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Supplicating to the Almighty

The holy month of Ramadhan is a special time for supplicating to Allah. Dua, or supplication, is especially encouraged. Believers spend a lot of time in this month praying to the Almighty, asking for their needs of this world and the Hereafter. Apart from the recommended duas for the nights and days of this blessed month, we are told to be in a constant state of prayer and dua.

The following Ahadith show the importance of Dua in the month of Ramadhan:

- Supplicate (in Ramadhan) with your hands raised at the times of prayer, as these are the best of times during which the Almighty looks at His servants with mercy. (He) answers if they supplicate, responds if they call, grants if they ask, and accepts if they entreat. Holy Prophet (S)
- Pray and seek forgiveness more frequently in the month of Ramadhan. Prayer wards off misfortune, and forgiveness cleanses your sins. Imam Ali (a)

What is Du`a?

Dua is a simple acceptance of the difference between the existences of God and the human being.

- The existence of Allah as the source of all good, perfection, independence and bestowal.
- The existence of the human being as a vessel of poverty, need, dependant on constant bestowal and favor.

Thus the human being needs to ask for and receive the favors of the Almighty. He is in constant need for what only Allah can give Him. To help him achieve his dreams, to give him success and happiness in this world and the Hereafter, he needs the favors of Allah.

The Almighty God, in His mercy and love for the human being, has allowed believers to ask from Him, and has promised to answer them. This is a great favor of God. The following Qur'anic verses show how Allah invites believers to ask from Him:

- ***“And when my servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the suppliant when he calls upon Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, that they may walk the right way.”*** (2:186)
- ***“Call unto Me, I will answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell.”*** (40:60)
- ***“Call your Lord humbly and secretly, He loves not the transgressors.”*** (7:55)
- ***“And call on Him, fearing and hoping, surely the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good.”*** (7:56)

Many Hadith also emphasize the importance of supplicating to Allah:

- ***“Du`a is the weapon of the believer, and the pillar of faith, and the light of the heavens and the earth.”***
Holy Prophet (S)
- Know that He who owns the treasures of the skies and the earth has permitted you to pray to Him, and has promised you acceptance of the prayer. He has commanded you to beg of Him in order that He may give you, and to seek His mercy in order that He may have mercy on you.
- He has opened for you the door of repentance. Therefore whenever you call Him, He hears your call, and whenever you whisper to Him, He knows the whisper. You place before him your needs, unveil before Him yourself, complain to Him for your worries, beseech Him to remove your troubles, seek His help in your affairs, and ask from the treasures of His mercy what no-one else has the power to give, namely long life, health of body, and increase of livelihood. Imam Ali (a) Letter 31, Nahjul Balagha

Allah loves the believers who ask from Him, and supplicate constantly. The Holy Prophet (S) has said that on the Day of Judgement, two men with very similar deeds will enter Heaven. One of them will see that the other is granted a rank above him. He will ask Allah: "My Lord! We have the same actions. Why have you preferred him over me"? Allah will reply, "He asked from Me, and you did not".

Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (a) often encouraged his companions to ask from Allah. He once said to Maysar, his companion : O Maysar! Supplicate, and do not say the affair has been destined. Surely there are ranks with Allah which cannot be reached except through asking. If the servant (of Allah) closes his mouth and does not ask, he will not be given anything, so ask and you will get. O Maysar, the door that is knocked often is most likely to open.

Dua is a great tool given to believers by Allah. Using du`a they can achieve great things and overcome many problems. One who has been given the power of Dua can never lose hope, as in his hands lies a great weapon. It is man's own loss if he does not make use of the tremendous potential of Du`a.

Effects of Dua

Pleases the Almighty

Allah loves that believers should pray to Him constantly. He says in the Holy Qur'an: ***"Allah would not care for you were it not for your supplications."*** (25:77). Ahadith also tell us of how Allah loves those who pray and ask from Him:

- *"God loves nothing better than that His servants ask from Him."* Imam al-Baqir (a)
- *"Supplicate, for there is nothing like Dua to get you closer to Allah, and do not leave out your minor needs, for the One who is the Master of the major needs is also the Master of the minor ones."* Imam as-Sadiq (a)

Gives Peace and Contentment

A person who prays to Allah, putting all faith and trust in Him, never feels alone or lonely. He has harnessed his own insignificant power onto a being who is the Supreme Power, and who has promised to answer His call. This gives him great peace of mind. It makes him confident that with the help of Allah, all things can be done. He knows also that whatever happens to him is the decree of the Wise, the almighty. Says the Holy Qur'an:

"Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah, surely by Allah's remembrance are hearts set at rest." (13:28)

Increases Knowledge and Humility

Most duas teach us about the greatness of Allah, and His qualities. They also make us aware of our lowly position and our helplessness. That is why Allah says:

"Call unto Me, I will answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell." (40:60)

Those who do not ask from Allah are described as the proud ones. Believers are encouraged to pray all the time, and for all things – even those which seem minor. Allah once told Nabi Musa (a), O Musa! Ask Me for everything, even the mending of your shoelace. When a human being realizes that he is in constant need of the favors of Allah, this will prevent him from becoming proud and arrogant. It reminds him of his own neediness and poverty.

Changes what is destined

Du`a reverts what has been destined. Although Allah decrees all things, He has given us the ability to make changes through Dua. The Holy Prophet (S) has said: What is destined cannot be averted except

through Dua. Another Hadith says: Indeed caution cannot save you from what is destined, but what can save you from it is Dua. Imam `Ali(a)

Averts Difficulties

“Many problems and difficulties in life can be avoided by praying to Allah. He is in complete control, and can keep away all afflictions from those who ask Him for that. The following Ahadith explain the importance of Dua for avoiding difficulties: Whoever fears difficulties should supplicate, Allah will never let the difficulties come to him. Imam as-Sadiq (a) Surely Dua meets the difficulties, and the two join together until the Day of Judgement.”

Imam al-Kadhim (a)

Etiquette of Du`a

As we spend more and more time reciting Duas during the holy months of Rajab, Sha`baan, and Ramadhan, it is necessary to know the correct etiquette of Dua. Supplicating to the Almighty should be done in the appropriate manner – in the manner that Allah loves – in order to benefit fully from it. The following are some of the Etiquette of Dua according to Hadith.

Begin with Bismillah: A Hadith of the Holy Prophet (S) says: No dua which has Basmalah (saying of Bismillahir Rahmaneer Raheem) at the beginning of it is rejected. A dua should begin in the name of Allah, putting all trust and hope in Him alone. Describing Him as Kind and Merciful creates confidence that the dua will not be rejected.

Send Blessings on Muhammad and his family: A Hadith of the 6th Imam (a) says: Whoever has a wish he wants Allah to fulfill, let him begin with blessings on Muhammad and his family, then let him ask his wish, and end by sending blessings on Muhammad and his family. Allah is nobler than to accept the first and the last (the blessings) and reject the middle. Salawat is a dua for the Holy Prophet (S) and his family. Whoever includes that dua is assured of the acceptance of his dua for himself.

Praise and Glorify Allah: Every Dua should begin with the praise of Allah, the recognition that He alone has the Power and Might over everything. A supplicant increases in his humility as he acknowledges the greatness of the Almighty. He realizes that everything is in the control of God, and if He wishes, the dua can be accepted and answered immediately.

Acknowledgement of Sins: When supplicating to Allah, one should be aware of and confess that one is a sinner, undeserving of the favor of Allah. Humility and apprehensiveness are commendable qualities in the one who supplicates.

Pray emotionally: Allah says in Hadithe Qudsi to Nabi Isa (a): O Isa! When you ask from me, supplicate to me the supplication of the grief stricken, the overwhelmed, the one who has no helper . . . and do not supplicate to Me except in an emotional state. Your grief should be only one. Whenever you pray to Me

in such a way, I shall answer you. A soft heart and tears are the best weapons of a human being in his quest to achieve nearness to Allah. When one prays emotionally, the Dua is very sincere and acceptance is assured.

Pray for others: Whoever prays for others pleases the Almighty greatly. A Hadith of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a) says: Nothing is more swiftly answered than a Dua recited for others. According to the Holy Prophet(S), the Dua of a believer for other believers is returned to him as many times as the number of believing men and women from the beginning of creation to the Day of Judgement.

Have confidence that Allah will answer your prayers : When praying, the supplicant must have trust that Allah will answer his prayers. A Hadith says, Whenever you recite Dua, assume that what you need is at the door.

Du`a is always answered

Whoever asks something from Allah, his du`a is always heard and answered. Sometimes it is not answered in the way the supplicant expects. No du`a is rejected. Allah is more noble than to tell His servants to ask from Him, and then reject their du`a. Many Ahadith tell us of how Allah always answers the supplicant, and is pleased with Him. A believer who prays and asks from Allah, is guaranteed one of three things:

- Either his du`a is answered immediately
- Or he is given a reward for it for the Hereafter
- Or a difficulty is averted from him

During the month of Ramadhan, believers try and spend as much time in du`a as possible. This is the month in which du`a carries even greater reward than usual, a month in which the mercy of Allah guarantees immediate acceptance of du`a.

Exercises

The following are some examples of what children could do as they study the importance of dua. Teachers can choose to study a specific dua, encourage students to compose poems, write essays, or even write a play on the effectiveness of dua on daily life.

1. Write a story of someone who was in a great difficulty. Show how faith in Allah and dua helped the person. Explain the change in emotional and mental state after supplicating to Allah, and entrusting Him with the problem.
2. List ten things you usually do each day for which you could ask help from Allah. Remember that dua

is not only for major problems. Even simple everyday tasks could be improved greatly with the help and support of the almighty.

3. Read the section from Nahjul Balagha where Imam Ali (a) advises his son about Du`a in Letter 31.

Write in your own words how you would use that section of the letter to advise one of your friends.

4. Choose one of the whispered duas (Munajaat) from Saheefa as-Sajjadiyyah to read and ponder over.

What does Imam say which makes his duas very effective? What do you understand about the relationship Imam has with Allah.?

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