

Part 3: Commentary on Du‘a’ Abu Ḥamzah al-Thumali

First Discourse: The Supplication of Abu Ḥamzah al-Thumali

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا أَدْعُو غَيْرَهُ وَلَوْ دَعَوْتُ غَيْرَهُ لَمْ يَسْتَجِبْ لِي دُعَائِي، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَا أَرْجُو غَيْرَهُ وَلَوْ رَجَوْتُ غَيْرَهُ لَأَخْلَفَ رَجَائِي.

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

The Supplication of Abu Hamzah al-Thumali

The supplication known as *Du‘a’ Abu Hamzah al-Thumali* which is recited before dawn, during the month of Ramadan, is one of the noble and substantial supplications transmitted from Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn (‘a).

Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, a companion of Imam al-Baqir (‘a) and Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) recorded this supplication from Imam al-Sajjad (‘a). Abu Hamzah was called “the Salman of his time”.¹ This great supplication in itself bespeaks of his knowledge and personality.²

Ontological relationship between God and His creatures

Although the supplications transmitted from the Imams (‘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’ [*mutashabih*] 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'a' al-Iftitah*, thus:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي مِنْ خَشْيَتِهِ تَرَعَدُ السَّمَاءُ وَسُكَّانُهَا، وَتَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَعُمَّارُهَا، وَتَمُوجُ الْبِحَارُ وَمَنْ يَسْبِحُ 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.”³

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.”⁴

God also says:

﴿ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ﴾

“There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.”⁵

These are subjects which are beyond our comprehension. Also, the exegetes of the Qur'an [*mufassirin*] usually believe that these verses and supplications are allegorical [*mutashabihat*]. 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'a-e wujudi*], 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 Ramadhan, 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.”*⁶

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'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

وَأَنْكَ لَا تَحْتَجِبُ عَنْ خَلْقِكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَحْجُبَهُمُ الْأَعْمَالُ دُونَكَ.

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

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 Imam al-Sajjad ('a) would raise his hands in supplication at midnight during Ramadhan, supplicating and imploring God.

أَلْحَمْدُ 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, Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 Imam (‘a) said to God:

كَيْفَ أَرْجُو غَيْرَكَ وَالْخَيْرُ كُلُّهُ بِيَدِكَ؟

“How should I have hope in other than You, when the good—all of it—is in Your hand?”⁷

These words must be uttered the way Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 يَحْتُمُّ 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.

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‘a’ al-Ifitah*, 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 *hadith qudsi* that God says:

أُنَاجِيهِ فِي ظُلْمِ اللَّيْلِ وَتُورِ النَّهَارِ.

“I whisper to him in the darkness of the night as well as the brightness of the day.”⁸

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 Imams (‘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 *awliya*’, we cannot redeem ourselves. Once man acquires such spiritual states and tastes their sweetness, he will no more pay attention to anything else. The *awliya*’ of Allah who have savored this sweetness say as such:

إِلَهِي مَا أَلَذَّ خَوَاطِرَ الْإِلْهَامِ بِذِكْرِكَ 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!”⁹

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 *hadith* that there was a hermit who used to impersonate ʿAdhrat Musa (‘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 *awliya*’ of Allah, repeating what they recited so that by imitating His *awliya*’,¹⁰ God may grant us His grace and favor.

إِلَهِي إِنْ كَانَ قَلَّ زَادِي فِي الْمَسِيرِ إِلَيْكَ، فَلَقَدْ حَسُنَ ظَنِّي بِالتَّوَكُّلِ عَلَيْكَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ جُرْمِي 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.”¹¹

Second Discourse: Paying Attention to the Attributes of Allah

أَدْعُوكَ يَا سَيِّدِي بِلِسَانٍ قَدْ أَخْرَسَهُ ذَنْبُهُ، رَبِّ أَنَا جِيكَ بِقَلْبٍ قَدْ أَوْبَقَهُ جُرْمُهُ، أَدْعُوكَ يَا رَبِّ رَاهِباً رَاعِباً، رَاجِئاً خَائِفاً، إِذَا رَأَيْتُ مَوْلَايَ ذُنُوبِي فَزِعْتُ، وَإِذَا رَأَيْتُ كَرَمَكَ طَمِعْتُ، فَإِنَّ عَفْوَتَ فَخَيْرٍ 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 [*‘ubudiyyah*]. 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 Imam (‘a) also expressed these points in his 15 whispered prayers [*munajat khamsah ‘asharah*]:

إِلَهِي ارْحَمْ عَبْدَكَ الذَّلِيلَ، ذَا اللِّسَانِ الْكَلِيلِ.

“O God, have mercy upon Your lowly slave of silent tongue and few good deeds.”¹²

Imam al-Husayn (‘a) also expressed similar points in *Du‘a’ ‘Arafah*:

إِلَهِي كُلَّمَا أَخْرَسَنِي لُؤْمِي أَنْطَقَنِي كَرَمُكَ وَكُلَّمَا آيَسَنِي أَوْصَافِي أَطْمَعَتْنِي 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 *awliya'* 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' [*qabdh*], 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' [*inbisa*], 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 "*dalal*"; that is, a sort of coquetry and amorous gesture. In the same *Du'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says to God:

وَلَيْنِ ادْخَلْتَنِي 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 Imam ('a) says elsewhere:

إِلَهِي إِنْ ادْخَلْتَنِي النَّارَ فَفِي ذَلِكَ سُرُورٌ عَدُوِّكَ، وَإِنْ ادْخَلْتَنِي 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 'adhrat 'Ali and Imam al-Sajjad ('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'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali*, *Du'a' Kumayl*, *Du'a' al-Sabah*, *Du'a' 'Arafah* of Imam al-'usayn ('a), *Munajat Khamsah 'Asharah* [Fifteen Whispered Prayers], and many other supplications in *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah* and other books on supplication.

In *Du'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ أَسْوَأَ حَالاً مِنِّي إِنْ أَنَا نُفِلْتُ 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.

إِلٰهِي اَتَوَسَّلُ اِلَيْكَ بِفَقْرِي اِلَيْكَ

"O Allah! I seek Your help through my poverty (in relation to You)."¹³

Our arrogance and I-ness or egoism [*ananiyyah*] 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 ʿAdhrat Yunus (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 ﴿١٤﴾

“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!’”¹⁴

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.”¹⁵

In *Du‘a’ ‘Arafah*, Imam al-‘Usayn (‘a) says to God:

إِلٰهِي 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 and abjectness in relation to God.

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.”¹⁶

God is not in need of the worship of His servants. But servitude [*‘ubdiyyah*] 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 [*awliya*] as our mediators. (They are means [*wasa'i*] for the descent of Divine favor upon creatures including human beings.) As such, nearness to the *awliya*' 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 *awliya*'. 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:

﴿ 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.”¹⁷

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].”¹⁸

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.”¹⁹

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 وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

“Do not weaken or grieve: you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful.”²⁰

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].

Third Discourse: The Divine Presence

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي كُلَّمَا قُلْتُ قَدْ تَهَيَّأْتُ وَتَعَبَّأْتُ وَقُمْتُ لِلصَّلَاةِ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَنَاجَيْتُكَ أَلْقَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نِعَاسًا إِذَا أَنَا صَلَّيْتُ، وَسَلَبْتَنِي مُنَاجَاةَكَ إِذَا أَنَا نَاجَيْتُ، مَالِي كُلَّمَا قُلْتُ قَدْ صَلَّحْتُ سَرِيرَتِي، وَقَرُبَ مِنْ مَجَالِسِ التَّوَابِينَ مَجْلِسِي، عَرَضْتَ لِي بَلِيَّةً أَزَالَتْ قَدَمِي، وَحَالَتْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خِدْمَتِكَ سَيِّدِي لَعَلَّكَ عَنْ بَابِكَ طَرَدْتَنِي، وَعَنْ 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 [*ilham*], 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 أَلَسِنَتِنَا، وَإِذْنُكَ لَنَا بِدُعَائِكَ

“Among Your greatest favors to us is the running of Your remembrance across our tongues and the permission to supplicate to You!”²¹

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.

In the *ziyarah* to ʿAdhrat Ma‘sumah (‘a),²² 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 *awliya’* 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'a' Abu ʿAmzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) says to God:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي... نَحَيْتَنِي أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي مُسْتَخْفِئاً بِحَقِّكَ فَأَقْصَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ رَأَيْتَنِي مُعْرِضاً 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 الْبَطَّالِينَ فَبَيَّنِي
وَبَيْنَهُمْ خَلَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ لَمْ تُحِبَّ أَنْ تَسْمَعَ دُعَائِي فَبَاعَدْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ بَجُرْمِي وَجَرِيرَتِي كَافَيْتَنِي، أَوْ لَعَلَّكَ بِقَلَّةِ حَيَاتِي
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 '*ulama*' and upright servants of Allah results in one's deprivation of opportunities to worship God. It is mentioned in some narrations [*riwayat*] 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'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali* 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 [*taqwa*]²³—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 Ramadhan, 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 Ramadhan.

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 perform night supererogatory prayers [*tahajjud*].²³ It is because arrogance [*ghurur*] is so harmful to man that it cannot even be compensated by supererogatory prayers.

أَللَّهُمَّ احْمِلْنَا فِي سُفُنِ نَجَاتِكَ، وَمَتِّعْنَا بِلَذِيذِ مُنَاجَاتِكَ، وَأُورِدْنَا 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] preoccupy us with obeying You.”²⁴

Fourth Discourse: Fear and Hope

إِلَهِي لَوْ قَرَنْتَنِي بِالْأَصْفَادِ، وَمَتَّعْتَنِي سَيِّبِكَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَشْهَادِ، وَدَلَّلْتَ عَلَيَّ فَضَائِحِي عُيُونِ الْعِبَادِ، وَأَمَرْتَ بِي إِلَى النَّارِ، وَحُلْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ الْأَبْرَارِ، مَا قَطَعْتُ رَجَائِي مِنْكَ وَمَا صَرَفْتُ تَأْمِيلِي لِلْعَفْوِ عَنْكَ، وَلَا خَرَجَ حُبُّكَ مِنْ قَلْبِي، أَنَا لَا أَنْسَى
أَيَادِيكَ عِنْدِي، وَسِتْرَكَ عَلَيَّ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا.

“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 Ramadan is the issue of fear and hope [*khawf wa raja*] and the striking of a balance between them.

Perfect expression of the state of fear and hope in Imam al-Sajjad (‘a)

The prayer of Imam 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 [*awliya*] were so fearful that sometimes their faces would turn pale. At times, their trembling would be beyond description! Could we faithfully describe Hadrat ‘Ali, Imam al-Sajjad and the other infallible Imams (‘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.

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said one of the admonitions of Luqman the Wise (‘a) to his son was as follows:

خَفِ اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَيْفَةً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِبِرِّ التَّقْلِيْنِ لَعَذَّبَكَ. وَارْحُ اللّٰهَ رَجَاءً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِذُنُوبِ التَّقْلِيْنِ 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.”[25](#)

The Imam (‘a) also said in another *hadith*:

نَجْوَى الْعَارِفِيْنَ تَدُوْرُ عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أُصُوْلٍ: الْخَوْفِ وَالرَّجَاءِ وَالْحُبِّ؛ فَالْخَوْفُ فَرْعُ الْعِلْمِ وَالرَّجَاءُ فَرْعُ الْيَقِيْنِ 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 [*yaqin*] [to God]. Love is the offshoot of gnosis [of Allah].”[26](#)

There are many similar passages in other supplications and litanies transmitted from the infallible Imams (‘a). In a poem attributed to him, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said:

إِلٰهِي لَنْ عَذَّبْتَنِي أَلْفَ حَبَّةٍ فَحَبْلُ رَجَائِي مِنْكَ لَا يَنْقَطِعُ

“O God, even if You chastise me for a thousand years, The rope of my hope in You[r mercy] will never be cut.”[27](#)

In *Du‘a’ Kumayl*, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) says:

يَا مَوْلَايَ فَكَيْفَ يَبْقَى فِي الْعَذَابِ وَهُوَ يَرْجُو مَا سَلَفَ مِنْ حِلْمِكَ، أَمْ كَيْفَ تُوَلِّمُهُ النَّارَ وَهُوَ يَأْمَلُ 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 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 ʿAdhrat Amir (‘a) and Imam al-Sajjad (‘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‘a’ Abu ʿAmzah al-Thumali* quoted earlier, Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 (S) said:

أَحِبُّوا اللَّهَ لِمَا يَغْذُوكُمْ بِهِ نِعْمِهِ

“Love Allah as He nourishes you with His blessings.”[28](#)

It is mentioned in a *hadith qudsi* that God, the Exalted, said to Musa ibn ‘Imran (‘a): “O Musa! Express your love for Me in the presence of people.” ʿAdhrat Musa (‘a) asked: “What should I do?” God said: “Mention My blessings to them.”[29](#)

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‘a’ Jawshan Saghir 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:

إِلَهِي كُمْ مِنْ عَدُوِّ انْتَضَى عَلَيَّ سَيْفَ عَدَاوَتِهِ وَشَحَذَ لِي ظُبَّةَ مُدْبِئَتِهِ، وَأَرْهَفَ لِي شِبَا حَدِّهِ، وَدَافَ لِي قَوَائِلَ سَمُومِهِ،
وَسَدَّدَ إِلَيَّ (نَحْوِي) صَوَائِبَ سِهَامِهِ وَلَمْ تَنْمُ عَنِّي عَيْنُ حِرَاسَتِهِ، وَأَضْمَرَ أَنْ يَسُومَنِي الْمَكْرُوهَ وَبُجِرَّعَنِي دُعَافَ مَرَارَتِهِ

نَظَرْتُ (فَنَظَرْتُ) إِلَى ضَعْفِي عَنِ احْتِمَالِ الْفَوَادِحِ

“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:

وَاجْعَلْنِي لِنِعْمَائِكَ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ وَلَا لَائِكَ مِنَ الذَّاكِرِينَ

“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 Imam al-^(a)usayn (‘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.³⁰ To express gratitude and attain the station of the grateful [*shakirin*] is a status given by God to His faithful servants, otherwise who could be able to duly express gratitude for His blessings? Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) says:

فَالأَوْكَ جَمَّةٌ ضَعْفَ لِسَانِي عَنْ إِحْصَائِهَا، وَنِعْمَاؤُكَ كَثِيرَةٌ قَصُرَ فَهْمِي عَنْ إِدْرَاقِهَا فَضْلاً عَنْ اسْتِيقْصَائِهَا، فَكَيْفَ لِي بِتَحْصِيلِ الشُّكْرِ، وَشُكْرِي إِيَّاكَ يَفْتَقِرُ إِلَى شُكْرٍ، 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!’”³¹

از دست و زبان که برآید 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'a' Abu 'Amzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad ('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 أَرَوَيْتَهُ، وَالْعَارِي الَّذِي كَسَوْتَهُ، وَالْفَقِيرُ الَّذِي أَغْنَيْتَهُ، 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 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, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

أَنَا لَا أَنْسَى أَيْدِيكَ 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 Ramadhan 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 Ramadhan 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.

أَفْبَلِسَانِي هَذَا الْكَالَ أَشْكُرُكَ، أَمْ بِغَايَةِ جُهْدِي فِي عَمَلِي أَرْضِيكَ، وَمَا قَدَرُ لِسَانِي يَا رَبِّ فِي جَنْبِ شُكْرِكَ، وَمَا قَدَرُ
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?”³²

Fifth Discourse: Remembrance of Allah

يَا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَدْتُ 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 [*salah*] which is the highest form of worship and highly enjoined, the Qur’an states:

﴿ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴾

“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”³³

Concerning other acts of worship, *fuqaha* [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 *yad* [remembrance] in Persian. Of course, *dhikr* is sometimes applied to the heavenly books and prophets. Regarding the Torah [*tawrat*], 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’.”³⁴

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.”[35](#)

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 [*adhkar*] 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:

﴿وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ﴾

“And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without being loud.”[36](#)

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 Allah*] is considered a slogan, such as in the call to prayer [*adhan*] and reciting *Allahu akbar* [*takbir*] 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!”³⁷

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, Imam Khomeini 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.

﴿الْمُؤْمِنُ كَالْجَبَلِ الرَّاسِخِ لَا تُحَرِّكُهُ الْعَوَاصِفُ﴾

“The believer is like a mountain that cannot be shaken by winds.”³⁸

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 awliya’

In the Qur'an, God uses an excellent expression which is worthy of reflection. He says:

﴿ فَاذْكُرُونِي أَنذُرَكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴾

“Remember Me, and I will remember you.”³⁹

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.”⁴⁰

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ﴾

“And Your Lord is not forgetful.”⁴¹

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.”⁴²

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 [awliya]. It does not refer to His general attention towards all creation.

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 [mahbub] 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 [muhibb] 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 ‘*ulama*’ 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 [*‘ibadah*].

Therefore, remembrance of God leads to His special attention towards His remembering servant [*dhakir*]. During the latter part of the blessed life of the late ‘Allamah (Sayyid Muhammad ʿAbasaʿi), he was often requested for advice. Such a request was repeated many times in which he would always recite the same noble verse:

﴿ فَأَذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴾

“Remember Me, and I will remember you.”⁴³

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 [*kuffar*] on the Day of Judgment will be God’s inattention to them. In expressing the severity of the loss and chastisement of the faithless on the Day of Judgment, God says:

﴿ وَلَا يَكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ ﴾

“And Allah will not speak to them nor will He [so much as] look at them.”⁴⁴

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 (S), it has been reported, thus:

وَكَانَ لَا يَجْلِسُ وَلَا يَقُومُ إِلَّا عَلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ جَلَّ إِسْمُهُ.

“He would neither sit nor rise up without remembering Allah, may His Name be glorified.”[45](#)

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 [*ayat al-kursi*][46](#) according to some traditions. At the time of waking up, he would first perform prostration and praise Allah. Imam al-Baqir (‘a) said:

مَا اسْتَيْقَظَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ مِنْ نَوْمٍ إِلَّا خَرَّ لَهُ سَاجِدًا.

“The Messenger of Allah would not wake up without having prostrated to Allah.”[47](#)

After waking up, Prophet Muhammad (S) would say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانِي بَعْدَ مَوْتِي.

“All praise is due to Allah who revived me after being dead.”

Many other *adhkar* transmitted from the Imams 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 Musa ibn ‘Imran (‘a): “Forget Me not in any condition and be not heedless in remembering Me.” Musa (‘a) said: “O God! In some conditions, I am ashamed to be aware of Your presence.” God said to him:

إِنَّ ذِكْرِي حَسَنٌ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ.

“Indeed remembrance of Me is good in all conditions.”[48](#)

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.”⁴⁹

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 (S) during the night of ascension [*mi'raj*]:

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ لَهَا: كَيْفَ تَرَكْتِ الدُّنْيَا؟ فَتَقُولُ: إِلَهِي وَعِزَّتِكَ وَجَلَالِكَ لَا عِلْمَ لِي بِالدُّنْيَا، أَنَا مُنْذُ خَلَقْتَنِي خَائِفٌ مِنْكَ. فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ صَدَقْتَ عَبْدِي؛ كُنْتَ بِجَسَدِكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَرُوحُكَ مَعِي.

“When the believer departs from this world, he will be asked: ‘How did you leave the world?’⁵⁰ He will answer: ‘O Allah, by Your might and glory! I have no knowledge of it. Since You created me, I have 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.’⁵¹

Intimacy with Allah as [source of] the joy of the awliya’

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 *awliya’* 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 *hadith qudsi* on the Prophet’s night ascension [*mi'raj*], 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.”⁵²

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, Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) says to God:

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ مِنْ كُلِّ لَذَّةٍ بَغَيْرِ ذِكْرِكَ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ رَاحَةٍ بَغَيْرِ أَنْسِكَ، 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 obeying You!”⁵³

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 *hadith qudsi* on the Prophet’s night ascension [*mi’raj*]:

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 لَهْجًا وَقَلْبَنَا بِحُبِّكَ مَتِيمًا 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.”⁵⁴

Sixth Discourse: The Heart

يَا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَدْتُ 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 Allah* has been emphasized in noble verses of the Qur’an and sayings of the purified Imams (‘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, Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ جَعَلَ الذِّكْرَ جِلَاءً لِلْقُلُوبِ، تَسْمَعُ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْوُقْرَةِ، 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.”[55](#)

“Polish” [*jala*] 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 (S) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَصْدَأُ كَمَا يَصْدَأُ الْحَدِيدُ قَبْلَ 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 (S) said: “It is reading of the Qur’an and remembrance of death.”[56](#)

Hadrat ‘Ali (‘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,

يَتَسَمُّونَ بِدُعَائِهِ رَوْحَ التَّجَاوُزِ.

“They call Him and breathe in the air of forgiveness.”[57](#)

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 *awliya*’ of Allah. If ever they could perceive a little, they would feel the burden of their sins. The *awliya*’ 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!

﴿ أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا ﴾

“Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother?”⁵⁸

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 *adhkar* 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 Imams of guidance (‘a) used to perform *dhikr*. Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said: “The tongue of my father (Imam al-Baqir (‘a)) was stuck to his palate.”⁵⁹ It alludes to his constant recital of *La ilaha illallah* [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 easily disappear. Many *adhkar* 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-rahman*]:

قَلْبُ 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 ‘Ali (‘a),

if God has a place in the hearts of some, “They pass their life in it (remembrance of Allah),”⁶⁰ 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.

The mineralogists of this desert are the prophets and infallible Imams (‘a). ʿAdhrat ‘Ali (‘a) said: “Polish the heart with the remembrance of Allah so that its truth be revealed.” Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 مِّنْهَا ﴾

“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?”⁶¹

It can be inferred from this verse that man can have a kind of life whose requisite is luminosity [*nuraniyyah*]. 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 الْاَعْمَى فَيَصُدُّ عَنْهُ، فَذَلِكَ مَيِّتٌ
الْاَحْيَاءِ!

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.”[62](#)

In this line of *Du‘a’ Abu ‘Amzah al-Thumali*—“In Your remembrance my heart takes delight”—Imam al-Sajjad (‘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” [*ruh al-iman*] 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 *awliya’* of Allah, such as the “holy spirit” [*ruh al-qudus*] possessed by the Holy Prophet (S) and the pure Imams (‘a).

Apart from what we can see and perceive with our animal perception, there are other things known to God, His Apostle (S) and the pure Imams (‘a). Since we believe in God and His Apostle (S) 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.

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.”⁶³

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 *awliya*’ 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 Imams (‘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 (S), and the Imams (‘a), we can also enjoy a spiritual life.

اللَّهُمَّ اشْغَلْنَا بِذِكْرِكَ، وَأَعِدْنَا مِنْ سَخَطِكَ، وَأَجِرْنَا مِنْ عَذَابِكَ، وَارْزُقْنَا 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.”

Seventh Discourse: Degrees of Remembrance of Allah

يا مَوْلَايَ بِذِكْرِكَ عَاشَ قَلْبِي، وَبِمُنَاجَاتِكَ بَرَدْتُ 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 Imam al-Sajjad (‘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.”⁶⁴

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!”⁶⁵

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 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 Imam al-Sajjad (‘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!"[66](#)

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 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'raj*], God said to His Apostle (S): "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:

وَلَا سَتَعْرِقَنَّ عَقْلَهُ بِمَعْرِفَتِي وَلَا قَوْمَنَّ لَهُ مَقَامَ عَقْلِهِ.

"I shall fill his intellect with My gnosis and I shall settle in place of his intellect."[67](#)

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 *hadith* on the Prophet's (S) ascension [*mi'raj*], God said to His Apostle (S):

يَا أَحْمَدُ لَوْ صَلَّى الْعَبْدُ صَلَاةَ أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَصُومَ صِيَامِ أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَطْوِي عَنِ الطَّعَامِ مِثْلَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَلَبَسَ لِبَاسَ الْعَابِدِينَ ثُمَّ أَرَى فِي قَلْبِهِ مِنْ حُبِّ الدُّنْيَا ذَرَّةً أَوْ سَمِعَتْهَا أَوْ رَأَسَتْهَا أَوْ صَبَتْهَا أَوْ زِينَتْهَا لَا يُجَاوِرُنِي فِي دَارِي وَلَا نَزَعَنِي مِنْ قَلْبِهِ مَحَبَّتِي وَلَا ظَلَمَنِي قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَنْسَانِي وَلَا أَدْبِقُهُ حَالَوَةَ 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.”⁶⁸

The *awliya*' 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 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‘a’ Kumayl*, thus:

اللَّهُمَّ عَظُمَ بَلَائِي، وَأَفْرَطَ بِي سُوءُ حَالِي، وَقَصُرَتْ بِي أَعْمَالِي، وَقَعَدَتْ بِي أَغْلَالِي، وَحَبَسَنِي عَنِ نَفْعِي بَعْدُ أَمَالِي،
وَوَدَّعْتَنِي 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 profiting (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 الْغُرُورِ ﴾

“The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion.”⁶⁹

It also states elsewhere:

﴿ فَلَا تَغُرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّتْكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ﴾

“So do not let the life of this world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver⁷⁰ deceive you concerning Allah.”⁷¹

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 Imams (‘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‘a’ Kumayl* is transmitted from ʿAdhrat ‘Ali (‘a), and it is, and if *Du‘a’ Abu ʿAmzah al-Thumali* and the supplications in *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah* are transmitted from Imam al-Sajjad (‘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.

Eighth Discourse: Provisions for the Hereafter

وَأَرْحَمْنِي صَرِيحاً عَلَى الْفُرَاشِ تُقَلِّبُنِي أَيْدِي أَحِبَّتِي، وَتَفَضَّلْ عَلَيَّ مَمْدُوداً عَلَى الْمُغْتَسَلِ يُقَلِّبُنِي صَالِحُ جِيرَتِي، وَتَحَنَّنْ عَلَيَّ مَحْمُولاً قَدْ تَنَاوَلَ الْأَقْرَبَاءُ أَطْرَافَ جِنَازَتِي، وَجُدْ عَلَيَّ مَنقُولاً قَدْ نَزَلْتُ بِكَ وَحِيداً فِي حُفْرَتِي، وَأَرْحَمْ 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. 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 Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) in this manner:

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ أَسْوَأَ حَالاً مِنِّي إِنْ أَنَا نُقِلْتُ عَلَى مِثْلِ حَالِي إِلَى قَبْرِي، لَمْ أُمَهِّدْهُ لِرُقْدَتِي، وَلَمْ أَفْرُشْهُ بِالْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ
لِضَجِّعَتِي، وَمَالِي لَا أَبْكِي وَلَا أَدْرِي 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 لِحْدِي

“[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 [*lahad*].”

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?

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 [*taqwa*].”

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‘a’ Abu ‘Amzah al-Thumali*,

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) dwells on these truths and says to God:

وَأَرْحَمْنِي صَرِيحاً عَلَى الْفِرَاشِ تُقَلِّبُنِي أَيْدِي أَحِبَّتِي، وَتَفَضَّلْ عَلَيَّ مَمْدُوداً عَلَى الْمُغْتَسَلِ يُقَلِّبُنِي صَالِحُ جِيرَتِي، وَتَحَنَّنْ عَلَيَّ مَحْمُولاً قَدْ تَنَاوَلَ الْأَقْرَبَاءُ أَطْرَافَ جِنَازَتِي، وَجُدْ عَلَيَّ مَنْقُولاً قَدْ نَزَلَتْ بِكَ وَحِيداً فِي حُفْرَتِي، وَأَرْحَمْ 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 Dawud (David) (‘a):

يَا دَاوُدُ أُبَلِّغُ أَهْلَ أَرْضِي إِيَّيَ حَبِيبٌ مَنَ أَحَبَّنِي وَجَلِيسٌ مَنَ جَالَسَنِي وَمُونِسٌ لِمَنَ أَنَسَ بِذِكْرِي وَصَاحِبٌ لِمَنَ صَاحَبَّنِي.

“O Dawud! 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.”⁷²

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 أَحَبَبْتَ وَكَأَنَّكَ مَا اكْتَسَبْتَ.

“You shall be with him whom you love and it shall be for you whatever you earn.”⁷³

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), ‘Adhrat Fa‘imah (‘a) is reported to have said:

إِذَا أَنَا مِتُّ فَتَوَلَّيْ أُنْتِ غُسِّلِي وَجَهِّزِي... وَاجْلِسِي عِنْدَ رَأْسِي قِبَالَهَ وَجْهِي فَأَكْثِرِي مِنَ تِلَاوَةِ الْقُرْآنِ وَالِدُعَاءِ

“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.”⁷⁴

‘Adhrat Fa‘imah’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 Ramadhan 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 ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ﴾

“My Lord! Take me back, that I may act righteously in what I have left behind.”⁷⁵

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 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 Shushtari mounted the pulpit and said: “O people! Today I want to say something which is contrary to all that the prophets and *awliya*’ have said.” The people were astonished. He continued: “All the prophets invited the people to believe in the Unity of God [*tawhid*], but I want to invite you to *shirk* [association of partners to God]. All the prophets and *awliya*’ 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.”

إِلَهِي] وَاغْرَسْ فِي أَفْئِدَتِنَا أَشْجَارَ مَحَبَّتِكَ، وَأْتِمِّمْ لَنَا أَنْوَارَ مَعْرِفَتِكَ، وَأَذِقْنَا حَلَاوَةَ عَفْوِكَ، وَالذَّةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ، وَأَقْرِرْ أَعْيُنَنَا
بِیَوْمِ 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.”⁷⁶

Ninth Discourse: Faith

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ إِيمَانًا تُبَاشِرُ بِهِ قَلْبِي وَيَقِينًا حَتَّى أَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُصِيبَنِي مَا كَتَبْتَ لِي وَرَضِيَنِي مِنَ الْعَيْشِ بِمَا قَسَمْتَ
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‘a’ Abu Hamzah al-Thumali*. After supplicating and entreating God, it is as if Imam al-Sajjad (‘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, Imam al-Sajjad (‘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 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 [*‘alim*] named Shaykh Hasan ‘Ali Isfahani (r)[77](#) 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 Ahwaz,[78](#) he wrote in reply: “On so-and-so day and time, go near Karun 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 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:

﴿ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن 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.”⁷⁹

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.⁸⁰

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 Imams (‘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 such a heart happens to be in the company of debauchees and mammonists, he is as if a prisoner longing for his release.

چو طوطي کلاغش بود هم نفس غنيمت 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 Imams (‘a).

Some effects of faith

1. Certainty

1. *Certainty [yaqin]*: When faith is well established in the heart, it bears fruit. Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) has mentioned two of its fruits:

(1) certainty in what God has destined for a person, and

(2) contentment with divine decree:

حَتَّى أَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُصِيبَنِي مَا كَتَبْتَ لِي وَرَضْتَنِي 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 [*yaqin*] is the highest and most perfect form of faith [*iman*]. 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 *hadith* on the ascension [*mi‘raj*] of the Prophet (S), 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.”⁸¹

Imam al-Ridha ('a) was once asked about the meaning of 'certainty' [*yaqin*] and he said: Imam al-Baqir ('a) described it in this manner:

أَلْتَوَكَّلُ عَلَى 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.”⁸²

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.

Imam 'Ali ('a) is reported by Imam al-Sadiq ('a) to have said:

لَا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ مَا أَصَابَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَهُ وَأَنَّ مَا أَخْطَأَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبَهُ 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.”⁸³

And only Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, can give benefit and harm.”⁸⁴

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 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 ikhtiyar*], 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 [*silat al-rahim*] or severance of the same [*qaṭʿ al-rahim*], 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 [*fiʿl*] to the human agent or doer [*faʿil*] 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."[85](#)

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."[86](#)

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."[87](#)

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 Musa (‘a): “My most beloved servant is he who submits and does not complain to Me when I take one of his beloved persons.”⁸⁸

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.

2. Contentment with God’s decree

The second effect of faith is contentment with Divine decree:

وَرَضِنِي مِنَ الْعَيْشِ بِمَا قَسَمْتَ 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.”

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 [*tashri’i*] and ontological [*takwini*] affairs.

In the legislative affairs, this decree refers to the religious obligations—what is commanded [*wajibat*] and what is prohibited [*muharramat*]. Contentment [*ridayah*] 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” [*sabr*]. The station higher than the station of patience is that of “contentment” [*ridha*]. 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 (S): “The most beloved acts for Me are trust (in God) [*tawakka*] and (then) ‘contentment’ [*ridhayah*] with what I have decreed.”⁸⁹

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 Musa, thus:

يَا مُوسَىٰ مَا خَلَقْتُ خَلْقًا أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ وَإِنَّمَا ابْتَلَيْتُهُ لِمَا هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ

“O Musa! No creature is more beloved to Me than My faithful servant. Verily, if I send him an affliction it is good for him.”[90](#)

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 [*riwayat*] 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.[91](#)

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‘a’ al-Iftitah* 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:

﴿ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ﴾

“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.”⁹²

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 فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴾

“And should you dislike them, maybe you dislike something while Allah invests it with an abundant good.”⁹³

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 [*yaqin*] and contentment and satisfaction with the decree of God.

¹ – Salman refers to Salman al-Farsi who was one of the great companions of Prophet Muhammad (S). See Sayed Ali Asgher Razwy, *Salman al-Farsi: Friend of the Prophet Muhammad* (Karachi: Islamic Seminary Publication, n.d.). [Trans.]

² – In *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 98, p. 82, hadith 2, the late 'Allamah Majlisi has mentioned the chain of transmission [sanad] of this supplication as follows:

Abu Muhammad Harun ibn Musa Tal'akbari narrated from Hasan ibn Mahbub (who were both prominent narrators) from Abu Hamzah al-Thumali that Hadrat 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) used to pray all night during the month of Ramadan and recite this supplication before dawn.

This supplication is named Du'a' Abu Hamzah al-Thumali either because it has been transmitted by Abu Hamzah or taught to him by Imam al-Sajjad.

Who was Abu Hamzah? Abu Hamzah Thabit ibn Dinar belonged to the tribe of Thumalah in Kufah. Some claimed that he belonged to the tribe of Bani Tha'l but since lived with the tribe of Thumalah, he was known as al-Thumali. He lived during the time of Imam al-Sajjad, Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq ('a) and narrated traditions from them. Some claimed that he also lived during

the Imamate of Imam al-Kazim ('a). It is reported that he was one of the close companions and reliable narrators of those Imams ('a). Also, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said: “Abu Hamzah is the Salman of his time.” Najjashi, *Rijal* (Beirut), pp. 289–290.

Shaykh Abu 'Amru Kashshi Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz who was a distinguished scholar of rijal and writer of the accounts of the companions of the Imams ('a) mentioned in his book of rijal that he saw Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Na'im al-Shadhani writing that he heard from Fadl

ibn Shadhan saying that he heard from a reliable companion that Hadrat al-Rida ('a) said:

أَبُو حَمَزَةَ فِي زَمَانِهِ كَلْفَمَانَ فِي زَمَانِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَنَّهُ خَدَّمَ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَّا: عَلِيَّ بْنَ الْحُسَيْنِ وَمُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ وَجَعْفَرَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَبِرْهَةً مِنْ عَصْرِ مُوسَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ.

“Abu Hamzah is the Luqman of his time and he served four of us, namely, ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali and Ja‘far ibn Muhammad and he lived up to the time of Musa ibn Ja‘far.”

In the book on rijal by Mamqani, Dawud Raqqi from Khurasan who went to visit [ziyarah] 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 Kufah 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 Abu Hamzah. 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-Sadiq (‘a) passed away.’ On hearing this news, Abu Hamzah cried and lamented. He then asked the man: ‘Did he make a will?’ The man said: ‘He made a will about his sons ‘Abd Allah and Musa as well as Mansur (the then ruling ‘Abbasid caliph).’ Abu Hamzah 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 Allah, the elder son) has a physical defect (so he cannot be the next Imam) and the ‘small’ (Musa, the younger son) is mentioned as he is the true successor (and next Imam)...’

Thereafter, I went to Medina and asked Imam al-Kazim (‘a) about the issue. The Imam (‘a) replied: ‘Did Abu Hamzah 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 ahadith show the high station of Abu Hamzah. Moreover, whenever the Imams (‘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 Abu Hamzah’s high station and excellence.

We narrate this supplication from Mafatih al-Jinan of the late Haj Shaykh ‘Abbas Qummi from his Misbah.

3.

– Surat al-Ra’d 13:13.

4.

– Surat al-Jum‘ah 62:1; Surat al-Taghabun 64:1.

5.

– Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) 17:44.

6.

– Surat Qaf 50:16.

7.

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Hopeful.”

8.

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 24, hadith 6.

9.

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Knowers.”

10.

– “Whoever imitates a community is one of them.” Bihar al-Anwar, vol.11, p.174, hadith 19. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) also said: “Whoever imitates a community unless he is doubtful of it is one of them.” Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 19, p.27.

[11.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Beseechers.”

[12.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly Poor.”

[13.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan, Supplication of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) in ‘Arafah.

[14.](#)

– Surat al-Anbiya’ 21:87.

[15.](#)

– Surat al-Anbiya’ 21:88.

[16.](#)

– Surat al-Dharyyat 51:56.

[17.](#)

– Surat al-Anfal 8:10.

[18.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:123.

[19.](#)

– Surat al-Tawbah (or, Bara’ah) 9:25.

[20.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:139.

[21.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Rememberers”.

[22.](#)

Fatimah al-Ma’sumah (‘a): the sister of Imam al-Rida (‘a) who was buried in Qum. [Trans.]

[23.](#)

– Al-Kulayni: Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, bab al-rida bi’l-qada’, hadith 4.

[24.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan: The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Obedient towards God”.

[25.](#)

– Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 67, hadith 1.

[26.](#)

– Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 70, p. 22, hadith 22.

[27.](#)

– Mafatih al–Jinan, p. 238.

[28.](#)

– Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 70, p. 16, hadith 7.

[29.](#)

– Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 2, p. 4, bab 8, hadith 6.

[30.](#)

– In Du‘a’ ‘Arafah, Imam al–Husayn (‘a) said:

لَوْ عُمِرْتُهَا أَنْ أُؤَدِّيَ شُكْرَ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْ أَنْعَمِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِمَنِّكَ الْمُوجِبِ عَلَيَّ بِهِ شُكْرُكَ أَبَدًا جَدِيدًا.

“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.”

[31.](#)

– Mafatih al–Jinan: The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Thankful”.

[32.](#)

– A part of Du‘a’ Abu Hamzah al–Thumali.

[33.](#)

– Surat Ta Ha 20:14.

[34.](#)

– Surat al–Anbiya’ 21:105.

[35.](#)

– Surat al–Hijr 15:9.

[36.](#)

– Surat al–A‘raf 7:205.

[37.](#)

– Surat al–Ra‘d 13:28.

[38.](#)

– Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 24, p. 104, hadith 5 with a slight variation.

[39.](#)

– Surat al–Baqarah 2:152.

[40.](#)

– Surat Hud 11:123.

[41.](#)

– Surat Maryam 19:64.

[42.](#)

– Surat Yunus 10:61.

[43.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:152.

[44.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:77.

[45.](#)

– Tabarsi, Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 14.

[46.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:255.

[47.](#)

– Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 39.

[48.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 13, p. 343, hadith 21.

[49.](#)

– Surat al-Nur 24:37.

[50.](#)

– That is, “How’s the world when you left it?”

[51.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 21.

[52.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 23, hadith 6.

[53.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan: The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Rememberers”.

[54.](#)

– Adapted from Du‘a’ Kumayl.

[55.](#)

– Nahj al-Balaghah: Sermon 222 (Subhi Salih).

[56.](#)

– Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 104, hadith 1548.

[57.](#)

– Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 222 (Subhi Salih).

[58.](#)

– Surat al-Hujurat 49: 12.

[59.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, p. 297, hadith 29.

[60.](#)

– Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 222 (Subhi Salih).

[61.](#)

– Surat al-An'am 6: 122.

[62.](#)

– Nahj al-Balaghah: Sermon 87 (Subhi Salih).

[63.](#)

– A part of Du'a' Abu Hamzah al-Thumali.

[64.](#)

– Surat al-Zumar 39:45.

[65.](#)

– Surat al-Ankabut 29:65.

[66.](#)

– Surat al-Ra'd 13:28.

[67.](#)

– Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 12, section 61, p. 36, hadith 13446, as quoted in Daylami, Irshad al-Qulub.

[68.](#)

– Ibid.

[69.](#)

– Surat Al 'Imran 3: 185.

[70.](#)

– That is, Satan, or anything that diverts a human being from the path of Allah. [Q. Trans.]

[71.](#)

– Surat Luqman 31:33.

[72.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 26, hadith 28.

[73.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 27, p. 105, hadith 75.

[74.](#)

– ‘Aziz Allah ‘Atarudi, Musnad Fatimah al-Zahra’ (Intisharat-e ‘Atarud, first edition), p. 401.

[75.](#)

– Surat al-Mu’minun 23:99–100.

[76.](#)

– Mafatih al-Jinan, The 15 Whispered Prayers, “The Whispered Prayer of the Abstainers”.

[77.](#)

– The abbreviation, “r” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, rahmatullah ‘alayh, rahmatullah ‘alayha, or rahmatullah ‘alayhim [may peace be upon him/her/them], which is mentioned after the names of pious people. [Trans.]

[78.](#)

– Ahwaz: city in southwestern Iran, the administrative center of Khuzestan (Khuzistan) Province. Ahwaz is one of Iran’s largest cities and the center of the region’s oil industry. It is located at the confluence of the Karun and Shatt al-‘Arab rivers on the lowland plain of Khuzestan. [Trans.]

[79.](#)

– Surat Ibrahim 14:7.

[80.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 327, hadith 10.

[81.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 27, hadith 6.

[82.](#)

– Ibid., vol. 70, p. 138, hadith 4.

[83.](#)

– That is, whatever is supposed to reach him has reached him or will reach him and whatever is supposed not to reach him

has not reached him and will never reach him.

[84.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 154, hadith 12.

[85.](#)

– Surat al-Takwir 81:29.

[86.](#)

– Surat al-Hadid 57:22.

[87.](#)

– Surat al-Hadid 57:23.

[88.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 90.

[89.](#)

– Ibid., vol. 77, p. 21.

[90.](#)

– Ibid., vol. 13, hadith 36.

[91.](#)

– Ibid., vol. 72, p. 327, hadith 12.

[92.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:216.

[93.](#)

– Surat al-Nisa' 4:19.

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