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Part 4: Commentary on Du‘a’ Makarim al-Akhlaq

[First Discourse: Invoking Blessings on the Apostle \(S\)](#)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ

“O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household.”

[Supplication of the righteous](#)

The supplications transmitted from the pure Imams (‘a) are all precious means for one to attain nearness to God, the Exalted, but some of these supplications have other peculiarities. Treasures of knowledge and gnosis of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) are embedded in them. By carefully reciting them, one can acquire lofty and sublime knowledge from them, according to his capability, understanding, knowledge and assiduousness. *Du‘a’ Makarim al-Akhlaq* is one of such supplications.¹ Every line of this noble supplication is full of important messages and moral lessons for man.

The name of this supplication reminds us that in requesting something from God, the Exalted, one must not only pay attention to material or worldly affairs. Perhaps, most of those who supplicate pay more attention to their material, physical, social and similar needs. Only a few are aware that acquisition of moral virtues also needs to be supplicated from God. In fact, just as moral virtues are superior to material things, we must engage in supplication more sincerely and fervently to acquire them.

Usually, we supplicate and seek the help of God when we feel that the material means to solve our problem are not at our disposal.

﴿ فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ﴾

“When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him.”²

When a person is in the middle of a raging sea and about to be drowned, he will resort to prayer. When he faces a big problem which he cannot solve, he will seek the help of God. We ask God for everything we want and the preservation of whatever we have because the universe is under His control. He is the Source of all causes and effects. Whatever God gives us cannot guarantee its own perpetuity and it is in His hand. In this sense, there is no difference between the physical and fundamental spiritual needs of man.

A worker who leaves home in the morning to earn a lawful living must bear in mind that his hands, feet, eyes, mind, life, and many other blessings come from God. If there will be a problem with any one of them, he will not be able to work properly or work at all. So, along with sweat and toil, he must ask God for his needs.

A student who is busy studying must strive hard but he must remember that the teachers, lessons, books, ears to listen, mind to understand, health, and the like are all from God. Without the existence of any of them, he cannot pursue his studies. So he must ask God to provide the means for the acquisition of knowledge.

One of the fundamental needs of man is the acquisition of noble moral traits and excellent human qualities. It is true that one must strive to remove bad traits and replace them with noble ones, but since the control over all causes and effects lies in God, they must be sought from Him. These causes and means that exist are all channels of Divine bounty.

Invoking blessings on the Apostle (S) for the acceptance of supplication

Invoking of blessings [*salawat*] on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a) is a sign of respect towards the Holy Prophet (S) and contributes towards the acceptance of a supplication. It is recommended in some traditions that for a supplication to be accepted, it must begin with the invocation of blessings upon Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a) because *salawat* is always accepted and God, the Generous, would certainly not reject the second after accepting the first supplication (i.e. *salawat*).³ It is mentioned in other traditions, thus: “Begin and end your supplication with *salawat* so that your supplication in between be accepted because God is more generous than that He would accept the beginning and end of a supplication but not its middle.”⁴

At the beginning and end of this noble supplication, as well as in between, Allah’s blessing on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a) has been invoked.

Way of attaining the most perfect faith and highest decree of certainty

After invoking Allah’s blessing on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a), Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) says:

وَبَلِّغْ بِإِيمَانِي أَكْمَلَ الْإِيمَانِ وَاجْعَلْ يَقِينِي أَفْضَلَ الْيَقِينِ.

“Cause my faith to reach the most perfect faith and make my certainty the most excellent certainty.”

When a person asks for something spiritual from God, he must ask for its best and most excellent form. Concerning our material or worldly needs, we usually look for the best and ask for it from God but for acquiring excellent human qualities, we are contented with their average forms or levels. If we have high aspirations, we will strive to perform all our religious obligations and avoid what is unlawful so as to avoid being thrown into hellfire. But in this supplication, Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (‘a) teaches us not to be of low aspirations and ask God in our supplications for faith [*iman*] like that of the prophets (‘a), and certainty [*yaqin*] like that of the truthful [*siddiqin*], so that in case we do not deserve the highest form, God will grant it to us according to our merit.

Great material blessings are always accompanied by some hassles. The greater a material blessing is, the greater are its associated difficulties, troubles and grief. But that is not the case with spiritual blessings. The loftier they are, the more will be their associated pleasure, felicity and perfection. Therefore, in the realm of spiritual affairs we must aim at the highest form of faith and certainty and seek the help of Allah in attaining them.

Faith has many levels and can be increased or decreased. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states:

﴿وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا﴾

“And when His signs are recited to them, they (Allah’s signs) increase their faith.” [5](#)

In this supplication, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) prays for the impeccable and highest form of faith. The reason why the Imam (‘a) used the term “best” [*afdhal*] with respect to certainty is that its essence is perfect and absolute belief without any blemish. As such, it cannot be said that certainty has different levels but different types can be mentioned. The quality of certainty has some differences. One type of certainty is that which is acquired through logical reasoning and argumentation and it is called “informational certainty” [*ilm al-yaqin*]. The second type of certainty is that which is acquired through intuition and mystical witnessing [*kashf wa shuhud*] and it is called “visual certainty” [*‘ayn al-yaqin*]. The third type of certainty is that which is acquired through the discovery of the truth and acceptance of it and it is called “true certainty” [*haqq al-yaqin*].

For the sake of clarity, one can compare it to a wholesome sherbet in a glass. The first person has not seen it but through a reliable source he knows that it exists. The second person can see it in a glass and the third person has not only seen it but even tasted it. In this case, all the three persons are certain that it exists, but the type of certainty each of them has is different from one another. Perhaps what is meant by “best” in this supplication is the most excellent type of certainty which is usually called “true certainty”

by the teachers of ethics.

The difference between faith and belief

Knowledge, perception and belief are not voluntary. It is possible that their preliminaries are voluntary but their availability is possible even without a person seeking them. A person sees another person in front of him and he is certain that the other person is present, or he involuntarily places his hand on fire and it burns and thus he realizes that fire burns. A person may possibly know something though he does not want to know it. It is even possible that he is annoyed by its knowledge. But for faith, be it certain or conjectural, the heart must also be inclined and attracted by it. The element of freewill is involved. A person may possibly not like and accept something in spite of being certain of it. Regarding the people of Pharaoh, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا﴾

“They impugned them—though they were convinced in their hearts—wrongfully and defiantly.”⁶

After the divine signs and great miracles were shown by Prophet Musa (‘a), the people of Pharaoh were certain that he was a prophet of God and that the shown miracles came from God, but they denied these signs and called the prophet of God “sorcerer” [*sahir*] and “spellbound” [*mashur*] because of their desire for power and tyrannical practices. They had certainty in their hearts but they did not have faith so they denied what they saw. Addressing Pharaoh, Prophet Musa (‘a) said:

﴿لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾

“You certainly know that no one has sent these [signs] except the Lord of the heavens and the earth.”⁷

In this verse, two signs of emphasis are used, viz. *lam wa qad* [*laqad*]. That is, they truly and certainly know that no one has sent these signs except the Lord of the universe. Yet, Pharaoh said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي﴾

“I do not know of any god that you may have other than me.”⁸

And he refused to believe but when he was about to be drowned in the sea, he exclaimed:

﴿قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

“He called out, ‘I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit [to Him]!’”⁹

But since this declaration was made out of compulsion, it was not accepted. So, no faith will emanate from compulsion, as the element of freewill plays an important role in its emergence.

Perfect certainty is not needed to have faith. Without knowledge, however, one cannot have faith. During the early period of Islam, many people believed in Prophet Muhammad (S). At the beginning, they had no perfect certainty in Islam. For this reason as well as the emergence of some doubts, some of them became apostates and went outside the pale of Islam.

Faith does not arise out of belief and inclination toward a certain thing or idea. Belief has its highest and lowest levels. From mere guesswork to the most perfect form of certainty, it can be improved. Similarly, inclination can be changed from outward desire to the highest level of love. These two elements have an impact on the strength of faith. If the belief or enthusiasm of a person on a thing or idea increases, on the same magnitude his faith on it will become stronger. Conversely, as his belief and inclination decrease, his faith also weakens. As such, in order to have perfect faith, we must strengthen our belief, bring about more convincing proofs for our faith, and remove the obstacles in the way of faith.

Reasons behind the peoples’ opposition to their respective prophets

One of the reasons why most peoples opposed their respective prophets at the beginning of their prophetic mission was the prophets’ invitation to the people to believe in the Resurrection, and to accept this invitation was too difficult for some people. They made gods for themselves and worshipped them but they did not have faith in the One True God. It is because the requisite of accepting monotheism [*tawhid*] meant the acceptance of the Resurrection and life after death, and since they assumed that the power of God is limited, they could not believe that their Creator could revive them after death and they would see the fruit of their deeds in the other world. Belief in the Resurrection means that one day all deeds of all human beings will be reckoned, and they will be rewarded or punished accordingly. The faithless imagined that by denying it at the outset, they would be at ease and could continue indulging in their sensualities.

Belief in the Resurrection comes if one reflects profoundly on the power of God. Just as He created human beings from nothing, He can also give life to them again. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states:

﴿أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ * بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ * بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ﴾

“Does man suppose that We shall not put together his bones? Yes indeed, We are able to proportion [even] his fingertips! Rather man desires to go on living viciously.”¹⁰

Signs of certainty

In a tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have narrated:

“One day the Messenger of Allah (S), after praying in the mosque with people, noticed a pale and thin youth taking a nap with his head down and sunken eyes. The Messenger of Allah (S) asked him: ‘How are you?’ He replied: ‘I have attained certainty.’ The Messenger of Allah (S) was elated by his answer and said: ‘Every certainty has a sign and what is the sign of your certainty?’ He replied: ‘O Messenger of Allah! The sign of my certainty is that it makes me sad and keeps me awake all night and thirsty on hot days. I have become uninterested in the world and its contents. It is as if I can see the Throne of Allah being established to reckon the people and the people gathered for the Reckoning. I am also with them. I can see the dwellers of paradise enjoying, reclining on cushions and introducing one another. I can see the denizens of the Fire under chastisement and asking for help. Even now the sound of the blazing Fire is ringing in my ears.’ The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘This youth is a servant [of Allah] whose heart God has illuminated with the light of faith’.”¹¹

The same Imam (a) is also reported to have said:

مِنْ صِحَّةِ يَقِينِ الْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ لَا يَرْضَى النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يُلْوِمُهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِهِ اللَّهُ.

“Among the signs of the authenticity of certainty of a Muslim is that he would not seek the satisfaction of people at the expense of God’s pleasure and he would not reproach them for what God has given them.”¹²

It can be deduced from Qur’anic verses that those who can benefit from the Qur’an are only those who have faith in the unseen world and are certain of the hereafter:

﴿الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ... وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

“...who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them...and are certain of the Hereafter.”¹³

In order to acquire ‘ilm al-yaqin, one must resort to convincing proofs on the existence of God and the unseen world. Substantiating certainty with righteous deeds removes the obstacles in the way of man and makes him ready to acquire ‘ayn al-yaqin and haqq al-yaqin.

The best of intentions and deeds

وَأَنَّهُ بِنِيَّتِي إِلَى أَحْسَنِ النِّيَّاتِ وَبِعَمَلِي إِلَى أَحْسَنِ الْأَعْمَالِ.

“And make my intention the best of intentions and my works the best of works!”

It can be inferred from this line that intention, like action, has degrees of excellence, and the perfection or imperfection of actions depends on the perfection or imperfection of intention. Pure intention is not to entertain other than the truth in the heart and to do so is very difficult. Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Ḥusayn (‘a) is reported to have said:

الَّتِيَّةُ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ، أَلَا وَإِنَّ التِّيَّةَ هِيَ الْعَمَلُ

“Intention is superior to action, nay verily intention is the very [essence of] action.” [14](#)

“Intention” means quality not quantity; in fact, what is important is the quality. As the Holy Qur’an states,

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿١٨٠﴾

“He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct.” [15](#)

In the above noble verse, it is not stated “that He may test you [to see] which of you has done the most” [*liyabluwakum ayyukum aktharu ‘amalan*].

The best worship

In a tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

الْعِبَادَةُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَوْفًا؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ. وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى طَلَبَ الثَّوَابِ؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ. قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُبًّا لَهُ؛ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ وَهِيَ أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ.

“Worship is of three types. There is a group that worships Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, out of fear; that is the worship of the slave. And there is a group that worships Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, for seeking reward; that is the worship of the trader. And there is a group that worships Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, out of love for Him; that is the worship of the free, and it is the best of worship.” [16](#)

With weak faith and insufficient gnosis, one cannot expect to have pure intention. What urges a person to work is his motive which, in turn, depends on his faith and gnosis, which, in turn, constitute intention. So, in order to have pure intention, it is necessary to strengthen one’s faith and gnosis. Pure intention automatically brings about good deeds because the best of deeds is that which is based upon the best of intentions. Hence, the key to all perfections is the acquisition of gnosis and the strengthening of faith.

Man can assess himself to some extent and reflect on the intention or motive behind his actions. If paradise and hell do not exist, will he still be willing to leave his soft bed in the middle of the night and

perform supererogatory prayers [*tahajjud*], or to endure hunger during the days of the month of Ramadhan and deprive himself of material pleasures just to win the pleasure of God? Will he refrain from committing sins out of his love for God and gratitude for His blessings?

The gnosis [*ma'rifah*] of some people is so great that even if hell does not exist, they will worship God out of their desire for paradise and abundant blessings therein. There are also those who worship God not out of fear of hell or craving for paradise but because God is worthy of worship. In order to be near to God, he loves Him and is grateful for all His favors.

One must start making incessant efforts to acquire sublime intention. By doing good deeds and reflecting on the secret of creation and the fact that everything belongs to God and that He is the only one worthy to be worshipped, and sought for help, one strengthens his faith and certainty and acquires pure intention.

Of course, the warning of Divine Wrath and the glad tidings of Divine Pleasure is one of the great favors of God on His servants because most people cannot attain the sublime gnosis of worshipping God solely out of love for Him, but worship Him out of fear of hell or desire for paradise. Had it not been for hell and paradise, these people would not benefit from the fruit of worship and avoid sins, and neither would they attain perfection.

اللَّهُمَّ وَفِّرْ لِبُلُطْفِكَ نِيَّتِي وَصَحِّحْ بِمَا عِنْدَكَ يَقِينِي وَاسْتَصْلِحْ بِقُدْرَتِكَ مَا فَسَدَ مِنِّي.

“O God, complete my intention through Your gentleness, rectify my certainty through what is with You, and set right what is corrupt in me through Your power!”

O Allah! Given my weakness, I cannot acquire sublime intention, so help me acquire it. “Your gentleness” [*luṭfika*] means the special favors of God. In other words, “Through Your kindness and mercy, You must help me acquire correct and wholesome intention.” Wholesome intention means to worship God solely to express gratitude and discharge one’s obligations as a servant of God. To worship God to gain reward or out of fear of punishment in the hereafter is a correct intention but cannot be considered wholesome intention.

At the beginning of this supplication, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) specified a section as an introduction to the overall contents of the supplication. The criterion of value in Islam is faith and righteous deeds. To express in action whatever we believe in requires some preliminaries. The requisite of perfect faith is certain belief and that which connects faith to action is intention. Eating, laborious work, abstaining from food, lending and borrowing, etc. are not always related to faith. Anybody may do them. The action of a person will be considered the best of actions and be related to faith when its medium is pure intention. The best of intentions breeds the best of deeds.

Perfect faith, highest type of certainty, purest intention, and best deeds are the main themes of *Du‘a’*

Makarim al-Akhlaq. All lead to “nearness to Allah” [*qurb ilallah*].

Second Discourse: Human Responsibility

Since the natural disposition [*fitrah*] of man inclines toward his welfare and felicity, once his attention is drawn to the purpose behind his creation, he will do his best to reach the peak of felicity and perfection.

The first thing for man to do then is to exert all efforts to achieve the purpose of creation, i.e. that which will lead him to perfection and felicity. Along this line, daily activities—studies, earning a living, interaction with others, etc.—must not distract him from moving toward Allah [*sayr illallah*]. In this section, Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) prays to God to make him succeed in exerting all efforts to attain proximity to Him and remove the obstacles that stop or slow down his movement.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَكَفِّنِي مَا يَشْغُلُنِي الْإِهْتِمَامُ بِهِ وَاسْتَعْمِلْنِي بِمَا تَسْأَلُنِي غَدًا عَنْهُ

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household, spare me the concerns which distract me, employ me in that about which You will ask me tomorrow!”

Intellectual and psychological obstacles dissuade man from thinking of his responsibilities towards God. Seeking the amenities of life, articles of luxury, facing problems, and the like divert man’s attention from thinking of his responsibilities.

Meeting the essential needs of man is a religious obligation and to discharge a duty for the sake of God is worship, and worship contributes to man’s attainment of perfection. In earning a living, however, is everybody only discharging an obligation with the intention of obedience to God? Does a person marry and honor this bond of wedlock solely for the sake of God, or is personal desire also involved? Will these matters not preoccupy his mind and hinder his attention and devotion to God? Are all the sociopolitical activities of a believer for the sake of God? If the sociopolitical affairs will preoccupy the minds of those who enter the sociopolitical arena, they will not find spare time to entreat God and be heedful of Him, let alone invest all their energy in worship. So, in order to solve this problem, we must pray to God to attend to our needs and give us opportunity to easily meet these needs in such a manner that they do not hinder us from discharging our religious obligations and worshipping Him.

Human responsibility

Man is solely responsible to God. Only God has the right to question man because everything comes from Him. He determines the responsibilities of man—responsibilities toward parents, spouse/s, children, neighbors, people, animals, etc. These responsibilities are in essence man’s responsibilities toward God, concerning which he will be held to account by God. This world is a place of trial for man, and the Day of Resurrection is the time when man will be asked about the things placed at his disposal. So we must try

our best to discharge these responsibilities and seek help from God so that even the essentials of life do not fill our hearts and make us negligent of remembering God and our responsibilities.

وَأَسْتَغْرِغُ أَيَّامِي فِيمَا خَلَقْتَنِي لَهُ.

“And let me pass my days in that for which You have created me!”

While discharging responsibilities, it is necessary to limit the objects of attention, and even necessary affairs must not make man negligent of his responsibilities. By discharging his responsibilities dutifully, man tends to become nearer to the purpose of creation.

Purpose of creation according to the Qur'an

In the Holy Qur'an, different expressions are used to describe the purpose behind the creation of man. In a certain verse, it is stated that he is created for test and trial:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾

“He created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct.”¹⁷

In another verse, worship of God is mentioned as the purpose behind his creation:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

“I did not create the jinn and humans except that they may worship Me.”¹⁸

In yet another verse, it is stated that man is created so that he may enjoy the divine favor and attain nearness to God:

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ﴾

“Except those on whom your Lord has mercy—and that is why He created them.”¹⁹

Outwardly, these verses are inconsistent with one another but in reality each of them refers to a certain level of a single truth. In other words, they allude to the short-term, middle-term and ultimate objectives. The ultimate objective is proximity to God. Man has been given freedom and freewill to worship and serve God and attain nearness to Him. If man is compelled to tread the right path, his movement cannot be treated as a movement for perfection. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَائِرٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهْدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ﴾

“With Allah rests guidance to the straight path, and some of them are devious, and had He wished, He would have guided you all.”²⁰

God has shown many paths to man so that he can freely choose and tread his path to perfection. By successfully passing this test of choosing the right path, one stage in his way to perfection is passed. In order to be accepted by God, he must take a step towards the next stages to perfection and strive to make his life totally dedicated to God. Everything belongs to Him and we are His servants and a servant is not worthy of anything but servitude. Worldly needs and material pleasures are not the ultimate objective of man. He must deal with them only to the extent necessary and all his attention must focus on his servitude to God. Through his worship and servitude to God, he will attain nearness to God.

Worship [*‘ibadah*] is a general concept which is not confined to prayers and fasting. Every good work done for the sake of God is considered an act of worship. Even the sleep of a fasting person during the month of Ramadhan is an act of worship because it gives him an opportunity to rest so that he can engage in the night vigil and supererogatory prayers.

وَأَغْنِنِي وَوَسِّعْ عَلَيَّ فِي رِزْقِكَ وَلَا تَفْتِنِّي بِالْأَنْظَرِ.

“Free me from need, expand Your provision toward me, and tempt me not with ingratitude!”

In order for the life of man to be filled with obedience to Allah, the material needs—food, clothing, housing, social security net, and the like—must not hinder the movement of man towards perfection.

Striving for a lawful earning is an act of worship but there is a considerable difference between it and the worship in which the heart’s attention is solely towards God. If his efforts towards a lawful earning do not draw his attention to other than God and he is not negligent of his Lord, he can more sincerely worship God and attain true perfection.

The nature of riches or possession of vast wealth usually makes man proud and negligent of God, often urging him to rebel against Him. So we must work hard and pray to God that our efforts for a lawful earning make us not forget or be negligent of our responsibilities.

وَأَعْزِّنِي وَلَا تَبْتَغِنِي بِالْكَبْرِ.

“Exalt me and afflict me not with pride!”

Just as man has physical needs, he has numerous psychological needs, one of which is the need to be respected. Of course, those who attain a high stage of gnosis do not pay attention to other than God and

are not in need of others' respect. Sometimes, meeting this need makes a person arrogant and thus slows down his progress.

Arrogance [*takabbur*] has many evil effects and engenders other vices. Its cure is possible by reflecting on the essence of man's being. If a person realizes that he has nothing of his own and his being belongs to the Creator of the universe, how can he consider himself greater than others?

وَعِبِّدْنِي لَكَ وَلَا تُفْسِدْ عِبَادَتِي بِالْعُجْبِ.

“Make me worship You and corrupt not my worship with self-admiration!”

To have the opportunity to worship is not enough. It is possible that Satan makes insinuations while a person is worshipping and afflicts him with self-admiration [*ujb*].²¹ *Ujb* means to consider one's good deeds great and plenty and to think of oneself worthy of reward for doing them.

Ujb has different levels and forms:

1. To think God is beholden to one for his good deeds (This is the spiritually most menacing level and form of *ujb*);
2. To be glad of one's good deeds before God;
3. To consider oneself worthy of reward; and
4. To regard oneself superior to others.

This mean quality has many evil effects. In this regard, Imam 'Ali ('a) said:

مَنْ دَخَلَ الْعُجْبَ هَلَكَ.

“Whoever is afflicted with *ujb* is wretched.”²²

وَأَجْرِ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى يَدَيَّ الْخَيْرَ وَلَا تَمَحِّقْهُ بِالْمَنْ.

“Let good flow out from my hands upon the people and efface it not by my making them feel obliged!”

It is possible for a person to find an opportunity to help a needy, cure a patient, feed an indigent or give charity for the sake of God, but after sometime he makes them feel obliged through a statement or gesture by saying, for example: “Had I not helped you, you would not have been relieved of that affliction.” Such a statement renders void all those services. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى ﴾

“O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts.”²³

وَهَبْ لِي مَعَالِيَ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَاعْصِمْنِي مِنَ الْفَخْرِ.

“Give me the highest moral traits and preserve me from vainglory!”

The important and fine point that must be given attention to is that pretension or showing off [*riya*] in worship and reproaches for good works done are not vices that always openly lead a person to perdition. It is rather possible that he is careful not to do the above, but in his heart he nurtures a sense of superiority to others. To remove this defect also requires incessant efforts and the help of God.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَلَا تَرْفَعْنِي فِي النَّاسِ دَرَجَةً إِلَّا حَطَطْتَنِي عِنْدَ نَفْسِي مِثْلَهَا.

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household! Raise me not a single degree before the people without lowering me its like in myself.”

Whatever is added to the knowledge of a scholar makes him more aware of his ignorance. If a common person with average knowledge is asked about the number of scientific facts he is unaware of, he may say ten or twenty but whatever is added to his knowledge will make him more aware of his ignorance. The scholar perpetually realizes his own ignorance of many things.

Gnostically, the more a person knows God, the more he will realize his nothingness, ignorance, impotence, and helplessness. If he would acknowledge his defects, he will be relieved from arrogance, otherwise his self will rebel and afflict him with many vices. In *Du‘a’ Abu ‘amzah al-Thumali*, Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) considers himself the most sinful before God, saying:

فَمَنْ يَكُونُ أَسْوَأَ حَالاً مِنِّي.

“Is there anyone who is in a worse state than me?”

وَلَا تُحْدِثْ لِي عِزًّا ظَاهِرًا إِلَّا أَحْدَثْتَ لِي ذِلَّةً بَاطِنَةً عِنْدَ نَفْسِي بِقَدَرِهَا.

“And bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself of the same measure!”

As they are nearer to God, His Friends [*awliya’ Allah*] become more humble. On the contrary, if ignorant

and mean people learn something or perform a certain good work, they think that they become superior to the angels and they have done all good things in the world.

As the gnosis of the meritorious servants of Allah increases, they see themselves more abject before God and become truly more humble. True humility means to sincerely consider one insignificant, and not only pretend before the people that one is humble, as this is hypocrisy [*nifaq*]. True humility is impossible except by the grace of Allah because man is rebellious and becomes arrogant on account of a very small thing.

Perpetual guidance

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَمَتَّعْنِي بِهُدًى صَالِحٍ لَا اسْتَبْدِلُ بِهِ.

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household! Let me enjoy such sound guidance which I do not seek to replace.”

In this part of the supplication, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) prays for the perpetuity and preservation of perfection throughout his life, without any deviation.

In the commentary of Sayyid ‘Ali Khan on this noble supplication, it is mentioned that in an old manuscript instead of *bihudan salih*, *bihadin salih* is written. *Hada* means mode, method and approach. Based on this version, therefore, this part of the supplication is as follows: “Let me enjoy a sound method which I seek not to replace.” If it is really *bihudan salih*, then it means “Let me enjoy sound guidance which I seek not to replace” and if it is really “guidance” it is also proper. But it seems that *bihadin* is more proper in view of the fact that the same expression—*al-hadyu as-salih*—also exists in a *hadith*.

وَطَرِيقَةَ حَقٍّ لَا أَزِغُ عَنْهَا.

“...a path of truth from which I swerve not...”

وَنِيَّةٍ رُشْدٍ لَا أَشْكُ فِيهَا.

“...and an intention of righteous conduct in which I have no doubt!”

Probably, “doubt” here refers to its literal sense, i.e. hesitation. That is, intention in which there is no loophole. It is possible for a person to have doubt in intention but usually the intention itself is endowed with neither doubt nor certainty.

In this part of the supplication, Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (‘a) has three requests from God:

- Wholesome and constant attitude;
- A path towards God in which there is no deviation;
- A firm and permanent resolve to do good deeds or pious acts.

These three requests show us that the permanence or perpetuity of what we ask from God or what He gives us, also lies in His power and we must ask Him for it.

The station of this part of the supplication is like this noble supplication:

﴿ رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا ﴾

“Our Lord! Do not make our hearts swerve after You have guided us.”²⁴

After guiding us, God has to keep us along the straight and right path. God says in the Qur’an, thus:

﴿ وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ نَبِيِّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رَبِّيُونَ كَثِيرٌ... * وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

“How many a prophet there has been with whom a multitude of godly men fought... All that they said was, ‘O Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affairs, and make our feet steady, and help us against the faithless lot’.”²⁵

One of the supplications of those who have offered their lives and properties in the way of Allah by following the prophets was this: “O God, make our feet steady in the right path!”

Man is always subject to commit error and be misguided every moment. Ibn Muljim²⁶ was a person who used to perform night supererogatory prayers, yet he thrust his poisoned sword onto the blessed head of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). Zubayr²⁷ was a paternal cousin of Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imam ‘Ali (‘a). For many years he fought in battles on the side of the Apostle (S) who prayed for his sword and arm. He was one of the great combatants and companions who pledged allegiance under the tree [bay‘at ar-ridhwan].²⁸ After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S), however, ambition for power dragged him to the extent of wielding his sword against Imam ‘Ali (‘a) during the Battle of Jamal.

The late Haj Mirza ‘Abd al-‘Ali Tehrani (may Allah, the Exalted, be pleased with him) said: “When I was young, I used to ask for high levels of gnosis from God without giving importance to its lower levels. I used to ask God to let me attain His proximity and pleasure, but now that I am old, I only pray to God to make me die as a Muslim.” To die as a Muslim is not easy. The ideas, beliefs, attitude, and actions of

man are ever-changing. It is possible for a person to lose his faith on account of a simple doubt. So it is only proper to pray to God, that after having guided us and shown us the straight path, to keep us firm and steady along this path. If on the verge of death, a person is overwhelmed by doubts and skepticism, all his good deeds will be rendered useless. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾

“And whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies faithless—they are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever].”²⁹

﴿وَعَمَرْنِي مَا كَانَ عُمْرِي بِذَلَّةٍ فِي طَاعَتِكَ فَإِذَا كَانَ عُمْرِي مَرْتَعًا لِلشَّيْطَانِ فَأَقْبِضْنِي إِلَيْكَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَسْبِقَ مَقْتُكَ إِلَيَّ أَوْ يَسْتَحْكَمَ غَضَبُكَ عَلَيَّ﴾

“Let me live as long as my life is a free gift in obeying You, but if my life should become a pasture for Satan, seize me to Yourself before Your hatred overtakes me or Your wrath against me becomes firm!”

We do not have the capability to comprehend Imam al-Sajjad (‘a), whether such assumption is applicable to the Imam (‘a) or something meant to be a lesson for others. We are not infallible and our life can be a pasture for Satan. Our life, souls and hearts are like a piece of land that can be occupied by Satan, and if every moment of our life is to be filled with sins and offences and trampling upon the stages of perfection we have attained, it is better for it to end as soon as possible.

If a person believes that he is meant for the hereafter, he must sincerely pray for this to God. It is possible that a time will come for him when he indulges in sins and is overwhelmed by sensuality, anger or craving for power, and the veil of negligence covers his heart and blinds his eyes and then he sees and hears nothing but carnal desires. At that time, there is no more chance for return, but after succumbing to this state of affairs, he must pray to God that if that day is supposed to come to him, He must put an end to his life before the arrival of that day.

This supplication helps reform man’s actions because it urges him to think about it, not to allow Satan to dominate his heart, and guard it against doubts and skepticism. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ ﴿٢٠﴾ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

“When you see those who gossip impiously about Our signs, avoid them until they engage in

some other discourse; but if Satan makes you forget, then, after remembering, do not sit with the wrongdoing lot. [”30](#)

The Qur’an wants to convey that a person like the Apostle (S) must also be admonished in this regard because the words of Satan may also exert a sort of influence on him.

The statement is not inconsistent with freedom. If a young weightlifter is advised not to lift 200 kilos as it will break his back but undergo extensive training first so that he can make it later, this in no way conflicts with freedom.

As we have now identified the path of truth, we must not be in pursuit of the words of Satan as they bring nothing to us except agitation, doubt and skepticism. In this supplication, Imam ‘Ali ibn al-ḥusayn (‘a) prays to God for the termination of his life before Divine wrath overtakes him, if his life is supposed to become a pasture for Satan, and if ever He is angry with him, he asks for help so that he is able to repent and make compensations for his lapses. God says in the Qur’an, thus:

﴿وَمَنْ يَحِلِّلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ﴾

“And he on whom My wrath descends certainly perishes.” [”31](#)

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَدَعْ خِصْلَةً تُعَابُ مِنِّي إِلَّا أَصْلَحْتُهَا.

“O God, deposit in me no quality for which I will be faulted, unless You settle it right.”

وَلَا عَائِبَةً أُؤْتَبُ بِهَا إِلَّا أَحْسَنْتُهَا.

“...and no flaw for which I will be blamed, unless You make it beautiful.”

وَلَا أَكْرُومَةً فِيَّ نَاقِصَةً إِلَّا أَتَمَمْتُهَا.

“...and no deficient noble trait, unless You complete it!”

The qualities and flaws to be condemned and reproached by others refer to the attributes not acceptable by the righteous, and not to those good qualities condemned by the spiteful and wicked.

Third Discourse: Good and Evil

According to Islam, man is a social being. He will not attain real perfection by mere personal acts of

worship. Instead, he must live with people to attain all dimensions of perfection. He must be in touch with society and all facets of social life—relationship with his spouse, children, friends, and neighbors; transactions, *jihad* and defense; relationship with the government and people; etc. He must worship God according to His command. By doing so, he will attain nearness to God.

Sometimes, these relationships cause annoyances, disturbances of the mind and conflicts. Some of these conflicts are with those who are hostile to the person. This hostility may be caused by worldly or religious matters, and sometimes these conflicts and grudges are caused by the jealousy of others for blessings given by God to a person. This jealousy breeds animosity towards him and tries to harm his reputation. At times, a person has no animosity towards another person who in turn is not jealous of him, but they have a difference of views and do not exactly understand each other. This difference of views leads to misunderstanding and a sort of conflict between them.

So, some matters pertaining to the heart such as animosity, grudge, jealousy, suspicion, misgiving, pessimism, misunderstanding, and difference of views undermines a person's wholesome, amicable and sincere relations with others. This state of affairs brings about indignation, anxiety and bitterness to him and these feelings may lessen the presence of his heart in worship. In this part of the supplication, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) pays attention to these things.

Turning evil and defects into good and merits

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَبْدِلْنِي مِنْ بُغْضَةِ أَهْلِ الشَّتَانِ الْمَحَبَّةَ

“O God, bless Muhammad and Muhammad’s Household and replace for me the animosity of the people of hatred with love.”

وَمِنْ حَسَدِ أَهْلِ الْبَغْيِ الْمَوَدَّةَ

“...the envy of the people of insolence with affection.”

وَمِنْ ظَنَّةِ أَهْلِ الصَّلَاحِ التَّيَقُّنَ

“...the suspicion of the people of righteousness with trust.”

وَمِنْ عَدَاوَةِ الْأَدْنِيِّينَ الْوَلَايَةَ

“...the enmity of those who are close with friendship.”

“Those who are close” [*adnayn*] refers to the nearest of kin. A person has different levels of relationship with various people—relationship with near relatives, distant relatives, neighbors, etc. Each of them requires a particular nature of relationship.

وَمِنْ عُفُوقِ ذَوِي الْأَرْحَامِ الْمَبَرَّةِ.

“...the disrespect of womb relatives with devotion.”

Near relatives must have a close relationship which should not be severed. They must be kind and not mistreat one another.

وَمِنْ خِذْلَانِ الْأَقْرَبِينَ النُّصْرَةَ.

“...the abandonment of relatives with help.”

Sometimes a person needs the help of his relatives who do not want to assist him.

وَمِنْ حُبِّ الْمُدَارِبِينَ تَصْحِيحَ الْمَقَّةِ.

“...the attachment of flatterers with love set right.”

وَمِنْ رَدِّ الْمُلَابِسِينَ كَرَمِ الْعِشْرَةِ.

“...the rejection of fellows with generous friendliness.”

وَمِنْ مَرَارَةِ خَوْفِ الظَّالِمِينَ حَلَاوَةِ الْأَمْنَةِ.

“...the bitterness of fear of wrongdoers with the sweetness of security!”

In other words, “O God! The threat of tyrants and oppressors is sometimes not actualized but it creates fear and dread in our hearts. Turn this fear and dread into a sense of security!”

Seeking help to repel evil and attract good

This part of the supplication is related to the time when the oppressor, the envious, and their like intend to do evil.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْعَلْ لِي يَدًا عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَنِي.

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household! Appoint for me a hand against him who wrongs me.”

وَلِسَانًا عَلَى مَنْ خَاصَمَنِي.

“...a tongue against him who disputes with me.”

وَوَظْفَرًا بِمَنْ عَانَدَنِي.

“...victory over him who stubbornly resists me!”

وَهَبْ لِي مَكْرًا عَلَى مَنْ كَايَدَنِي.

“Give me guile against him who schemes against me.”

وَقُدْرَةً عَلَى مَنْ اضْطَهَدَنِي.

“...power over him who oppresses me.”

وَتَكْذِيبًا لِمَنْ قَصَبَنِي.

“...refutation of him who reviles me.”

وَسَلَامَةً مِمَّنْ تَوَعَّدَنِي.

“...safety from him who threatens me!”

وَوَفْقَنِي لِطَاعَةِ مَنْ سَدَّدَنِي وَمُتَابَعَةِ مَنْ أَرَشَدَنِي.

“Grant me success in obeying him who points me straight and following him who guides me right!”

Goodness in exchange for the badness of others

This part of the supplication is related to the time when something iniquitous is done to us. What must

we do then? Shall we take revenge from them and treat them in kind? Shall we forgive them for what they have done? In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿ وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ﴾

“Good and evil [conduct] are not equal. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend.”³²

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَسَلِّمْ لِي أَنْ أُعَارِضَ مَنْ عَشَنِي بِالنُّصْحِ

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household and point me straight to resist him who is dishonest toward me with good counsel.

وَأَجْزِي مَنْ هَجَرَنِي بِالْبِرِّ

“...repay him who separates from me with gentle devotion.

وَأُثِيبَ مَنْ حَرَمَنِي بِالْبَذْلِ

“...reward him who deprives me with free giving.”

وَأُكَافِيَ مَنْ قَطَعَنِي بِالصِّلَةِ

“...recompense him who cuts me off with joining.”

وَأُخَالِفَ مَنْ اغْتَابَنِي إِلَى حُسْنِ الذِّكْرِ

“...oppose him who slanders me with excellent mention.”

وَأَنْ أَشْكُرَ الْحَسَنَةَ وَأُغْضِيَ عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ

“...give thanks for good, and shut my eyes to evil!”

Keeping one's honor

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَصُنْ وَجْهِي بِالْيَسَارِ وَلَا تَبْذُلْ جَاهِي بِالْاِقْتَارِ فَأَسْتَزِقَ أَهْلَ رِزْقِكَ

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household! Save my face through ease, and demean not my dignity through neediness, lest I seek provision from those whom You have provided.”

In *Nahj al-Balaghah* there is an expression which is very similar to the initial part of this line. All the Infallibles (‘a) are of the same light [*nur*] and it is not suprising if a supplication can be traced to more than one of them. So, Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) might have learned this supplication from the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) through Imam al-Hasanayn (‘a).

Every person wants to be respected in society. That is, he must be treated with honor and not with contempt. If the visage, clothing, behavior, attitude, and valuable works of a person are praised by others, he is respected in society, otherwise he is held in contempt and no one respects him.

Some Sufis believe that their outward appearance must not be good. Accordingly, they must avoid grooming themselves and cleaning their clothes so that their bad odor and ungroomed faces make them despicable. In their own narrow thinking, they are struggling against their carnal selves in a bid to attain spiritual perfection. This way of thinking and attitude establishes a sort of relationship with Satan. Sometimes, Satan helps them in some affairs and to their delight they think that this assistance is a sign of their truthfulness.

As can be deduced from the Qur’an and traditions of the infallible Imams (‘a), this practice is extremely despicable and condemnable. In the Qur’an even the indigent who do not show their indigence is praised:

﴿يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا﴾

“The unaware suppose them to be well-off because of their reserve. You recognize them by their mark; they do not ask the people importunately.”³³

According to Islam, in wearing clothes, dealing with others—members of the family and the society in large—a person must behave in such a way that he maintains his self-respect. Traditions have not reproached people who have two types of clothes—one for days of festivities, Fridays and social gatherings and another for work—and neither considered their practice “worldly”. In fact, they have been praised and appreciated. Moreover, in Islamic society, people must have extensive and cordial relations with one another. This practice paves the way for their material progress and spiritual perfection. The believers [mu’minin] are recommended in traditions to shake hands whenever they meet each other and

be affectionate to one another. In this regard, Imam al-Baqir (‘a) said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا التَّقَى فَتَصَافَحَا أَدْخَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَدَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمَا وَأَقْبَلَ بِوَجْهِهِ عَلَى أَشَدِّهِمَا حُبًّا لِصَاحِبِهِ

“When two believers meet each other and shake their hands, God, the Honorable and Glorious, puts His hand in between their hands and gives special attention to the one who loves the other one more.”³⁴

All these recommendations are made for the believers to forge cordial relations with one another. For this cordiality, amity and connection one must avoid things that are contemptible. No person wants to shake hands or even look at someone untidy and disheveled, with a bad odor. Hence, cleanliness is a prerequisite of friendship and affection.

Whenever he was supposed to meet his companions, the Holy Prophet (S) combed his hair, applied perfume, brushed his teeth, and fixed his clothes. He looked at himself in the mirror to be sure that everything was fine. In the absence of a mirror, he would look at himself in a container filled with water. This emphasis on personal hygiene is mentioned so that members of society can love each other more and benefit from one another. One of the differences between the believer and the unbeliever is that the former is in pursuit of self-respect so that he can discharge his social responsibilities prescribed by religion, but the latter is after self-respect for the good of his ego.

Usually, people do not pay attention to a poor person. For such a person, it is difficult to acquire a good social standing in society even among Muslims. Wealth and property are of no value for Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a), but he asks God to preserve his honor. By acquiring a good social standing, he can discharge his religious obligations in a better way. A person who is in need of others is forced to extend his hands towards them. In this case, if he is helped by them he is humiliated, and if he is refused, he endures worse humiliation. This is while the treasures of the heavens and earth are in the hand of God who can meet the needs of man out of His infinite mercy and bounty and thereby preserve his honor.

وَأَسْتَغْطِي شَرَّارَ خَلْقِكَ فَافْتَتِنَ بِحَمْدٍ مَنْ أَعْطَانِي وَأُبْتَلِيَ بِذَمٍّ مَنْ مَنَعَنِي وَأَنْتَ وَلِيُّ الْإِعْطَاءِ وَالْمَنْعِ

“...and asks for bestowal from the worst of Your creatures! Then I would be tried by praising him who gave to me and afflicted with blaming him who held back from me, while You—not they—are the patron of giving and holding back.”

One must pray to God Himself to provide all his needs, so that one is not forced to seek it from mean and wicked individuals. In this regard, the Noble Qur’an states:

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ لِفَضْلِهِ يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٦﴾

“Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is no one to remove it except Him; and should He desire any good for you, none can stand in the way of His grace: He grants it to whomever He wishes of His servants, and He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.”³⁵

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَارْزُقْنِي صِحَّةً فِي عِبَادَةٍ وَفَرَاغاً فِي زَهَادَةٍ.

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household and provide me with soundness in worship and detachment in renunciation...”

The Imam (‘a) prays for relief from pressures to worship with total dedication.

وَعِلْماً فِي اسْتِعْمَالٍ وَوَرَعاً فِي إِجْمَالٍ.

“...knowledge put into action and abstinence in measure!”

Individuals, who want to be pious and devoted to God, sometimes abstain from things which are wholesome and hinder them from doing the obligatory. They must know the scope and limitation of asceticism and piety before practicing them.

اللَّهُمَّ اخْتِمْ بِعَفْوِكَ أَجَلِي

“O God, seal my term with Your pardon...”

وَحَقِّقْ فِي رَجَاءٍ رَحْمَتِكَ أَمَلِي

“...verify my expectation in hoping for Your mercy.”

When a person reflects on his sins, he becomes hopeless of God’s forgiveness and in this state expects God’s mercy.

وَسَهِّلْ إِلَى بُلُوغِ رِضَاكَ سُبُلِي

“...smooth my paths to reach Your good pleasure.”

وَحَسِّنْ فِي جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِي عَمَلِي

“...and make my works good in all my states!”

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَنَبِّهْنِي لِذِكْرِكَ فِي أَوْقَاتِ الْغَفْلَةِ

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household and incite me to remember You in times of heedlessness.”

Man is always prone to forget and be negligent. Moreover, sometimes something happens that makes him totally forget God. We must pray to God to extend His hand in such a situation, inspire His remembrance and awaken our hearts.

وَاسْتَعْمِلْنِي بِطَاعَتِكَ فِي أَيَّامِ الْمُهْلَةِ

“...employ me in Your obedience in days of disregard.”

وَأَنْهَجْ لِي إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكَ سَبِيلًا سَهْلَةً أَكْمِلُ لِي بِهَا خَيْرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

“...open a smooth road for me to Your love, and complete for me, thereby, the good of this world and the next!”

That is to say, “My aim is to obtain Your love. To obtain this love has long and winding roads. Set for me the shortest one. By granting these requests and finding the shortest way to Your love, You will completely grant to me the good in this world as well as in the hereafter.”

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ كَأَفْضَلٍ مَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ قَبْلَهُ وَأَنْتَ مُصَلٍّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ بَعْدَهُ وَآتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“O God, bless Muhammad and his Household the best You have blessed any of Your creatures before him and will bless any of them after him, and give to us in this world good, and in the next world good, and protect me through Your mercy from the chastisement of the Fire!”

Fourth Discourse: The Night of Ordainment

The holiness of certain places and periods in the Qur'an

God, the Exalted, has granted more honor and nobility to certain creatures as compared to the rest. They are endowed with a certain status, honor, nobility, and dignity which others do not possess. It can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) and pure Imams (‘a) that apart from visible creatures, some places and periods have special features. The first and foremost of these places is the Holy *Ka'bah*:

﴿ إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

“Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah,³⁶ blessed and a guidance for all nations.”³⁷

The second holy place is Masjid al-Aqsa. In the Glorious Qur’an, Masjid al-Haram and Masjid al-Aqsa are mentioned together:

﴿ سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ ﴾

“Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose environs We have blessed.”³⁸

God says that He blesses them as well as their environs, and in another verse He says:

﴿ يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ﴾

“O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you.”³⁹

The third holy place mentioned in the Qur’an is the Mount Sinai which is described therein as *turi sinin*:

﴿ وَطُورِ سِينِينَ ﴾

“By Mount Sinai.”⁴⁰

Mount Sinai is the place where Prophet Musa (‘a) used to pray and received for the first time the divine revelation. It is possible that these places have intrinsic peculiarities and their holiness is inherent. In this case, a time will come when mankind will discover their special status. It is equally possible that their holiness is due to certain events that took place there. In any case, these places have special sanctity and nobility.

Some periods are mentioned in the Qur’an as having special significance. It can be inferred from verses of the Qur’an that the arrangement of days according to the Islamic lunar calendar has divinely been ordained.

﴿ إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ﴾

“Indeed the number of the months with Allah is twelve months in Allah’s Book, the day when He

created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred.”⁴¹

Among these twelve months, God declared four months as “forbidden months” [*ash-shuhur al-haram*], viz. Muharram, Rajab, Dhu’l-Qa’dah, and Dhu’l-Hijjah. It is obligatory to honor these four months and it is forbidden to initiate war during this period even to the Holy Prophet (S) and pure Imams (‘a), except if it is initiated by the faithless or polytheists and the Muslims need to defend themselves. The reason for this prohibition is the sanctity given by God to these months.

In the Holy Qur’an, the month of Dhu al-Hijjah as well as its two preceding months, viz. Shawwal and Dhu’l-Qa’dah, when the pilgrims [*hujjaj*] were getting ready for the pilgrimage [*Hajj*], have been mentioned as months of pilgrimage. In addition, different rituals of *Hajj* are mentioned in other chapters of the Qur’an. Yet, nowhere are the names of these months ever mentioned.

The virtue of the month of Ramadan and the Night of Ordainment

Among the twelve months only the name of the month of Ramadhan is explicitly mentioned in verses of the Glorious Qur’an. This month is among neither the “forbidden months” nor the “months of pilgrimage” but it is mentioned in the Qur’an with special respect:

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ ﴾

“The month of Ramadhan is one in which the Qur’an was sent down.”⁴²

The night when the Qur’an was revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) in the month of Ramadhan is also called a blessed night:

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ ﴾

“Indeed We sent it down on a blessed night.”⁴³

This sacred month has an intrinsic peculiarity because divine ordinances are not without consideration of good and bad. So there are certain reasons why God has preferred it over other months. The Night of Ordainment [*Laylat al-Qadr*] is in this sacred month in which fasting is divinely ordained. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ﴾

“O you, who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting, as it was prescribed for those who were before you.”⁴⁴

It is also stated, thus:

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ ﴾

“The month of Ramadhan is one in which the Qur’an was sent down.”⁴⁵

It can be deduced from these two verses that fasting is ordained on mankind in the month of revelation of the Qur’an. Perhaps it can be inferred from this form of expression of the Qur’an that God has made fasting obligatory to mankind in recognition of the revelation of the Qur’an. Even if it cannot be claimed that the reason behind the injunction of fasting in this sacred month is the revelation of the Qur’an, it certainly plays some role in this injunction.

In the first verse, the Qur’an states, “The Qur’an is revealed in the month of Ramadhan” and in the other verse it declares, “The Qur’an is revealed in a blessed night.” Thus, the Qur’an is revealed in a certain night of the month of Ramadhan and that is the Night of Ordainment. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an states:

﴿ حَم * وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ * إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ * فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ ﴾

“a Mim. By the Manifest Book! Indeed We sent it down on a blessed night, and indeed We have been warning [mankind]. Every definitive matter is resolved in it.”⁴⁶

Yufraqu in the last verse means “to separate” and to separate necessitates distinction, which in turn requires appointment [*ta’ayyun*] and estimation [*taqdir*] which both mean “measurement”. In Qur’anic parlance, *taqdir* is used to mean “measurement”. Whenever the measurement of a thing is determined, its limit [*hudud*] can be established. Once it is separated from others, it will become free of its ambiguity. The verse “Every definitive matter is resolved in it” indicates that the night of revelation of the Qur’an is the Night of Ordainment. In *Surat al-Qadr* this night is also considered majestic:

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴾

“Indeed We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment.”⁴⁷

The word *qadr* means *taqdir*. The Qur’an continues:

﴿ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴾

“What will show you what is the Night of Ordainment?”⁴⁸

Perhaps this question is not addressed to the Holy Prophet (S) and even if it is so, it is indicative of this night's majesty. In a bid to show the importance of the Night of Ordainment, in this three short verses the term "Night of Ordainment" is repeated three times. The Qur'an does not state: "Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment. What will show you what it is? It is a night..." This expression of the Qur'an cannot emphasise more the greatness and majesty of this night. In order to make the greatness of this night more discernible to the people, the Qur'an poses this question: *"What will show you what is the Night of Ordainment?"* This shows that the Night of Ordainment is a fact beyond the understanding of common people. The Qur'an continues, thus:

﴿لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ﴾

"The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months."[49](#)

One thousand months are equivalent to more than 70 years. That is, the whole lifespan of a person without counting the Nights of Ordainment every year in it. This superiority is based on two reasons. Firstly, on this night the mercy of God on His servants is greater than His regular mercy in more than 70 years, with the exception of the Nights of Ordainment every year. Secondly, the deeds of people on this night have more virtue compared to their deeds in more than 70 years, with the exception of the Nights of Ordainment every year. This is the explicit statement of the Qur'an and there is no dispute concerning it although it is not known to us which night of the month is the Night of Ordainment.

In understanding the importance of a thing, the human mind is more perceptible to quantities than qualities. To show the importance of this night, God states that it is better than a thousand months, but the truth behind this night is beyond that which we are familiar with. Nevertheless, we are obliged to believe in these truths. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ﴾

"Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets."[50](#)

Since God says so, we must have faith in the Last Day, angels, the Holy Book and prophets; otherwise our intellect is incapable of discerning creatures called "angels" who have a role in creation. Had it not been for the revelation and sayings of the *awliya'* of Allah, we could not have knowledge of any of them. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا﴾

“But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.’”⁵¹

Hence, since God has said it, we believe in it. Some information about the angels can be learned from verses of the Qur’an and traditions of the pure Imams (‘a) but the truth behind it is beyond our comprehension. The truth behind the angels, their station, their roles in the universe, the meaning of their coming down and others, are all unknown to us. In our conception, the word *nuzul* is applied to the coming down of a thing from above, but it is unknown to us how the angels “come down”, and we are even incapable of imagining it. We only know that angels are creatures with very high stations that administer the affairs of the universe with the permission of God. They are mediums in the distribution of sustenance, taking the soul out of the human body, writing down of the deeds of the people, etc. In this connection, the Noble Qur’an states:

﴿وَالنَّارِعَاتِ غَرْقًا * وَالنَّاشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا * وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا * فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبْقًا * فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا﴾

“By those [angels] who wrest [the soul] violently, by those who draw [it] out gently, by those who swim smoothly, by those who take the lead racing, by those who direct the affairs [of creatures].”⁵²

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ﴾
﴿

“All praise belongs to Allah, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes.”⁵³

Notwithstanding this, the whole truth behind the existence of the angels is unknown to us. In this connection, the Glorious Qur’an states:

﴿وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾

“And you have not been given of the knowledge, except a few [of you].”⁵⁴

Today, thanks to the advancement in space science, it is proven that this physical universe is so complex that it is beyond understanding and description. In order for the light of some stars to reach the planet Earth, they require billions of years to travel while the light of the sun reaches the earth in only eight minutes. Some scientists believe that some light that has reached the earth from other heavenly bodies is from stars whose lifespan has ended and they have been extinguished. In spite of the

complexity of this universe—that everyday a portion of its expanse and greatness is discovered—it is like a ring in a vast desert in comparison to the elements that are beyond human comprehension. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ مَا السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ فِي الْكُرْسِيِّ إِلَّا كَحَلْقَةٍ مُلقَاةٍ فِي أَرْضٍ فَلَاةٍ

“O Abu Dharr! In comparison with the Throne, the seven heavens are nothing but like a ring that fell in a desert.”[55](#)

Human beings are incapable of comprehending the majesty of the physical universe, except the prophets, the infallible Imams (‘a), and perhaps some *awliya*’ of Allah, who have been granted mystical knowledge [*‘ilm al-ladunni*] by Him. How can they, then, understand spiritual concepts which cannot be understood by the physical senses and are far more complex and intricate than the physical universe? The descent [*nuzul*] of the angels from a higher world on the heart of the Holy Prophet (S) is beyond the comprehension of common people. Yet, we must declare:

﴿ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا ﴾

“We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.”[56](#)

Our greatest honor is that God, the Exalted, has guided us and we have accepted His guidance, completely believing in what He has said—that there are angels who have descended on the heart of the Holy Prophet (S) on the Night of Ordainment, the night which is superior to one thousand nights and in which one *rak‘ah* of prayer is superior to thirty thousand common *rak‘ahs*. God has given this sanctity to this night and a window is open for His servants to get the maximum benefit within this short period.

Refuting the alleged improbability of the revelation of the Qur’an in one night

Perhaps we think that the Qur’an consists of 30 parts [*juz’*] and wonder how they were revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) in only a single night. Is it possible? How could it be reconciled with the revelation of the Qur’an in 23 years?

One of the objections of the enemies of Islam against the Apostle (S) is this: Why was the Qur’an not revealed all at once? In this regard, the Qur’an states:

﴿ كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ﴾

“So it is, that We may strengthen your heart with it, and We have recited it [to you] in a measured tone.”[57](#)

The other objection is that the Holy Qur'an consists of more than six thousand verses, and it cannot be imagined that Archangel Jibra'il (‘a) could have normally recited them to the Apostle (S) in one night.

In reply to such objections, one of the methods employed by the Holy Qur'an is the “elimination of improbability” [*raf' istib'ad*]. For example, the polytheists were saying, “How could the human body and its bones be connected together again and be given life again?” The Noble Qur'an replies to this question in many ways, one of which is the “elimination of improbability”. The Qur'an states, thus:

﴿وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ﴾

“And He revives the earth after its death. Likewise you [too] shall be raised [from the dead].”⁵⁸

God who can make plants grow in a dead earth can also revive dead and rotten human bodies. This way of expression is elimination of improbability which is considered a way of argumentation or reasoning. In this regard, the Glorious Qur'an shows many other cases such as the birds killed by Prophet Ibrahim (‘a) and then made alive again and the cow of the Children of Israel which lived again after being slaughtered. These instances show that it is possible for God to give life again to the creatures in this or the next world.

At this juncture, elimination of improbability can also be used. It must be noted that our judgments are based upon comparisons with what we are familiar with. We understand “reading” and “listening” in the way we use these concepts in our common everyday life. We think that if a person wants to talk, he must face another person and this talk takes as much time as we talk. This is while there are examples when we can know of so many things in a very short time. One of these cases is dreaming. Sometimes, a person sleeps and has a dream in a short period and if the event that he sees in the dream happens in actual life, it would take many days. A long event happens in our dream in a few minutes and we can hear many and long conversations in only a short period. If we want to make those conversations in actual life, we need many hours. Another point is that the sending down of the Qur'an in one night does not mean that it had been revealed to the Apostle (S) in the form of words through sound waves. In this regard, the Noble Qur'an states:

﴿نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ * عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ﴾

“[It (Qur'an) was] brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit, upon your heart, so that you may be one of the warners.”⁵⁹

And the Qur'an does not state, “...*upon your ears.*”

In order to eliminate this improbability, we can cite the computer as an example. The entries of voluminous encyclopedia can be stored in a single compact disc. By having this compact disc, all entries

of the said encyclopedia are at our disposal. By using a personal computer, we can benefit from any of its information whenever we want. And this does not mean that all words of the encyclopedia are recited to us one by one. So, in the physical world there are things which can compress a set of textual and audio data. Since in this world which is a world of dispersion, such things are possible, it follows that in the metaphysical world which is more akin to the attribute of unity, a set of information can more probably be compressed.

Of course, it is not known to us how this thing happens but we know for certain that the same is not impossible and an example of which exists in this world. Hence, it is possible for the whole Qur'an to be revealed in the Night of Ordainment within a very short period—perhaps a few minutes or even shorter—to the Apostle (S) who impeccably received it.

Concerning the manner of revelation of the Noble Qur'an, the late 'Allamah ʿAbāʿAbā'i (may Allah be pleased with him) says in *Tafsir al-Mizan*, that the Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (S) in two ways: (1) in an all-at-once revelation [*nuzul daf'i*] and (2) revelation-in installments [*nuzul tadriji*]. The all-at-once revelation of the Qur'an which is described in traditions as "revelation to the Inhabited House" [*nuzul ila bayt al-ma'mur*], "revelation to the heaven of the world" [*nuzul ila's-sama' ad-dunya*] and "revelation to the heart of the Prophet (S)" [*nuzul 'ala qalb an-nabi*] is different from the revelation of the verses to the Holy Prophet (S) on different occasions. The relationship between the two is like that of "addition" [*jam'*] and "subtraction" [*tafriq*]. The revelation of the Qur'an within the span of 23 years to the Apostle (S) is the revelation-in-installments, and the revelation of the Qur'an on the Night of Ordainment is the all-at-once revelation, which is beyond our comprehension:

﴿ وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾

"And you have not been given of the knowledge, except a few [of you]."[60](#)

During the night of the revelation of the Qur'an, the angels came down. The said night is so blessed and a source of hope for human beings. Those who pay attention to the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (S) and the pure Imams ('a) prepare themselves throughout the year to comprehend the Night of Ordainment. If something can be done to make one night more valuable than thirty thousand days and nights, one year of effort to comprehend such a night is valuable.

Among the acts effective in understanding the Night of Ordainment is to read *Surat al-Qadr* throughout the year, reading the *surat* during the blessed nights of Ramadhan one thousand times, or reading of *Surat al-Dukhan* a hundred times during those nights.

[1.](#)

– Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, Supplication 20.

[2.](#)

– Surat al-‘Ankabut 29:65.

3.

– The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) is reported to have said:

إِذَا كَانَتْ لَكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ سُحَّانَةٌ حَاجَةٌ فَأَبْدَأْ بِمَسْأَلَةِ الصَّلَاةِ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ (صلى الله عليه وآله)، ثُمَّ سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَكْرَمُ مِنْ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ حَاجَتَيْنِ، فَيَقْضِيَ إِحْدَاهُمَا وَيَمْنَعَ الْأُخْرَى.

“If you have a need toward Allah, the Glorified, then begin by seeking Allah’s blessing on His Prophet (S) then ask your need, because Allah is too generous to accept one of the two requests made to Him and deny the other.” Nahj al-Balaghah, Saying 361.

4.

– Abu ‘Abd Allah (Imam al-Husayn) (‘a) is reported to have said:

من كانت له إلى الله عز وجل حاجة، فليبدأ بالصلوة على محمد وآله، ثم يسأل حاجته، ثم يختم بالصلوة على محمد وآل محمد؛ فإن الله عز وجل أكرم من أن يقبل الطرفين ويدع الوسط، إذا كانت الصلوة على محمد وآل محمد لا تحجب عنه.

“Whoever has a need toward Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, then he must begin by seeking Allah’s blessing on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a) then ask his need and then end by seeking Allah’s blessing on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a), because Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, is too generous to accept the two ends and not the middle. Whenever there is invocation of Allah’s blessing on Muhammad (S) and his progeny (‘a), it is acceptable.” Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 4, hadith 1137.

5.

– Surat al-Anfal 8:2.

6.

– Surat al-Naml 27:14.

7.

– Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) 17:102.

8.

– Surat al-Qasas 28:38.

9.

– Surat Yunus 10:90.

10.

– Surat al-Qiyamah 75:3–5.

11.

– Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 53.

12.

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 143, hadith 7.

13.

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:2–5.

[14.](#)

– Usul al-Kafi, “Kitab al-Iman wa’l-Kufr,” bab al-ikhlās [section on sincerity], hadith 4.

[15.](#)

– Surat al-Mulk 67:2.

[16.](#)

– Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, “Kitab al-Iman wa’l-Kufr,” bab al-‘ibadah [section on worship], p. 131, hadith 5.

[17.](#)

– Surat al-Mulk 67:2.

[18.](#)

– Surat al-Dharyat 51:56.

[19.](#)

– Surat Hud 11:119.

[20.](#)

– Surat al-Nahl 16:9.

[21.](#)

– For a lengthy treatment of ‘ujb, see Imam Khomeini, Forty Hadiths: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, trans. Sayyid ‘Ali Quli Qara’i and Mahliqah Qara’i (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, 2003), pp. 8–100. [Trans.]

[22.](#)

– Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 1, p. 321.

[23.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:264.

[24.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:8.

[25.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:146–147.

[26.](#)

– ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljim: the assassin of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). [Trans.]

[27.](#)

– Zubayr: one of the companions of the Prophet (S) who, along with Talhah and ‘A’ishah, led the Battle of Jamal against Imam ‘Ali (‘a). [Trans.]

[28.](#)

– See exegesis [tafsir] of Surat al-Fath 48:18:

﴿لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا﴾

“Allah was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down composure on them, and requited them with a victory near at hand.”

[29.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:217.

[30.](#)

– Surat al-An‘am 6:68.

[31.](#)

– Surat Ta Ha 20:81.

[32.](#)

– Surat Fussilat 41:34.

[33.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2:273.

[34.](#)

– Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 179.

[35.](#)

– Surat Yunus 10:107.

[36.](#)

– Bakkah: the Holy Mosque or the city of Mecca, or the territory where they stand. [Q Trans.]

[37.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:96.

[38.](#)

– Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) 17:1.

[39.](#)

– Surat al-Ma’idah 5:21.

[40.](#)

– Surat al-Tin 95:2.

[41.](#)

– Surat al-Tawbah (or, Bara'ah) 9:36.

[42.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2: 185.

[43.](#)

– Surat al-Dukhan 44:3.

[44.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2: 183.

[45.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2: 185.

[46.](#)

– Surat al-Dukhan 44: 1–4.

[47.](#)

– Surat al-Qadr 97: 1.

[48.](#)

– Surat al-Qadr 97:2.

[49.](#)

– Surat al-Qadr 97:3.

[50.](#)

– Surat al-Baqarah 2: 177.

[51.](#)

– Surat Al 'Imran 3:7.

[52.](#)

– Surat al-Nazi'at 79: 1–5.

[53.](#)

– Surat Fatir (or al-Mala'ikah) 35: 1.

[54.](#)

– Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) 17:85.

[55.](#)

– Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73.

[56.](#)

– Surat Al ‘Imran 3:7.

[57.](#)

– Surat al-Furqan 25:32.

[58.](#)

– Surat al-Rum 30:19.

[59.](#)

– Surat al-Shu‘ara’ 26:193–194.

[60.](#)

– Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) 17:85.

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