Seeking The Absolute

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Article

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Seeking the absolute: A summarized commentary of a daily supplication of the holy month of Rajab al-Murajjab taught by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a)

By Muhammad Khalfan

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

اللهم صلي على محمد وأل محمد

يا من أرجوه لكل خير وأمن سخطه عند كل شر يا من يُعطي الكثير بالقليل يا من يُعطي من سأله يا من يُعطي من لم يسأله ومن لم يعرفه تحنُناً منه ورحمة أعطني بمسألتي إياك جميع خير الدنيا وجميع خير الأخرة واصرف عني بمسألتي إياك جميع شر الدنيا والأخرة فإنه غير منقوص ما أعطيت وزدني من فضلك يا كريم يا ذا الجلال والإكرام يا ذا النعماء والجود يا ذا المنّ والطّول حرّم شيبتي على النار.

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The Source of the Du'a'

Abu al-Hasan' Ali bin Muhammad al-Bursi said: al-Husayn bin Muhammad bin Shayban narrated to us, who narrated from Hamza bin al-Qasim al-'Alawi al-'Abbasi, who narrated from Muhammad bin 'Abdullah bin 'Imran al-Barqi, who narrated from Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Hamadani, who narrated from Muhammad bin Sinan who narrated a lengthy tradition from Muhammad al-Sajjad in which he said:

I said to Abu 'Abdillah ('a): May I be made your ransom. This is the month of Rajab. Teach me a supplication by which Allah would benefit me.

He said: So Imam al-Sadiq ('a)1 said to me: Write down: Bismillahi al- Rahman al-Rahim...and recite every day in Rajab in the mornings and evenings and after the daily prayers during the day and night:

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كريم.

He says: Then the Imam (‘a) raised his left hand and held his beard, and moved the index finger of his right hand, and said:

يا ذا الجلال والإكرام يا ذا النعماء والجود يا ذا المنّ والطّول حرّم شيبتي على النار.

Commentary Verse by Verse

يا من أرجوه لكل خير

Ya man arju-hu li-kulli khayr

O one on whom I am always hopeful for every good Yaa man arju-hu....I call him and say:

“O One on whom…” because although He is near to me than my jugular vein (***Holy Qur'an, 50:16***)**,** I am extremely remote from His Absolute Perfection. Hence I call Him. In the supplication of Jawshan al-Kabir we address Allah as: “O most distant of all the distant ones, O nearest of all near ones” (Ref: Mafatih al-Jinan of Sh. Abbas Qummi)

Yaa man arju-hu...Only “on Him” do I pin my hopes, because He is the primary cause of everything. Only He is the Independent giver and owner of every creation moment by moment. This is established by the Qur’an, Holy traditions, Spiritual Unveiling, and intellectual cognition. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) in his supplication of the Hopeful Ones (Munajat al-Raajin) says: “How can I have hope on other than You, whilst all good is in Your Hand?” (Ref: Mafatih al-Jinan of Sh Abbas Qummi)
Yaa man arju-hu ...I am “hopeful”, because He Himself has said:

La taqnatu min Rahmati Allah (***Do not despair in Allah's Mercy*** (***Holy Qur’an, 39:53***)).

I am hopeful because “to Him alone belong all the treasures” (Holy Qur’an, 63:7). I am hopeful because according to a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (a), a believer is not a believer if the light of hope does not exist in his heart. (Ref: Al-Kafi of Shaykh Kulayni, v.2, p. 67). In fact as Amir al-mu'minin ('a) has taught us in the supplication of Kumayl “hope” is my capital asset. “Irham man ra’su maalihi al-rajaa” (Have mercy on one whose capital asset is hope). (Ref: Mafatih al-Jinan of Shaykh „Abbas Qummi)

Yaa man arju-hu li-kulli khayr...I always hope, because despair is a great sin. [the aorist verb (al-fi’l al-mudhaari’) arju here signifies an ongoing event.)

Yaa man arju-hu li-kulli khayr...I am hopeful, for “every” good because my aspirations are exalted. I do not merely aspire for an inanimate, vegetable or animal life. I am a human being who by nature

always opts for the best and every good. Hence I do not want to leave aside any kind of good whatsoever.

Yaa man arju-hu li-kulli khayr …I hope what Allah has made naturally attractive to my innate disposition. The meaning of khayr is "something that one is naturally inclined to".

وأمن سخطه عند كل شر

Wa amanu sakhata-hu 'inda kulli sharr

And I am safe from His displeasure at every instance of evil

Wa aamanu sakhata-hu „inda kulli sharr…Whenever I sin I am not immediately punished. Sharr in Qur'an is employed to denote sin. Consider the verse:

[***…wa man ya'mal mithqaal dharratin sharran yarahu*** (***and whosoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it***)] (Holy Qur'an,99:8)

Wa aamanu sakhata-hu „inda kulli sharr …Whenever I sin (sharr), although its effect or rather its reality is reflected in the realms of barzakh and qiyama, which are the higher levels of created existence, the material cover of the body always protects me (aamanu). I cannot behold the snakes, the scorpions and the fire that I have lit for myself. The material body serves as a shield.

Wa aamanu sakhata-hu…Whenever I sin I am protected from His punishment (sakhata-hu). The word sakhat which means displeasure cannot be conceived to be like human displeasure, which is a kind of change of state. According to a tradition, His displeasure is His very punishment.2

Wa aamanu sakhata-hu inda kulli sharr…Sometimes sharr is also employed to denote a calamity, and sakhat (Divine displeasure) refers to the ultimate state of wretchedness. Hence, in case of every calamity that befalls me, I am always safe from His displeasure. Hence, circumstances of evil (sharr) instead of being signs for wretchedness for me, are signs for self-development and freedom from sin and Hell-Fire. In a beautiful tradition narrated by al-Ahwazi in his Kitab al-Mu'min, Imam al-Sadiq („a) is reported to have said: "Surely Allah does not destine anything for a Muslim save that it is good (khayr) for him."

يا من يُعطي الكثير بالقليل

Ya man yu'ti al-kathira bi'l qalil

O one who gives abundance in return to very little

Yaa man yu'ti al-katheera…He always gives us abundance in return for very little.

Yaa man yu'ti al-katheera bi al-Qaleeli…Every good that we do Allah gives us tenfold or even more. In fact in some verses no measure has been determined for it.

See: [***Man ja'a bi al-hasanati falahu'ashru amthaaliha- Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it***] (Holy Qur'an, 6:160)

Yaa man yu'ti al-katheera bi al-Qaleeli …Whatever is abundant for us is very little for Him. Hence His qaleel is our katheer. Perhaps this verse is trying to say that "O One who always gives abundance through what is very little for Him.

يا من يُعطي من سأله

Ya man yu'ti man sa'ala-hu

O one who always bestows on whosoever asks Him

Yaa man yu'ti man sa'ala-hu…We should really ask Him. When he witnesses real need in us for whatever we ask, He would not stop giving. In another beautiful supplication of the holy month of Rajab we say: "Your habit is to do good to the wrong doers"[3]. If that is the case, what about those who sincerely supplicate for being availed with goodness?

Yaa man yu'ti man sa'ala-hu …Therefore we should anticipate everything from Him alone. No other means can be taken to have any effect save through His grace and permission.

Yaa man yu'ti man sa'ala-hu …(O One who gives to whosoever asks for Him). This is when we consider the third person pronoun "hu" affixed to sa'ala-hu to refer to Allah, and our prayer is to seek Him and His proximity alone.

يا من يُعطي من سأله يا من يُعطي من لم يسأله

Ya man yu'ti man lam yas'al-hu wa man lam ya'rif-hu tahannunan minhu wa Rahmatan

O one who bestows on one who does not ask Him, nor does he know Him, out of kindness and mercy

Ya man yu'ti man lam yas'al-hu …Many of us vocalize our apparent desires, which in reality are not our needs and wants. Nevertheless, Almighty Allah provides us with what we ask Him, and enables us to employ that in His way.

Ya man yu'ti man lam yas'al-hu …Many of the people despite not asking Him, nor knowing Him are graced by Him through His kindness in mercy. This is because His mercy is all-embracing. He is al-Rahman, and hence he gives existence to all and also bestows them with the provisions essential to wake up and realize the truth. He knows when and how a dead heart can get to life, while we are oblivious about that.

أعطني بمسألتي إياك جميع خير الدنيا وجميع خير الأخرة

A'tini bimas'alati iyyaka jami'a khayr al-dunya wa jami'a khayr al-akhirah

Avail me by my asking you all the good of this world and all the good of the Hereafter

Bimas'alati iyyaka jami'a khayr al-dunya wa jami'a khayr al-akhirah …

Since the dunya is a lower manifestation of aakhira, if we seek all the good of this world, we have also sought all the good of the hereafter. The criteria of something good therefore are when it is good in both the realms of existence. We should therefore not be deceived to conjecture that heavily engaging ourselves with the pleasures of the world is what "khayr al-dunya" is all about.

Bimas'alati iyyaka jami'a khayr al-dunya wa jami'a khayr al-akhirah …This verse reveals an elevated spirit who in reality seeks the Absolute. We said earlier that the root meaning of khayr is "inclination". Hence because the human being is innately inclined to all the perfect attributes of Allah and does not yearn for them in a limited form, He seeks the absolute. He yearns for all power, all-knowledge, all-beauty. In short he aspires for jami'a khayr al-dunya wa jami'a khayr al-aakhira.

واصرف عني بمسألتي إياك جميع شر الدنيا والأخرة

Wasrif 'anni bimas'alati iyyaka jami'a shar al-dunya wa sharr al-akhirah

And avert from me by my asking You, all the evil of the world and the evil of the Hereafter.

Wasrif 'anni …The human being has been innately fashioned to seek advantage (jalb al-manfa„a) and dispel harm (daf„ al-dharar). Every evil is harmful to the human being. And hence to ask Allah to dispel every evil is to respond to the innate call of the heart…sharr al-dunya wa al-aakhira…Sharr in reality is the absence of good. It is not an existential reality (amr wujudi). Hence we are in reality asking Allah to protect us from imperfection. And since the world is a manifestation of the Hereafter, we are seeking for the prevention of such imperfections that pertain to this world as well as the Hereafter.

فإنه غير منقوص ما أعطيت

Fa innahu ghayru manqusin ma a'tayta

For surely whatever You give is not decreased [***from your treasure***]

Fa innahu ghayru manqusin ma a'tayta …Because whatever He provides does not separate from Him (lam yalid), but rather is his action, nothing decreases from His kingdom (ghayru manqus). Rather, because when He provides to a receptacle which contain great knowledge, it widens, He provides more, and this process always continues. Hence the provisions of His treasures instead of decreasing always increase. In Du'a al-Iftitah we recite "…wa la taziduhu kathrat al-ataa illa judan wa karaman" (And the abundance of His bestowals does not increase save His open handedness and generosity.)

Fa innahu ghayru manqusin ma a'tayta …Another meaning of ghayru manqus is "not deficient". Since there is no kind of stinginess on the part of Allah, whatever He provides is perfect. The cause(s) of imperfection is from our side. The rain is provided pure and limpid, but our containers and receptacles have been contaminated. So if we receive contaminated water, it is our own fault and not his. If we come with a broken container, the loss of water is due to the receptacle and not the giver of water. We should seek for a spacious heart (al-qalb al-mashruh) in order to be able to enjoy great quantities of spiritual waters.

Fa innahu ghayru manqusin ma a'tayta …The descent of existence from the absolute perfection brings about deficiency. Hence deficiency is not provided.

وزدني من فضلك يا كريم

Wa zidni min fadhlika Ya Karimu

And increase in me from your favors O Honorable One.

Wa zidni min fadhlika Ya Karimu …Invoking the name Ya Kareemu reveals that we are asking for karaama (greatness). And the most kareem according to Allah is the most God-wary and pious.

Inna akramakum 'inda Allahi atqaakum

(***Indeed the most honorable and great near Allah is one who is most God-wary of you*** (holy Quran, 49:13)).

Hence we are asking increase in being God-wary. And since the Holy Qur'an teaches us:

"If you are thankful, I shall increase you" (Holy Qur'an, 14:7)

We must struggle to be God-wary in order to get a higher level of taqwa.

Wa zidni min fadhlika … We employed the words fadhlika (Your favor) because in actuality whatever

Allah gives us, whether the succor of obeying him, understanding the depths of His religion, performing good deeds, or receiving material and spiritual provisions, is only a favor. We have nothing of our own so that we can anticipate something in return. Everything is from Him and His, and will always remain so. This is a Quranic and intellectual reality.

يا ذا الجلال والإكرام

Ya dha al-Jalali wa al-Ikram

O the Possessor of Majesty and Greatness

Ya dha al-Jalali wa al-Ikram …According to the tradition that reports this supplication, Imam al- Sadiq („A) raised his left hand, held his beard and moving the index finger of his right hand recited these concluding verses that reveal the beautiful names of Allah: "Ya Dhal Jalali wal Ikraam, Ya Dha al-Na'maa'I wal Jud…."

Ya dha al-Jalali wa al-Ikram …In a tradition, Abu Basir asks Imam al-Sadiq (a) about the meaning of raising one's hands during supplication, and the Imam (a) speaks of five ways

(1) As for al-ta'awwudh (seeking refuge in Allah from Satan), it is when your palms should face qibla.

(2) As for dua (calling Allah) for His provision (rizq), it is when you should spread out your palms and make them face the sky,

(3) As for al-tabattul (complete connection to Allah and detachment from other than Him), it is when you point with your index finger.

(4) As for al-ibtihaal (extreme supplication), it is when you should raise both your hands until they align with your head,

(5) As for al-tadharru' (expressing humility near Allah), it is when you move your index finger near your face, and that is secret supplication[4].

Ya dha al-Jalali wa al-Ikram …Hence moving our index figures signifies humility on our part. Therefore we should struggle to ensure that our heart reflects what our speech expresses.

Ya dha al-Jalali wa al-Ikram …According to exegetes the Name Dhu al-Jalaali wal Ikraam encapsulates the Divine Attributes of Beauty and Majesty. Invoking such a name, perhaps informs us that all what we sought previously in summarized in this name. If one becomes the manifestation of this name, he has attained his goal in life. He has become the manifestation of the name Allah, which exemplifies all the attributes of Divine Beauty and Majesty.

يا ذا النعماء والجود

Ya Dha al-na'ma'i wa al-jud

O Possessor of Extended Blessings and Generosity

Ya Dha al-na'ma'i wa al-jud ...Some opine that al- Namaa signifies "al-ni'ma al-mumtadda" (extended blessing). Some say that it refers to hidden blessings. Others believe that it refers to diversity of blessings. Hence He is the possessor and owner of diverse blessings.

Ya Dha al-na'ma'i wa al-jud ...Invoking these beautiful names, we say to Allah, that it is You who gives every kind of blessing. Hence bless us with what we have asked you for. Likewise you are the Absolute Generous (al-jawad al-mutlaq) in reality. Any generosity manifested in anyone is in reality Your property. Hence You alone can bestow us what we have asked You for.

يا ذا المنّ والطّول

Ya dha al-manni waal-tawl

O Possessor of Weighty & Enduring Blessings

The noun mann means "a great favor". And when the article al is prefixed to it, it can signify a specific great favor. Perhaps it refers to the specific great blessing of sending the Holy Prophet (S) as the Messenger of Allah on the 27th of Rajab. The Holy Qur'an when referring to this has employed the verb:

"manna Allaha..." (***Allah bestowed great favor...***) (Holy Qur'an, 3:164).

The word mann is also employed for the blessing of guidance. (Holy Qur'an, 49:17).

In short, He alone is the owner of every great favor.

Tawl denotes "an enduring blessing". Hence He is the giver and thus owner of enduring blessings.

And the spirit of guidance is crystallized in a person when he exemplifies the attributes of Allah. Hence because only He is the owner of the great blessing of hidaya (guidance), it is correct to invoke Him with this name.

And only He has the power to guide independently.

Whosoever would like to guide anyone can never do so independently. Without His permission no kind of change can transpire whatsoever.

حرّم شيبتي على النار

Harrim shaybati 'la al-Naar

Prohibit my grey hair to burn in the Fire

Harrim shaybati ala al-Naar...Perhaps this expression taught by Imam al-Sadiq (a) is one of the praiseworthy ways of seeking freedom from Hell Fire.

Harrim shaybati ala al-Naar ...Perhaps grey hair (shayba) refers to one's transformed state of fear on the Judgment Day. Imam Ali (a) is reported to have said: "O servants of Allah, indeed after the resurrection is that which is more severe than the grave, the day when a small child's hair would turn grey (yawma yashibu fihi al-sagheer)..."5

Harrim shaybati ala al-Naar ...Some scholars like the late Shaykh al-Mishkini in his prayer manual al-Misbah al-Munir, after having mentioned this supplication, suggest that those who do not have grey hair, instead of saying "...harrim shaybati ala al-naar" (...prohibit my grey hair on the Hell Fire) may say "...***harrim sha'ri ala al-Naar"*** (...prohibit my hair on the Hell Fire)6 He has not substantiated this with any particular hadith. It is only a suggestion on his part.

In a beautiful tradition from Imam Ali (a) we are told: "Laa tantifu al-shayb fa innahu noorul Muslim" (do not uproot grey hair for surely it is the light of a Muslim)7

Harrim shaybati ala al-Naar ...In a very beautiful whispering supplication (Munajat), Imam Zayn al-„Abidin (a) says: "Ilahi al-shayba noorun min anwaarik fa muhaalun an tuhriqa nooruka bi naarika" (O God, grey hair is a light from Your lights. Therefore it is impossible that You burn Your light with Your fire.")8

Perhaps Imam al-Sadiq (a) would like to allude to this very point. In saying,"...harrim shaybati ala al-Naar", he in reality would like to say the following: "Because my hair are grey, and thus they exemplify a light from Your lights, and because You cannot burn Your light with Your fire, then forbid my grey hair on Hell Fire."

May the Almighty enable us understand the depths of this beautiful supplication as we continue our journey to His proximity Wa al-hamdu li Allahi Rabbi al-Aalamin

Rajab al-Murajjab 1430
Proximity of Hadhrat Ma'suma (a)
Holy City of Qum

1. He was well-known as Al-Sajjad. It is said: that prostrated and wept until he lost his eyesight.
2. Al-Tawhid of Shaykh al-Saduq, p. 169
3. Mafatih al-Jinan of Shaykh Abbas Qummi

4. Uddat al-Daa'i of Ibn Fahd al-Hilli, p. 183
5. Al-Amaali of Shaykh Mufid, p. 265
6. Al- Misbah al-Munir of Mirza „Ali Mishkini, p. 252
7. Bihar al-Anwaar of Allama al-Majlisi, v.10, p.91
8. Bihar al- Anwaar of Allama al-Majlisi, v.91, p.139

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