the type of certainty each of them has is different from one another. Perhaps what is meant by “best” in this supplication is the most excellent type of certainty which is usually called “true certainty” by the teachers of ethics

The difference between faith and belief

Knowledge, perception and belief are not voluntary. It is possible that their preliminaries are voluntary but their availability is possible even without a person seeking them. A person sees another person in front of him and he is certain that the other person is present, or he involuntarily places his hand on fire and it burns and thus he realizes that fire burns. A person may possibly know something though he

does not want to know it. It is even possible that he is annoyed by its knowledge. But for faith, be it certain or conjectural, the heart must also be inclined and attracted by it. The element of freewill is involved. A person may possibly not like and accept something in spite of being certain of it. Regarding the people of Pharaoh, the Holy :Qur'an states

p: ١٨٤

.Sūrat al-Anfāl ٨:٢ – -١

(وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا)

They impugned them—though they were convinced in their hearts—wrongfully and“
[\(defiantly.\)”\(1\)](#)

After the divine signs and great miracles were shown by Prophet Mūsā (‘a), the people of Pharaoh were certain that he was a prophet of God and that the shown miracles came from God, but they denied these signs and called the prophet of God “sorcerer” [sāḥir] and “spellbound” [mashūr] because of their desire for power and tyrannical practices. They had certainty in their hearts but they did not have faith so they denied :what they saw. Addressing Pharaoh, Prophet Mūsā (‘a) said

(لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَـؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ)

You certainly know that no one has sent these [signs] except the Lord of the heavens“
[\(and the earth.\)”\(2\)](#)

In this verse, two signs of emphasis are used, viz. lām wa qad [laqad]. That is, they truly and certainly know that no one has sent these signs except the Lord of the :universe. Yet, Pharaoh said

(يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي)

[\(I do not know of any god that you may have other than me.\)”\(3\)](#)

And he refused to believe but when he was about to be drowned in the sea, he :exclaimed

(قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ)

He called out, ‘I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of“
[\(Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit \[to Him\]\)!’”\(4\)](#)

But since this declaration was made out of compulsion, it was not accepted. So, no faith will emanate from compulsion, as the element of freewill plays an important role .in its emergence

Perfect certainty is not needed to have faith. Without knowledge, however, one cannot have faith. During the early period of Islam, many people believed in Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). At the beginning, they had no perfect

p: ۱۸۵

.Sūrat al-Naml ۲۷:۱۴ – –۱

.Sūrat al-Isrā' (or Banī Isrā'īl) ۱۷:۱۰۲ – –۲

.Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ ۲۸:۳۸ – –۳

.Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۹۰ – –۴

certainty in Islam. For this reason as well as the emergence of some doubts, some of them became apostates and went outside the pale of Islam

Faith does not arise out of belief and inclination toward a certain thing or idea. Belief has its highest and lowest levels. From mere guesswork to the most perfect form of certainty, it can be improved. Similarly, inclination can be changed from outward desire to the highest level of love. These two elements have an impact on the strength of faith. If the belief or enthusiasm of a person on a thing or idea increases, on the same magnitude his faith on it will become stronger. Conversely, as his belief and inclination decrease, his faith also weakens. As such, in order to have perfect faith, we must strengthen our belief, bring about more convincing proofs for our faith, and remove the obstacles in the way of faith

Reasons behind the peoples' opposition to their respective prophets

One of the reasons why most peoples opposed their respective prophets at the beginning of their prophetic mission was the prophets' invitation to the people to believe in the Resurrection, and to accept this invitation was too difficult for some people. They made gods for themselves and worshipped them but they did not have faith in the One True God. It is because the requisite of accepting monotheism [tawhīd] meant the acceptance of the Resurrection and life after death, and since they assumed that the power of God is limited, they could not believe that their Creator could revive them after death and they would see the fruit of their deeds in the other world. Belief in the Resurrection means that one day all deeds of all human beings will be reckoned, and they will be rewarded or punished accordingly. The faithless imagined that by denying it at the outset, they would be at ease and could continue indulging in their sensualities

Belief in the Resurrection comes if one reflects profoundly on the power of God. Just as He created human beings from nothing, He can also give life to them again. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states

(أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ □ بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ □ بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ)

Does man suppose that We shall not put together his bones? Yes indeed, We are “[\(able to proportion \[even\] his fingertips!](#) Rather man desires to go on living viciously.”[\(1](#)

p: ١٨٩

.Sūrat al-Qiyāmah ٧٥:٣-٥ – -١

:In a tradition, Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) is reported to have narrated

One day the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), after praying in the mosque with people, noticed a pale and thin youth taking a nap with his head down and sunken eyes. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked him: ‘How are you?’ He replied: ‘I have attained certainty.’ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was elated by his answer and said: ‘Every certainty has a sign and what is the sign of your certainty?’ He replied: ‘O Messenger of Allah! The sign of my certainty is that it makes me sad and keeps me awake all night and thirsty on hot days. I have become uninterested in the world and its contents. It is as if I can see the Throne of Allah being established to reckon the people and the people gathered for the Reckoning. I am also with them. I can see the dwellers of paradise enjoying, reclining on cushions and introducing one another. I can see the denizens of the Fire under chastisement and asking for help. Even now the sound of the blazing Fire is ringing in my ears.’ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘This youth is a servant [of Allah] whose heart God has illuminated with the light of [faith](#)’.” (1)

:The same Imām (a) is also reported to have said

مِنْ صِحِّهِ يَقِينِ الْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ لَا يَرْضَى النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يُلُومُهُمْ عَلِيمًا لَمْ يُؤْتِهِ اللَّهُ.

Among the signs of the authenticity of certainty of a Muslim is that he would not seek the satisfaction of people at the expense of God’s pleasure and he would not [reproach them for what God has given them](#).” (2)

It can be deduced from Qur’anic verses that those who can benefit from the Qur’an are only those who have faith in the unseen world and are certain of the hereafter

(الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ... وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ)

who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We...“ [have provided for them...and are certain of the Hereafter](#).” (3)

In order to acquire ‘ilm al-yaqīn, one must resort to convincing proofs on the existence of God and the unseen world. Substantiating certainty with

p: ۱۸۷

.Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. ۲, p. ۵۳ – –۱

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۰, p. ۱۴۳, ḥadīth ۷ – –۲

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲-۵ – –۳

righteous deeds removes the obstacles in the way of man and makes him ready to acquire ‘ayn al-yaqīn and ḥaqq al-yaqīn

The best of intentions and deeds

وَأَنْتَ بِنِيَّتِي إِلَى أَحْسَنِ النِّيَّاتِ وَبِعَمَلِي إِلَى أَحْسَنِ الْأَعْمَالِ.

”!And make my intention the best of intentions and my works the best of works“

It can be inferred from this line that intention, like action, has degrees of excellence, and the perfection or imperfection of actions depends on the perfection or imperfection of intention. Pure intention is not to entertain other than the truth in the heart and to do so is very difficult. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn (‘a) is reported to have said:

الَّتِيهِ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ، أَلَا وَإِنَّ النِّيَّةَ هِيَ الْعَمَلُ.

“(Intention is superior to action, nay verily intention is the very [essence of] action.” (1)

Intention” means quality not quantity; in fact, what is important is the quality. As the“ Holy Qur’an states

(الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا)

He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in“ (conduct.” (2)

In the above noble verse, it is not stated “that He may test you [to see] which of you [has done the most” [liyabluwakum ayyukum aktharu ‘amalan

The best worship

:In a tradition, Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) is reported to have said

الْعِبَادَةُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَوْفًا؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ. وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى طَلَبَ الثَّوَابِ؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ. وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُبًّا لَهُ؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ وَهِيَ أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ.

Uṣūl al-Kāfī, “Kitāb al-Īmān wa’l-Kufr,” bāb al-ikhlās [section on sincerity], ḥadīth – ١

.٤

.Sūrat al-Mulk ٩٧:٢ – ٢

Worship is of three types. There is a group that worships Allah, the Honorable and “Glorious, out of fear; that is the worship of the slave. And there is a group that worships Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, for seeking reward; that is the worship of the trader. And there is a group that worships Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, out of love for Him; that is the worship of the free, and it is the best of worship.”

With weak faith and insufficient gnosis, one cannot expect to have pure intention. What urges a person to work is his motive which, in turn, depends on his faith and gnosis, which, in turn, constitute intention. So, in order to have pure intention, it is necessary to strengthen one’s faith and gnosis. Pure intention automatically brings about good deeds because the best of deeds is that which is based upon the best of intentions. Hence, the key to all perfections is the acquisition of gnosis and the strengthening of faith

Man can assess himself to some extent and reflect on the intention or motive behind his actions. If paradise and hell do not exist, will he still be willing to leave his soft bed in the middle of the night and perform supererogatory prayers [tahajjud], or to endure hunger during the days of the month of Ramaḍān and deprive himself of material pleasures just to win the pleasure of God? Will he refrain from committing sins out of his love for God and gratitude for His blessings

The gnosis [ma‘rifah] of some people is so great that even if hell does not exist, they will worship God out of their desire for paradise and abundant blessings therein. There are also those who worship God not out of fear of hell or craving for paradise but because God is worthy of worship. In order to be near to God, he loves Him and is grateful for all His favors

One must start making incessant efforts to acquire sublime intention. By doing good deeds and reflecting on the secret of creation and the fact that everything belongs to God and that He is the only one worthy to be worshipped, and sought for help, one strengthens his faith and certainty and acquires pure intention

Of course, the warning of Divine Wrath and the glad tidings of Divine Pleasure is one of the great favors of God on His servants because most people cannot attain the

sublime gnosis of worshipping God solely out of love for Him, but worship Him out of fear of hell or desire for paradise. Had it not been for hell and paradise, these people would not benefit from the fruit of worship and avoid sins, and neither would they .attain perfection

p: ١٨٩

Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. ٣, “Kitāb al-Īmān wa’l-Kufr,” bāb al-‘ibādah [section on worship], – ١
.p. ١٣١, ḥadīth ٥

اللَّهُمَّ وَفِّرْ بِطُفِكَ نِيَّتِي وَصَحِّحْ بِمَا عِنْدَكَ يَقِينِي وَاسْتَصْلِحْ بِقُدْرَتِكَ مَا فَسَدَ مِنِّي.

O God, complete my intention through Your gentleness, rectify my certainty through “what is with You, and set right what is corrupt in me through Your power

O Allah! Given my weakness, I cannot acquire sublime intention, so help me acquire it. “Your gentleness” [luṭfika] means the special favors of God. In other words, “Through Your kindness and mercy, You must help me acquire correct and wholesome intention.” Wholesome intention means to worship God solely to express gratitude and discharge one’s obligations as a servant of God. To worship God to gain reward or out of fear of punishment in the hereafter is a correct intention but cannot be considered wholesome intention.

At the beginning of this supplication, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) specified a section as an introduction to the overall contents of the supplication. The criterion of value in Islam is faith and righteous deeds. To express in action whatever we believe in requires some preliminaries. The requisite of perfect faith is certain belief and that which connects faith to action is intention. Eating, laborious work, abstaining from food, lending and borrowing, etc. are not always related to faith. Anybody may do them. The action of a person will be considered the best of actions and be related to faith when its medium is pure intention. The best of intentions breeds the best of deeds.

Perfect faith, highest type of certainty, purest intention, and best deeds are the main themes of Du‘ā’ Makārim al-Akhlāq. All lead to “nearness to Allah” [qurb ilallāh

Since the natural disposition [fiṭrah] of man inclines toward his welfare and felicity, once his attention is drawn to the purpose behind his creation, he will do his best to reach the peak of felicity and perfection.

The first thing for man to do then is to exert all efforts to achieve the purpose of creation, i.e. that which will lead him to perfection and felicity. Along this line, daily activities—studies, earning a living, interaction with others, etc.—must not distract him from moving toward Allah [sayr illallāh]. In this section, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) prays to God to make him succeed in exerting all efforts to attain proximity to Him and remove the obstacles that stop or slow down his movement.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَاكْفِنِي مَا يَشْغَلُنِي الْإِهْتِمَامُ بِهِ وَاسْتَعْمِلْنِي بِمَا تَسْأَلُنِي غَدًا عَنْهُ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household, spare me the concerns which distract“me, employ me in that about which You will ask me tomorrow”!

Intellectual and psychological obstacles dissuade man from thinking of his responsibilities towards God. Seeking the amenities of life, articles of luxury, facing problems, and the like divert man’s attention from thinking of his responsibilities.

Meeting the essential needs of man is a religious obligation and to discharge a duty for the sake of God is worship, and worship contributes to man’s attainment of perfection. In earning a living, however, is everybody only discharging an obligation with the intention of obedience to God? Does a person marry and honor this bond of wedlock solely for the sake of God, or is personal desire also involved? Will these matters not preoccupy his mind and hinder his attention and devotion to God? Are all the sociopolitical activities of a believer for the sake of God? If the sociopolitical affairs will preoccupy the minds of those who enter the sociopolitical arena, they will not find spare time to entreat God and be heedful of Him, let alone invest all their energy in worship. So, in order to solve this problem, we must pray to God to attend to our needs and give us opportunity to easily meet these

needs in such a manner that they do not hinder us from discharging our religious obligations and worshipping Him

Human responsibility

Man is solely responsible to God. Only God has the right to question man because everything comes from Him. He determines the responsibilities of man—responsibilities toward parents, spouse/s, children, neighbors, people, animals, etc. These responsibilities are in essence man's responsibilities toward God, concerning which he will be held to account by God. This world is a place of trial for man, and the Day of Resurrection is the time when man will be asked about the things placed at his disposal. So we must try our best to discharge these responsibilities and seek help from God so that even the essentials of life do not fill our hearts and make us negligent of remembering God and our responsibilities

وَاسْتَفْرُغْ أَيَّامِي فِيْمَا خَلَقْتَنِي لَهُ.

”And let me pass my days in that for which You have created me“

While discharging responsibilities, it is necessary to limit the objects of attention, and even necessary affairs must not make man negligent of his responsibilities. By discharging his responsibilities dutifully, man tends to become nearer to the purpose of creation

Purpose of creation according to the Qur'an

In the Holy Qur'an, different expressions are used to describe the purpose behind the creation of man. In a certain verse, it is stated that he is created for test and trial

(الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيُبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا)

He created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in“
(conduct.”[1](#))

.In another verse, worship of God is mentioned as the purpose behind his creation

(وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ)

“I did not create the jinn and humans except that they may worship Me.” (۲)

p: ۱۹۲

۱- ۶۷:۲ - Sūrat al-Mulk.

۲- ۵۱:۵۶ - Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt.

In yet another verse, it is stated that man is created so that he may enjoy the divine favor and attain nearness to God

(إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ)

“Except those on whom your Lord has mercy—and that is why He created them.” (1)

Outwardly, these verses are inconsistent with one another but in reality each of them refers to a certain level of a single truth. In other words, they allude to the short-term, middle-term and ultimate objectives. The ultimate objective is proximity to God. Man has been given freedom and freewill to worship and serve God and attain nearness to Him. If man is compelled to tread the right path, his movement cannot be treated as a movement for perfection. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَضُؤُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَائِزٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ)

With Allah rests guidance to the straight path, and some of them are devious, and“ had He wished, He would have guided you all.” (2)

God has shown many paths to man so that he can freely choose and tread his path to perfection. By successfully passing this test of choosing the right path, one stage in his way to perfection is passed. In order to be accepted by God, he must take a step towards the next stages to perfection and strive to make his life totally dedicated to God. Everything belongs to Him and we are His servants and a servant is not worthy of anything but servitude. Worldly needs and material pleasures are not the ultimate objective of man. He must deal with them only to the extent necessary and all his attention must focus on his servitude to God. Through his worship and servitude to God, he will attain nearness to God

Worship [‘ibādah] is a general concept which is not confined to prayers and fasting. Every good work done for the sake of God is considered an act of worship. Even the sleep of a fasting person during the month of Ramaḍān is an act of worship because it gives him an opportunity to rest so that he can engage in the night vigil and supererogatory prayers

وَأَغْنِنِي وَوَسِّعْ عَلَيَّ فِي رِزْقِكَ وَلَا تَفْتِنِّي بِالنَّظَرِ.

Free me from need, expand Your provision toward me, and tempt me not with“
”!ingratitude

p: ١٩٣

١- ١١:١١٩ - Sūrat Hūd

٢- ١٦:٩ - Sūrat al-Naḥl

In order for the life of man to be filled with obedience to Allah, the material needs—food, clothing, housing, social security net, and the like—must not hinder the .movement of man towards perfection

Striving for a lawful earning is an act of worship but there is a considerable difference between it and the worship in which the heart's attention is solely towards God. If his efforts towards a lawful earning do not draw his attention to other than God and he is not negligent of his Lord, he can more sincerely worship God and attain true .perfection

The nature of riches or possession of vast wealth usually makes man proud and negligent of God, often urging him to rebel against Him. So we must work hard and pray to God that our efforts for a lawful earning make us not forget or be negligent of .our responsibilities

وَأَعِزَّنِي وَلَا تَبْتَلِنِي بِالْكِبْرِ.

”!Exalt me and afflict me not with pride“

Just as man has physical needs, he has numerous psychological needs, one of which is the need to be respected. Of course, those who attain a high stage of gnosis do not pay attention to other than God and are not in need of others' respect. Sometimes, .meeting this need makes a person arrogant and thus slows down his progress

Arrogance [takabbur] has many evil effects and engenders other vices. Its cure is possible by reflecting on the essence of man's being. If a person realizes that he has nothing of his own and his being belongs to the Creator of the universe, how can he ?consider himself greater than others

وَعَبِّدْنِي لَكَ وَلَا تُفْسِدْ عِبَادَتِي بِالْعُجْبِ.

”!Make me worship You and corrupt not my worship with self-admiration“

To have the opportunity to worship is not enough. It is possible that Satan makes insinuations while a person is worshipping and afflicts him with self-admiration

Ujb means to consider one’s good deeds great and plenty and to think of oneself
.worthy of reward for doing them

:Ujb has different levels and forms‘

p: ۱۹۴

For a lengthy treatment of ‘ujb, see Imām Khomeinī, Forty Ḥadīths: An Exposition – ۱
of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, trans. Sayyid ‘Alī Qulī Qarā’ī and Mahliqah Qarā’ī
(Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī’s Works,
[۲۰۰۳]), pp. ۸-۱۰۰. [Trans

To think God is beholden to one for his good deeds (This is the spiritually most
;menacing level and form of ‘ujb

;To be glad of one’s good deeds before God .۲

To consider oneself worthy of reward; and .۳

.To regard oneself superior to others .۴

:This mean quality has many evil effects. In this regard, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said

مَنْ دَخَلَهُ الْعُجْبُ هَلَكَ.

“(Whoever is afflicted with ‘ujb is wretched.”(۱)

وَأَجْرٍ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى يَدَيَّ الْخَيْرِ وَلَا تَمْحَقْهُ بِالْمَنْ.

Let good flow out from my hands upon the people and efface it not by my making“
”!them feel obliged

It is possible for a person to find an opportunity to help a needy, cure a patient, feed an indigent or give charity for the sake of God, but after sometime he makes them feel obliged through a statement or gesture by saying, for example: “Had I not helped you, you would not have been relieved of that affliction.” Such a statement renders
:void all those services. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنْ وَالْأَذَى)

O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and“
(affronts.”(۲)

وَهَبْ لِي مَعَالِيَ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَاعْصِمْنِي مِنَ الْفَخْرِ.

”!Give me the highest moral traits and preserve me from vainglory“

The important and fine point that must be given attention to is that pretension or showing off [riyā’] in worship and reproaches for good works done are not vices that

always openly lead a person to perdition. It is rather possible that he is careful not to do the above, but in his heart he nurtures a sense of superiority to others. To remove this defect also requires incessant efforts and the help of God

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَلَا تَرْفَعْنِي فِي النَّاسِ دَرَجَةً إِلَّا حَطَطْتَنِي عِنْدَ نَفْسِي مِثْلَهَا.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household! Raise me not a single degree before the“
”people without lowering me its like in myself

p: ١٩٥

.Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, vol. ١, p. ٣٢١ – ١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٦٤ – ٢

Whatever is added to the knowledge of a scholar makes him more aware of his ignorance. If a common person with average knowledge is asked about the number of scientific facts he is unaware of, he may say ten or twenty but whatever is added to his knowledge will make him more aware of his ignorance. The scholar perpetually realizes his own ignorance of many things

Gnostically, the more a person knows God, the more he will realize his nothingness, ignorance, impotence, and helplessness. If he would acknowledge his defects, he will be relieved from arrogance, otherwise his self will rebel and afflict him with many vices. In Du‘ā’ Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) considers himself the most sinful before God, saying

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ أَسْوَأَ حَالاً مِنِّي.

”?Is there anyone who is in a worse state than me“

وَلَا تُحَدِّثْ لِي عِزًّا ظَاهِرًا إِلَّا أَحَدْتَنِي لِي ذِلَّةً بَاطِنَةً عِنْدَ نَفْسِي بِقَدَرِهَا.

And bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in“
”!myself of the same measure

As they are nearer to God, His Friends [awliyā’ Allāh] become more humble. On the contrary, if ignorant and mean people learn something or perform a certain good work, they think that they become superior to the angels and they have done all good things in the world

As the gnosis of the meritorious servants of Allah increases, they see themselves more abject before God and become truly more humble. True humility means to sincerely consider one insignificant, and not only pretend before the people that one is humble, as this is hypocrisy [nifāq]. True humility is impossible except by the grace of Allah because man is rebellious and becomes arrogant on account of a very small thing

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَتَّعَنِي بِهُدَى صَالِحٍ لَا اسْتَبْدِلُ بِهِ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household! Let me enjoy such sound guidance“
”which I do not seek to replace

In this part of the supplication, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) prays for the perpetuity and
.preservation of perfection throughout his life, without any deviation

In the commentary of Sayyid ‘Alī Khān on this noble supplication, it is mentioned that in an old manuscript instead of bihudan ṣāliḥ, bihadin ṣāliḥ is written. Hadā means mode, method and approach. Based on this version, therefore, this part of the supplication is as follows: “Let me enjoy a sound method which I seek not to replace.” If it is really bihudan ṣāliḥ, then it means “Let me enjoy sound guidance which I seek not to replace” and if it is really “guidance” it is also proper. But it seems that bihadin is more proper in view of the fact that the same expression—al-hadyu aṣ-ṣāliḥ—also exists in a ḥadīth

وَطَرِيقَهُ حَقٌّ لَا أَرْيَغُ عَنْهَا.

”...a path of truth from which I swerve not...”

وَيَتِيهِ رُشْدٌ لَا أَشْكُ فِيهَا.

”and an intention of righteous conduct in which I have no doubt...”

Probably, “doubt” here refers to its literal sense, i.e. hesitation. That is, intention in which there is no loophole. It is possible for a person to have doubt in intention but usually the intention itself is endowed with neither doubt nor certainty

In this part of the supplication, Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (‘a) has three requests from God

;Wholesome and constant attitude

A path towards God in which there is no

;deviation

A firm and permanent resolve to do good

.deeds or pious acts

These three requests show us that the permanence or perpetuity of what we ask from God or what He gives us, also lies in His power and we must ask Him for it

:The station of this part of the supplication is like this noble supplication

(رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا)

“[Our Lord! Do not make our hearts swerve after You have guided us.](#)”

After guiding us, God has to keep us along the straight and right path. God says in the
:Qur’an, thus

p: ۱۹۷

۱- ۳:۸ - Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān.

(وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ نَبِيِّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِثِيُونَ كَثِيرٌ... □ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسِرَّاتِنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ)

How many a prophet there has been with whom a multitude of godly men fought...“
All that they said was, ‘O Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affairs, and
(make our feet steady, and help us against the faithless lot’.”⁽¹⁾

One of the supplications of those who have offered their lives and properties in the way of Allah by following the prophets was this: “O God, make our feet steady in the
”right path

(Man is always subject to commit error and be misguided every moment. Ibn Muljim⁽²⁾
was a person who used to perform night supererogatory prayers, yet he thrust his
poisoned sword onto the blessed head of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a).
Zubayr⁽³⁾ was a paternal cousin of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and Imām ‘Alī (‘a). For
many years he fought in battles on the side of the Apostle (ﷺ) who prayed for his
sword and arm. He was one of the great combatants and companions who pledged
(allegiance under the tree [bay‘at ar-riḍwān]).⁽⁴⁾

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), however, ambition for power dragged
him to the extent of wielding his sword against Imām ‘Alī (‘a) during the Battle of
Jamal

The late Ḥāj Mīrzā ‘Abd al-‘Alī Tehrānī (may Allah, the Exalted, be pleased with him)
said: “When I was young, I used to ask for high levels of gnosis from God without
giving importance to its lower levels. I used to ask God to let me attain His proximity
and pleasure, but now that I am old, I only pray to God to make me die as a Muslim.”
To die as a Muslim is not easy. The ideas, beliefs, attitude, and actions of man are
ever-changing. It is possible for a person to lose his faith on account of a simple
doubt. So it is only proper to pray to God, that after having guided us and shown us
the straight path, to keep us firm and steady along this path. If on the verge of death,

١- ١٤٧-١٤٦: Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān

٢- [Trans ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muljim: the assassin of Imām ‘Alī (‘a).

٣- Zubayr: one of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) who, along with Ṭalḥah and

[Trans ‘Ā’ishah, led the Battle of Jamal against Imām ‘Alī (‘a).

٤- ١٨: ٤٨: See exegesis [tafsīr] of Sūrat al-Fath (لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا) “Allah was certainly pleased with the faithful”

when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts,

”so He sent down composure on them, and requited them with a victory near at hand

person is overwhelmed by doubts and skepticism, all his good deeds will be rendered :useless. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states

(وَمَنْ يَزِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيُؤْتِ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ) (

And whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies faithless—they are the“ ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter. They shall be the (inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever].” (1)

وَعَمَّرْنِي مَا كَانَ عُمْرِي بِذِلَّةٍ فِي طَاعَتِكَ فَإِذَا كَانَ عُمْرِي مَرْتَعًا لِلشَّيْطَانِ فَأَقْبِضْ نِي إِلَيْكَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَسْبِقَ مَقْتِكَ إِلَيَّ أَوْ يَسْتَحْكِمَ غَضَبَكَ عَلَيَّ.

Let me live as long as my life is a free gift in obeying You, but if my life should become“ a pasture for Satan, seize me to Yourself before Your hatred overtakes me or Your ”!wrath against me becomes firm

We do not have the capability to comprehend Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), whether such assumption is applicable to the Imām (‘a) or something meant to be a lesson for others. We are not infallible and our life can be a pasture for Satan. Our life, souls and hearts are like a piece of land that can be occupied by Satan, and if every moment of our life is to be filled with sins and offences and trampling upon the stages of .perfection we have attained, it is better for it to end as soon as possible

If a person believes that he is meant for the hereafter, he must sincerely pray for this to God. It is possible that a time will come for him when he indulges in sins and is overwhelmed by sensuality, anger or craving for power, and the veil of negligence covers his heart and blinds his eyes and then he sees and hears nothing but carnal desires. At that time, there is no more chance for return, but after succumbing to this state of affairs, he must pray to God that if that day is supposed to come to him, He .must put an end to his life before the arrival of that day

This supplication helps reform man’s actions because it urges him to think about it, not to allow Satan to dominate his heart, and guard it against doubts and skepticism.

:In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states

p: ۱۹۹

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۱۷ – ۱

(وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِمَّا يُنسِئَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ)

When you see those who gossip impiously about Our signs, avoid them until they“ engage in some other discourse; but if Satan makes you forget, then, after [\(1\)](#)remembering, do not sit with the wrongdoing lot.”

The Qur’an wants to convey that a person like the Apostle (ﷺ) must also be admonished in this regard because the words of Satan may also exert a sort of influence on him.

The statement is not inconsistent with freedom. If a young weightlifter is advised not to lift ٢٠٠ kilos as it will break his back but undergo extensive training first so that he can make it later, this in no way conflicts with freedom.

As we have now identified the path of truth, we must not be in pursuit of the words of Satan as they bring nothing to us except agitation, doubt and skepticism. In this supplication, Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (‘a) prays to God for the termination of his life before Divine wrath overtakes him, if his life is supposed to become a pasture for Satan, and if ever He is angry with him, he asks for help so that he is able to repent and make compensations for his lapses. God says in the Qur’an, thus

(وَمَنْ يَحِلِّلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ)

“[\(2\)](#)And he on whom My wrath descends certainly perishes.”

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَدْعُ خِصْلَةَ تُعَابٍ مِنِّي إِلَّا أَصْلَحْتَهَا.

“O God, deposit in me no quality for which I will be faulted, unless You settle it right“

وَلَا عَائِبَهُ أُؤْتِبُ بِهَا إِلَّا أَحْسَنْتَهَا.

“and no flaw for which I will be blamed, unless You make it beautiful...”

وَلَا أُكْرِمُهُ فَيَنْ نَاقِصَةً إِلَّا أَتَمَّمْتَهَا.

”and no deficient noble trait, unless You complete it...”

The qualities and flaws to be condemned and reproached by others refer to the attributes not acceptable by the righteous, and not to those good qualities condemned by the spiteful and wicked

p: ٢٠٠

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ٦:٦٨ – ١

.Sūrat Ṭā Hā ٢٠:٨١ – ٢

According to Islam, man is a social being. He will not attain real perfection by mere personal acts of worship. Instead, he must live with people to attain all dimensions of perfection. He must be in touch with society and all facets of social life—relationship with his spouse, children, friends, and neighbors; transactions, jihād and defense; relationship with the government and people; etc. He must worship God according to His command. By doing so, he will attain nearness to God

Sometimes, these relationships cause annoyances, disturbances of the mind and conflicts. Some of these conflicts are with those who are hostile to the person. This hostility may be caused by worldly or religious matters, and sometimes these conflicts and grudges are caused by the jealousy of others for blessings given by God to a person. This jealousy breeds animosity towards him and tries to harm his reputation. At times, a person has no animosity towards another person who in turn is not jealous of him, but they have a difference of views and do not exactly understand each other. This difference of views leads to misunderstanding and a sort of conflict between them

So, some matters pertaining to the heart such as animosity, grudge, jealousy, suspicion, misgiving, pessimism, misunderstanding, and difference of views undermines a person's wholesome, amicable and sincere relations with others. This state of affairs brings about indignation, anxiety and bitterness to him and these feelings may lessen the presence of his heart in worship. In this part of the supplication, Imām Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a) pays attention to these things

Turning evil and defects into good and merits

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَبْدِلْنِي مِنْ بُغْضِهِ أَهْلَ الشَّانِ الْمَحَبَّةِ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and Muḥammad's Household and replace for me the "animosity of the people of hatred with love

وَمِنْ حَسَدِ أَهْلِ الْبَغْيِ الْمَوَدَّةَ.

”the envy of the people of insolence with affection...”

p: ٢٠١

وَمِنْ ظَنِّهِ أَهْلَ الصَّالِحِ الثَّقَةِ.

”the suspicion of the people of righteousness with trust...”

وَمِنْ عداوِهِ الْأَذْنَيْنِ الْوَلَايَةِ.

”the enmity of those who are close with friendship...”

Those who are close” [adnayn] refers to the nearest of kin. A person has different levels of relationship with various people—relationship with near relatives, distant relatives, neighbors, etc. Each of them requires a particular nature of relationship

وَمِنْ عُقُوقِ ذَوِي الْأَرْحَامِ الْمَبْرَةِ.

”the disrespect of womb relatives with devotion...”

Near relatives must have a close relationship which should not be severed. They must be kind and not mistreat one another

وَمِنْ خِذْلَانِ الْأَقْرَبِينَ النَّصْرَةِ.

”the abandonment of relatives with help...”

Sometimes a person needs the help of his relatives who do not want to assist him

وَمِنْ حُبِّ الْمُدَارِينِ تَصْحِيحِ الْمَقَةِ.

”the attachment of flatterers with love set right...”

وَمِنْ رَدِّ الْمُلَابِسِينَ كَرَمِ الْعِشْرَةِ.

”the rejection of fellows with generous friendliness...”

وَمِنْ مَرَارِهِ خَوْفِ الظَّالِمِينَ حَلَاوَةِ الْأَمْنَةِ.

”the bitterness of fear of wrongdoers with the sweetness of security...”

In other words, “O God! The threat of tyrants and oppressors is sometimes not

actualized but it creates fear and dread in our hearts. Turn this fear and dread into a
”sense of security

Seeking help to repel evil and attract good

This part of the supplication is related to the time when the oppressor, the envious,
.and their like intend to do evil

p: ۲۰۲

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْعَلْ لِي يَدًا عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَنِي.

O God, bless Muhammad and his Household! Appoint for me a hand against him who
”wrongs me

وَلِسَانًا عَلَى مَنْ خَاصَمَنِي.

”a tongue against him who disputes with me...”

وَوَظْفَرًا بِمَنْ عَانَدَنِي.

”victory over him who stubbornly resists me...”

وَهَبْ لِي مَكْرًا عَلَى مَنْ كَايَدَنِي.

”Give me guile against him who schemes against me”

وَقُدْرَةً عَلَى مَنْ اضْطَهَدَنِي.

”power over him who oppresses me...”

وَتَكْذِيبًا لِمَنْ قَصَبَنِي.

”refutation of him who reviles me...”

وَسَلَامَةً مِمَّنْ تَوَعَّدَنِي.

”safety from him who threatens me...”

وَوَفْقَنِي لِطَاعِهِ مَنْ سَدَّدَنِي وَمُتَابِعِهِ مَنْ أَرَشَدَنِي.

Grant me success in obeying him who points me straight and following him who
”guides me right

Goodness in exchange for the badness of others

This part of the supplication is related to the time when something iniquitous is done to us. What must we do then? Shall we take revenge from them and treat them in kind? Shall we forgive them for what they have done? In this regard, the Holy Qur'an

:states

p: ۲۰۳

(وَلَا تَسْتَوِی الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ اُدْفَعِ بِالَّتِي هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ)

Good and evil [conduct] are not equal. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,]“ behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a (sympathetic friend.)”

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَسَدِّدْنِي لِأَنْ أُعَارِضَ مَنْ غَشَّنِي بِالنُّصْحِ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household and point me straight to resist him who“ .is dishonest toward me with good counsel

وَأُجْزَى مَنْ هَجَرَنِي بِالْبِرِّ.

.repay him who separates from me with gentle devotion...”

وَأُثِيبَ مَنْ حَرَمَنِي بِالْبَدْلِ.

”reward him who deprives me with free giving...”

وَأُكَافَى مَنْ قَطَعَنِي بِالصَّلَةِ.

”recompense him who cuts me off with joining...”

وَأُخَالِفَ مَنْ اغْتَابَنِي إِلَى حُسْنِ الذِّكْرِ.

”oppose him who slanders me with excellent mention...”

وَأَنْ أَشْكُرَ الْحَسَنَةَ وَأُعْضِيَ عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ.

”give thanks for good, and shut my eyes to evil...”

Keeping one's honor

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَصُنْ وَجْهِي بِالْيَسَارِ وَلَا تَبْتَدِلْ جَاهِي بِالْاِقْتَارِ فَاسْتَرْزِقْ أَهْلَ رِزْقِكَ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household! Save my face through ease, and“ demean not my dignity through neediness, lest I seek provision from those whom You .have provided

In Nahj al-Balāghah there is an expression which is very similar to the initial part of this line. All the Infallibles (‘a) are of the same light [nūr] and it is not surprising if a supplication can be traced to more than one of them

p: ۲۰۴

.Sūrat Fuṣṣilat ۴۱:۳۴ – ۱

So, Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) might have learned this supplication from the Commander of
the Faithful (‘a) through Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a).

Every person wants to be respected in society. That is, he must be treated with honor and not with contempt. If the visage, clothing, behavior, attitude, and valuable works of a person are praised by others, he is respected in society, otherwise he is held in
contempt and no one respects him.

Some Sufis believe that their outward appearance must not be good. Accordingly, they must avoid grooming themselves and cleaning their clothes so that their bad odor and ungroomed faces make them despicable. In their own narrow thinking, they are struggling against their carnal selves in a bid to attain spiritual perfection. This way of thinking and attitude establishes a sort of relationship with Satan. Sometimes, Satan helps them in some affairs and to their delight they think that this assistance is
a sign of their truthfulness.

As can be deduced from the Qur’an and traditions of the infallible Imāms (‘a), this practice is extremely despicable and condemnable. In the Qur’an even the indigent
:who do not show their indigence is praised

(يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَعْتِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِحْفَافًا)

The unaware suppose them to be well-off because of their reserve. You recognize “
them by their mark; they do not ask the people importunately.” (1)

According to Islam, in wearing clothes, dealing with others—members of the family and the society in large—a person must behave in such a way that he maintains his self-respect. Traditions have not reproached people who have two types of clothes—one for days of festivities, Fridays and social gatherings and another for work—and neither considered their practice “worldly”. In fact, they have been praised and appreciated. Moreover, in Islamic society, people must have extensive and cordial relations with one another. This practice paves the way for their material progress and spiritual perfection. The believers [mu’minīn] are recommended in traditions to shake hands whenever they meet each other and be affectionate to one another. In

:this regard, Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) said

p: ۲۰۵

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۷۳ – ۱

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا التَّقِيَا فَتَصَافَحَا أَدْخَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَدَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمَا وَأَقْبَلَ بِوَجْهِهِ عَلَيْهِمَا حُبًّا لِمَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ.

When two believers meet each other and shake their hands, God, the Honorable and“ Glorious, puts His hand in between their hands and gives special attention to the one [\(who loves the other one more.\)”](#)

All these recommendations are made for the believers to forge cordial relations with one another. For this cordiality, amity and connection one must avoid things that are contemptible. No person wants to shake hands or even look at someone untidy and disheveled, with a bad odor. Hence, cleanliness is a prerequisite of friendship and affection.

Whenever he was supposed to meet his companions, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) combed his hair, applied perfume, brushed his teeth, and fixed his clothes. He looked at himself in the mirror to be sure that everything was fine. In the absence of a mirror, he would look at himself in a container filled with water. This emphasis on personal hygiene is mentioned so that members of society can love each other more and benefit from one another. One of the differences between the believer and the unbeliever is that the former is in pursuit of self-respect so that he can discharge his social responsibilities prescribed by religion, but the latter is after self-respect for the good of his ego.

Usually, people do not pay attention to a poor person. For such a person, it is difficult to acquire a good social standing in society even among Muslims. Wealth and property are of no value for Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a), but he asks God to preserve his honor. By acquiring a good social standing, he can discharge his religious obligations in a better way. A person who is in need of others is forced to extend his hands towards them. In this case, if he is helped by them he is humiliated, and if he is refused, he endures worse humiliation. This is while the treasures of the heavens and earth are in the hand of God who can meet the needs of man out of His infinite mercy and bounty and thereby preserve his honor.

وَأَسْتَعِطَى شِرَارَ خَلْقِكَ فَأَفْتَتِنَ بِحَمْدِ مَنْ أَعْطَانِي وَأُبْتَلَى بِدَمِّ مَنْ مَنَعَنِي وَأَنْتَ وَلِيُّ الْإِعْطَاءِ وَالْمَنْعِ.

and asks for bestowal from the worst of Your creatures! Then I would be tried by...“
praising him who gave to me and afflicted with

p: ٢٠٦

.Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. ٢, p. ١٧٩ – –١

blaming him who held back from me, while You—not they—are the patron of giving
”and holding back

One must pray to God Himself to provide all his needs, so that one is not forced to
:seek it from mean and wicked individuals. In this regard, the Noble Qur’an states

(وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بَضْرًا فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ لِفَضْلِهِ يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ)
(

Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is no one to remove it except Him;“
and should He desire any good for you, none can stand in the way of His grace: He
grants it to whomever He wishes of His servants, and He is the All-forgiving, the All-
(merciful.” (1)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَارْزُقْنِي صِحَّةً فِي عِبَادِهِ وَفِرَاحاً فِي زَهَادِهِ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household and provide me with soundness in“
”...worship and detachment in renunciation

.The Imām (‘a) prays for relief from pressures to worship with total dedication

وَعِلْمًا فِي اسْتِعْمَالٍ وَوَرَعًا فِي إِجْمَالٍ.

”!knowledge put into action and abstinence in measure...”

Individuals, who want to be pious and devoted to God, sometimes abstain from things
which are wholesome and hinder them from doing the obligatory. They must know
.the scope and limitation of asceticism and piety before practicing them

اللَّهُمَّ اخْتِمْ بِعَفْوِكَ أَجَلِي

”...O God, seal my term with Your pardon“

وَحَقِّقْ فِي رَجَائِ رَحْمَتِكَ أَمَلِي

”.verify my expectation in hoping for Your mercy...”

When a person reflects on his sins, he becomes hopeless of God's forgiveness and in
.this state expects God's mercy

وَسَهِّلْ إِلَى بُلُوغِ رِضَاكَ سُبُلِي

”smooth my paths to reach Your good pleasure...”

p: ٢٠٧

.Sūrat Yūnus ١٠:١٠٧ – ١

وَحَسِّنْ فِي جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِي عَمَلِي.

”!and make my works good in all my states...”

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَتَبَّهْنِي لِذِكْرِكَ فِي أَوْقَاتِ الْعَفْلَةِ

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household and incite me to remember You in times “
”of heedlessness

Man is always prone to forget and be negligent. Moreover, sometimes something happens that makes him totally forget God. We must pray to God to extend His hand
.in such a situation, inspire His remembrance and awaken our hearts

وَاسْتَعْمِلْنِي بِطَاعَتِكَ فِي أَيَّامِ الْمُهْلَةِ

”.employ me in Your obedience in days of disregard...”

وَأَنْهَجْ لِي إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكَ سَبِيلًا سَهْلَةً أَكْمِلُ لِي بِهَا خَيْرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

open a smooth road for me to Your love, and complete for me, thereby, the good of ...“
”!this world and the next

That is to say, “My aim is to obtain Your love. To obtain this love has long and winding roads. Set for me the shortest one. By granting these requests and finding the shortest way to Your love, You will completely grant to me the good in this world as
”.well as in the hereafter

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ كَأَفْضَلِ مَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ قَبْلَهُ وَأَنْتَ مُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ بَعْدَهُ وَآتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي
الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ.

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household the best You have blessed any of Your “
creatures before him and will bless any of them after him, and give to us in this world
good, and in the next world good, and protect me through Your mercy from the
”!chastisement of the Fire

The holiness of certain places and periods in the Qur'an

God, the Exalted, has granted more honor and nobility to certain creatures as compared to the rest. They are endowed with a certain status, honor, nobility, and dignity which others do not possess. It can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and pure Imāms (‘a) that apart from visible creatures, some places and periods have special features. The first and foremost of these places is the Holy Ka‘bah

(إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِنَكِّهَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)

Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah,⁽¹⁾ blessed and a “⁽²⁾ guidance for all nations.”

The second holy place is Masjid al-Aqṣā. In the Glorious Qur'an, Masjid al-Ḥarām and Masjid al-Aqṣā are mentioned together

(سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ)

Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey by night from the Sacred “⁽³⁾ Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose environs We have blessed.”

God says that He blesses them as well as their environs, and in another verse He says

(يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ)

“⁽⁴⁾ O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you.”

The third holy place mentioned in the Qur'an is the Mount Sinai which is described therein as ṭūri sīnīn

[.Q Trans

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:٩٦ – ٢

.Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ١٧:١ – ٣

.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ٥:٢١ – ٤

“[\(By Mount Sinai.](#)

Mount

Sinai is the place where Prophet Mūsā (‘a) used to pray and received for the first time the divine revelation. It is possible that these places have intrinsic peculiarities and their holiness is inherent. In this case, a time will come when mankind will discover their special status. It is equally possible that their holiness is due to certain events that took place there. In any case, these places have special sanctity and nobility

Some periods are mentioned in the Qur’an as having special significance. It can be inferred from verses of the Qur’an that the arrangement of days according to the Islamic lunar calendar has divinely been ordained

(إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ)

Indeed the number of the months with Allah is twelve months in Allah’s Book, the day“
[\(when He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred.”](#)

Among these twelve months, God declared four months as “forbidden months” [ash-shuhūr al-ḥarām], viz. Muḥarram, Rajab, Dhū’l-Qa‘dah, and Dhū’l-Ḥijjah. It is obligatory to honor these four months and it is forbidden to initiate war during this period even to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and pure Imāms (‘a), except if it is initiated by the faithless or polytheists and the Muslims need to defend themselves. The reason for this prohibition is the sanctity given by God to these months

In the Holy Qur’an, the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah as well as its two preceding months, viz. Shawwāl and Dhū’l-Qa‘dah, when the pilgrims [ḥujjāj] were getting ready for the pilgrimage [Ḥajj], have been mentioned as months of pilgrimage. In addition, different rituals of Ḥajj are mentioned in other chapters of the Qur’an. Yet, nowhere are the names of these months ever mentioned

Among the twelve months only the name of the month of Ramaḍān is explicitly mentioned in verses of the Glorious Qur'an. This month is among neither the "forbidden months" nor the "months of pilgrimage" but it is mentioned in the Qur'an :with special respect

p: ٢١٠

.Sūrat al-Tīn ٩٥:٢ – -١

.Sūrat al-Tawbah (or, Barā'ah) ٩:٣٦ – -٢

(شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ)

“The month of Ramaḍān is one in which the Qur’an was sent down.” (1)

The night when the Qur’an was revealed to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in the month of Ramaḍān is also called a blessed night

(إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ)

“Indeed We sent it down on a blessed night.” (2)

This sacred month has an intrinsic peculiarity because divine ordinances are not without consideration of good and bad. So there are certain reasons why God has preferred it over other months. The Night of Ordainment [Laylat al-Qadr] is in this sacred month in which fasting is divinely ordained. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ)

O you, who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting, as it was prescribed for those“
“who were before you.” (3)

:It is also stated, thus

(شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ)

“The month of Ramaḍān is one in which the Qur’an was sent down.” (4)

It can be deduced from these two verses that fasting is ordained on mankind in the month of revelation of the Qur’an. Perhaps it can be inferred from this form of expression of the Qur’an that God has made fasting obligatory to mankind in recognition of the revelation of the Qur’an. Even if it cannot be claimed that the reason behind the injunction of fasting in this sacred month is the revelation of the Qur’an, it certainly plays some role in this injunction

In the first verse, the Qur’an states, “The Qur’an is revealed in the month of

Ramaḍān” and in the other verse it declares, “The Qur’an is revealed in a blessed night.” Thus, the Qur’an is revealed in a certain night of the month

p: ۲۱۱

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۸۵ – -۱

.Sūrat al-Dukhān ۴۴:۳ – -۲

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۸۳ – -۳

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۸۵ – -۴

of Ramaḍān and that is the Night of Ordainment. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(حم □ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ □ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلِهِ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ □ فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ)

Hā Mīm. By the Manifest Book! Indeed We sent it down on a blessed night, and“
(indeed We have been warning [mankind]). Every definitive matter is resolved in it.”

Yufraqu in the last verse means “to separate” and to separate necessitates distinction, which in turn requires appointment [ta‘ayyun] and estimation [taqdīr] which both mean “measurement”. In Qur’anic parlance, taqdīr is used to mean “measurement”. Whenever the measurement of a thing is determined, its limit [ḥudūd] can be established. Once it is separated from others, it will become free of its ambiguity. The verse “Every definitive matter is resolved in it” indicates that the night of revelation of the Qur’an is the Night of Ordainment. In Sūrat al-Qadr this night is also considered majestic

(إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلِهِ الْقَدْرِ)

(Indeed We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment.”

:The word qadr means taqdīr. The Qur’an continues

(وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ)

(What will show you what is the Night of Ordainment?”

Perhaps this question is not addressed to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and even if it is so, it is indicative of this night’s majesty. In a bid to show the importance of the Night of Ordainment, in this three short verses the term “Night of Ordainment” is repeated three times. The Qur’an does not state: “Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment. What will show you what it is? It is a night...” This expression of the Qur’an cannot emphasise more the greatness and majesty of this night. In order to make the greatness of this night more discernible to the people, the Qur’an poses this question: “What will show you what is the Night of Ordainment?” This shows that the

Night of Ordainment is a fact beyond the understanding of common people. The
:Qur'an continues, thus

p: ۲۱۲

.Sūrat al-Dukhān ۴۴:۱-۴ - -۱

.Sūrat al-Qadr ۹۷:۱ - -۲

.Sūrat al-Qadr ۹۷:۲ - -۳

(لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ)

“The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months.” (1)

One thousand months are equivalent to more than ۷۰ years. That is, the whole lifespan of a person without counting the Nights of Ordainment every year in it. This superiority is based on two reasons. Firstly, on this night the mercy of God on His servants is greater than His regular mercy in more than ۷۰ years, with the exception of the Nights of Ordainment every year. Secondly, the deeds of people on this night have more virtue compared to their deeds in more than ۷۰ years, with the exception of the Nights of Ordainment every year. This is the explicit statement of the Qur’an and there is no dispute concerning it although it is not known to us which night of the .month is the Night of Ordainment

In understanding the importance of a thing, the human mind is more perceptible to quantities than qualities. To show the importance of this night, God states that it is better than a thousand months, but the truth behind this night is beyond that which we are familiar with. Nevertheless, we are obliged to believe in these truths. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states

(لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ)

Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by]“ those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets.” (2)

Since God says so, we must have faith in the Last Day, angels, the Holy Book and prophets; otherwise our intellect is incapable of discerning creatures called “angels” who have a role in creation. Had it not been for the revelation and sayings of the awliyā’ of Allah, we could not have knowledge of any of them. In this regard, the Holy :Qur’an states

(وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا)

But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in“

knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.’” ﴿٢﴾

p: ٢١٣

.Sūrat al-Qadr ٩٧:٣ – -١

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١٧٧ – -٢

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ٣:٧ – -٣

Hence, since God has said it, we believe in it. Some information about the angels can be learned from verses of the Qur'an and traditions of the pure Imāms (‘a) but the truth behind it is beyond our comprehension. The truth behind the angels, their station, their roles in the universe, the meaning of their coming down and others, are all unknown to us. In our conception, the word nuzūl is applied to the coming down of a thing from above, but it is unknown to us how the angels “come down”, and we are even incapable of imagining it. We only know that angels are creatures with very high stations that administer the affairs of the universe with the permission of God. They are mediums in the distribution of sustenance, taking the soul out of the human body, writing down of the deeds of the people, etc. In this connection, the Noble Qur'an states:

(وَالنَّازِعَاتِ غَرْقًا □ وَالنَّاشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا □ وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا □ فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبْقًا □ فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا)

By those [angels] who wrest [the soul] violently, by those who draw [it] out gently, by those who swim smoothly, by those who take the lead racing, by those who direct the [affairs [of creatures]].” (1)

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولَىٰ أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ)

All praise belongs to Allah, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to [the creation whatever He wishes.]” (2)

Notwithstanding this, the whole truth behind the existence of the angels is unknown to us. In this connection, the Glorious Qur'an states

(وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا)

“And you have not been given of the knowledge, except a few [of you].” (3)

Today, thanks to the advancement in space science, it is proven that this physical universe is so complex that it is beyond understanding and description. In order for the light of some stars to reach the planet Earth, they require billions of years to travel while the light of the sun reaches the earth in only eight minutes. Some scientists

believe that some light that has reached the earth from other heavenly bodies is from
stars whose lifespan

p: ۲۱۴

.Sūrat al-Nāzi‘āt ۷۹:۱-۵ – -۱

.Sūrat Fāṭir (or al-Malā’ikah) ۳۵:۱ – -۲

.Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ۱۷:۸۵ – -۳

has ended and they have been extinguished. In spite of the complexity of this universe—that everyday a portion of its expanse and greatness is discovered—it is like a ring in a vast desert in comparison to the elements that are beyond human comprehension. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ مَا السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ فِي الْكُرْسِيِّ إِلَّا كَحَلْقَةٍ مُلْقَاهِ فِي أَرْضٍ فَلَاةٍ.

O Abū Dharr! In comparison with the Throne, the seven heavens are nothing but like“
(a ring that fell in a desert.”⁽¹⁾

Human beings are incapable of comprehending the majesty of the physical universe, except the prophets, the infallible Imāms (‘a), and perhaps some awliyā’ of Allah, who have been granted mystical knowledge [‘ilm al-ladunnī] by Him. How can they, then, understand spiritual concepts which cannot be understood by the physical senses and are far more complex and intricate than the physical universe? The descent [nuzūl] of the angels from a higher world on the heart of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is beyond the comprehension of common people. Yet, we must declare

(آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا)

(We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.”⁽²⁾

Our greatest honor is that God, the Exalted, has guided us and we have accepted His guidance, completely believing in what He has said—that there are angels who have descended on the heart of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) on the Night of Ordainment, the night which is superior to one thousand nights and in which one rak‘ah of prayer is superior to thirty thousand common rak‘ahs. God has given this sanctity to this night and a window is open for His servants to get the maximum benefit within this short period

Refuting the alleged improbability of the revelation of the Qur’an in one night

Perhaps we think that the Qur’an consists of ٣٠ parts [juz’] and wonder how they were revealed to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in only a single night. Is it possible? How could it be reconciled with the revelation of the Qur’an in ٢٣ years

.Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. ۷۳ – ۱

.Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān ۳:۷ – ۲

One of the objections of the enemies of Islam against the Apostle (ﷺ) is this: Why was the Qur'an not revealed all at once? In this regard, the Qur'an states

(كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا)

So it is, that We may strengthen your heart with it, and We have recited it [to you] in a “[measured tone.](#)”[\(1\)](#)

The other objection is that the Holy Qur'an consists of more than six thousand verses, and it cannot be imagined that Archangel Jibrā'il ('a) could have normally recited them to the Apostle (ﷺ) in one night

In reply to such objections, one of the methods employed by the Holy Qur'an is the “elimination of improbability” [raf' istib'ād]. For example, the polytheists were saying, “How could the human body and its bones be connected together again and be given life again?” The Noble Qur'an replies to this question in many ways, one of which is the “elimination of improbability”. The Qur'an states, thus

(وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ)

And He revives the earth after its death. Likewise you [too] shall be raised [from the “[dead.](#)”[\(2\)](#)

God who can make plants grow in a dead earth can also revive dead and rotten human bodies. This way of expression is elimination of improbability which is considered a way of argumentation or reasoning. In this regard, the Glorious Qur'an shows many other cases such as the birds killed by Prophet Ibrāhīm ('a) and then made alive again and the cow of the Children of Israel which lived again after being slaughtered. These instances show that it is possible for God to give life again to the creatures in this or the next world

At this juncture, elimination of improbability can also be used. It must be noted that our judgments are based upon comparisons with what we are familiar with. We understand “reading” and “listening” in the way we use these concepts in our common everyday life. We think that if a person wants to talk, he must face another person

and this talk takes as much time as we talk. This is while there are examples when we can know of so many things in a very short time. One of these cases is dreaming. Sometimes, a person sleeps and has a dream in a short period and if the event that he sees in the dream happens in actual life, it would take many days. A long event happens in our dream in a few minutes and we can hear many and long conversations in only a short period. If we want to make those conversations

p: ٢١٤

.Sūrat al-Furqān ٢٥:٣٢ – -١

.Sūrat al-Rūm ٣٠:١٩ – -٢

in actual life, we need many hours. Another point is that the sending down of the Qur'an in one night does not mean that it had been revealed to the Apostle (ﷺ) in the form of words through sound waves. In this regard, the Noble Qur'an states

(نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ □ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ)

It (Qur'an) was] brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit, upon your heart, so that]“
(you may be one of the warners.”[\(1\)](#)

”.And the Qur'an does not state, “...upon your ears

In order to eliminate this improbability, we can cite the computer as an example. The entries of voluminous encyclopedia can be stored in a single compact disc. By having this compact disc, all entries of the said encyclopedia are at our disposal. By using a personal computer, we can benefit from any of its information whenever we want. And this does not mean that all words of the encyclopedia are recited to us one by one. So, in the physical world there are things which can compress a set of textual and audio data. Since in this world which is a world of dispersion, such things are possible, it follows that in the metaphysical world which is more akin to the attribute of unity, a set of information can more probably be compressed

Of course, it is not known to us how this thing happens but we know for certain that the same is not impossible and an example of which exists in this world. Hence, it is possible for the whole Qur'an to be revealed in the Night of Ordainment within a very short period—perhaps a few minutes or even shorter—to the Apostle (ﷺ) who impeccably received it

Concerning the manner of revelation of the Noble Qur'an, the late 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (may Allah be pleased with him) says in Tafsīr al-Mizān, that the Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in two ways: (1) in an all-at-once revelation [nuzūl daf'ī] and (2) revelation-in installments [nuzūl tadrījī]. The all-at-once revelation of the Qur'an which is described in traditions as “revelation to the Inhabited House” [nuzūl ilā bayt al-ma'mūr], “revelation to the heaven of the world” [nuzūl ilā's-samā' ad-dunyā] and “revelation to the heart of the Prophet (ﷺ)” [nuzūl 'alā qalb an-nabī] is

different from the revelation of the verses to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) on different occasions. The relationship between the two is like that of “addition” [jam‘] and “subtraction” [tafrīq]. The revelation of the Qur’an within the span of ۲۳ years to the Apostle (ﷺ) is the revelation-in-installments, and the revelation of the Qur’an on the Night of Ordainment is the all-at-once revelation, which is beyond our :comprehension

p: ۲۱۷

.Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’ ۲۶:۱۹۳-۱۹۴ – -۱

(وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا)

“[And you have not been given of the knowledge, except a few \[of you\].”](#)”[\(1\)](#)

During the night of the revelation of the Qur’an, the angels came down. The said night is so blessed and a source of hope for human beings. Those who pay attention to the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and the pure Imāms (‘a) prepare themselves throughout the year to comprehend the Night of Ordainment. If something can be done to make one night more valuable than thirty thousand days and nights, one year .of effort to comprehend such a night is valuable

Among the acts effective in understanding the Night of Ordainment is to read Sūrat al-Qadr throughout the year, reading the sūrat during the blessed nights of Ramaḍān one thousand times, or reading of Sūrat al-Dukhān a hundred times during those .nights

p: ٢١٨

.Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ١٧:٨٥ – ١

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هَلِيسَتْوَيَالَّذِيَتَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِيَتَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

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We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable
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