

A NEW DAY DAWNS

A Commentary on
Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ

دعاء الصباح
لامير المؤمنين
عليه السلام

Tahir Ridha Jaffer

A New Day Dawns

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By: Tahir Ridha Jaffer

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Author: Tahir Ridha Jaffer

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dedication

We dedicate this work to those who encouraged us to learn and recite supplications in the masjid when we were young, and in so doing they increased our love for the beautiful *du'ās* that have reached us from the Ahl al-Bayt (a). May Allah elevate their status in the Hereafter – Āmīn.

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Transliteration Table

Arabic words have been transliterated according to the following standard transliteration table:

ء	ﺀ	ط	ṭ
ا	a	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	و	w
ز	z	ي	y
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	ة	h (or not transliterated)
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		

Long Vowels

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short Vowels

—َ	a
—ُ	u
—ِ	i

(s) : ﷺ - Peace and blessings be upon him and his family

(a) : ﷺ - Peace be upon him

(atf) : ﷺ May Allah hasten his reappearance

Introduction

Du‘ā’ al-Ṣabāḥ is one of the beautiful supplications that have reached us from the nascent period of Islam. It is a *du‘ā’* that is attributed to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a), which is said to have been regularly recited by him after the dawn prayers. The eloquence of this supplication is such that scholars have stated the lofty statements employed therein may be considered evidence that the supplication must be from an Infallible.

‘Allāmah Majlisī has cited this supplication in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, both in his chapter on supplications (*Kitāb al-Du‘ā’*) and his chapter on prayer (*Kitāb al-Ṣalāt*), along with an exposition. He says, “This is one of the well-known supplications, though I did not find it in any reliable compilation other than the *Miṣbāḥ* of Sayyid Ibn al-Bāqī, may Allah be pleased with him.”¹ He adds that the popular practice is to recite it after the obligatory Fajr prayer, though according to the narration of Sayyid Ibn al-Bāqī, it is to be recited after the morning *nāfilah* prayer, yet whichever time it is

¹ This is Sayyid ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥassān ibn al-Bāqī al-Qurashī, a seventh century scholar and a contemporary of Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī and Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs. His work that al-Majlisī refers to is known as *Ikhtiyār al-Miṣbāḥ* and it is not extant today. Nevertheless, many later scholars had access to it and have reported this supplication therefrom. Al-Majlisī has also mentioned a different chain for the supplication which goes back to Sharīf Yaḥyā ibn Qāsim al-‘Alawī al-‘Abbāsī al-Yamānī (d. c. 753 AH). Interestingly, al-Majlisī states that Imam ‘Alī wrote down this supplication in his own hand in the month on Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 25 AH.

recited is good and well.²

Since there is no complete chain of transmission linking this supplication to Amīr al-Muʾminīn (a), due to the fact that all the available chains go back only to the seventh century AH, this duʿāʾ is deemed to have a weak *sanad*, and can thus not be attributed to the Imam with complete certainty. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the lofty statements contained therein are such that one may attain a kind of assurance or peace of mind that it was most likely from the Imam (a) – and Allah knows best.

A number of texts were consulted during the process of writing this commentary. Four commentaries of the supplication were mainly referred to (details of which may be found in the bibliography), and two translations were studied: the translations done by Qarai and by Chittick, but after examining both, it was felt that each is lacking in some respects, so an original translation has been offered for some parts of the supplication. In the end, any fault or mistake is entirely my own, and I pray to Allah to accept this humble contribution, flaws and all.

The Importance of Duʿāʾ

In order to understand how important supplication is, let us look at what we have been told regarding *duʿāʾ* by the infallible Imams

² Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 84, p. 342, and vol. 91, pp. 246-7.

of the Ahl al-Bayt (a). Here are some of traditions that underscore the importance and significance of supplication:

1) Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a) was once asked, “Which is the best form of worship?” He replied, “There is nothing better in the sight of Allah, to Whom belong might and majesty, than being begged and implored for that which is with Him. And none is more hated in the sight of Allah, to Whom belong might and majesty, than the one who is too proud to worship Him and does not beg from Him.”³

2) Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (a) is reported to have said, “Supplicate [to Allah], for indeed nothing can bring you closer [to Him] than supplication. Do not abandon supplicating for anything small because of its triviality, for indeed He who grants great things is also the One who grants small things.”⁴

3) Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) reported that his great grandfather Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (a) said, “The most beloved of deeds on earth in the sight of Allah, to Whom belong might and majesty, is supplication, and the best worship is virtuous modesty.” Then he added, “And Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (a) was a person who would supplicate often.”⁵

4) The Noble Messenger (ṣ) is reported to have said, “Should I not show you a weapon that can save you from your enemies and

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 466, ḥ. 2.

⁴ Ibid, p. 467, ḥ. 6.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 467-468, ḥ. 8

increase your sustenance?” They said, “Yes!” He said, “Supplicate to your Lord by night and day, for indeed supplication is the weapon of a believer.”⁶

5) Imam Ja‘far al-Şādiq (a) is reported to have said, “Verily Allah, to Whom belong might and majesty, averts the matter that He knows one will supplicate for by answering the supplication. And if it were not for the supplication of the servant, he would have been afflicted by it to the extent of being uprooted from the face of the earth.”⁷

From these traditions (and there are many more), it is evident that *du‘ā* is one of the best acts of worship that a believer can undertake. Hence, we should always make time to supplicate to Allah every day. And we should also take benefit from the numerous supplications that have been taught to us by the Noble Prophet (ş) and his pure progeny.

⁶ Ibid, p. 468, h. 3

⁷ Ibid, p. 470, h. 9.

Du‘ā’ al-Ṣabāḥ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

اللَّهُمَّ يَا مَنْ دَلَعَ لِسَانَ الصَّبَاحِ بِنُطْقِ تَبْلُجِهِ،

O Allah, O He Who brought out the dawn’s tongue with the
expression of its brightness,

وَسَرَّحَ قِطْعَ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ بَعْيَاهِبِ تَلْجُجِهِ،

and dismissed the fragments of the dark night with its dismal
incoherence,

وَأَتَقَنَ صُنْعَ الْفَلَكَ الدَّوَارِ فِي مَقَادِيرِ تَبَرُّجِهِ،

and [Who] perfected the design of the revolving firmament with
its display of beautiful configurations,

وَشَعَشَعَ ضِيَاءَ الشَّمْسِ بِنُورِ تَأْجُجِهِ!

and extended the sun’s beaming light with the resplendence of
its radiance!

يَا مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى ذَاتِهِ بِذَاتِهِ،

O He Who guides to His Being through His Being,

وَتَنَزَّهَ عَنْ مُجَانَسَةِ مَخْلُوقَاتِهِ،

and is above any similarity to His creatures,

وَجَلَّ عَنْ مِثَالِ مَلَأَمَةٍ كَيْفِيَّاتِهِ!

and is exalted beyond conformity with His qualities!

يَا مَنْ قَرُبَ مِنْ خَطَرَاتِ الظُّنُونِ،

O He Who is close to the inner musings of the minds,

وَبُعَدَ عَنْ لِحَظَاتِ العُيُونِ،

and far from the glances of the eyes,

وَعَلِمَ بِمَا كَانَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ!

and knows what will be before it comes into existence!

يَا مَنْ أَرْقَدَنِي فِي مَهَادِ أَمْنِهِ وَأَمَانِهِ،

O He Who put me to sleep in the cradle of His peace and safety,

وَأَيْقَظَنِي إِلَى مَا مَنَحَنِي بِهِ مِنْ مَنَنِه وَإِحْسَانِهِ،

and awakened me to the favours and kindness He bestowed upon
me,

وَكَفَّ أَكُفَّ السُّوءِ عَنِّي بِيَدِهِ وَسُلْطَانِهِ!

and held back from me the claws of evil with His hand and
authority!

صَلِّ اللَّهُمَّ عَلَى الدَّلِيلِ إِلَيْكَ فِي اللَّيْلِ الأَثْوَلِ،

O Allah, bless the guide [who guided mankind] to You in the
darkest of nights,

وَالْمَاسِكِ مِنْ أَسْبَابِكَ بِحَبْلِ الشَّرَفِ الأَطْوَلِ،

who held fast to the lengthiest cord of nobility from [all] Your
means,

وَالنَّاصِعِ الحَسَبِ فِي ذِرْوَةِ الكَاهِلِ الأَعْبَلِ،

whose pure lineage is the peak of the loftiest ancestry,

وَالثَّابِتِ القَدَمِ عَلَى زَحَالِفِهَا فِي الزَّمَنِ الأَوَّلِ،

and whose feet remained steady in the slippery stretches of the
former times,

وَعَلَى آلِهِ الأَخْيَارِ المُصْطَفَيْنِ الأَبْرَارِ.

and [bless] his family, the virtuous, the chosen, the pious.

وَأَفْتَحِ اللَّهُمَّ لَنَا مَصَارِيحَ الصَّبَاحِ بِمَفَاتِيحِ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالْفَلَاحِ،

And open for us, O Allah, morning's folding door with the keys of mercy and felicity.

وَأَلْبِسْنِي اللَّهُمَّ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ خَلْعِ الْهِدَايَةِ وَالصَّلَاحِ،

Clothe me, O Allah, with the best garments of guidance and righteousness.

وَاعْرِسِ اللَّهُمَّ بِعَظَمَتِكَ فِي شَرْبِ جِنَانِي يَنَابِيعَ الْحُشُوعِ،

Implant, O Allah, by Your greatness, springs of humbleness in the canals of my heart.

وَأَجْرِ اللَّهُمَّ لِهَيْبَتِكَ مِنْ آمَاقِي زَفَرَاتِ الدُّمُوعِ،

Make flow, O Allah, due to [my] awe for You, tears from the corners of my eyes.

وَأَدِّبِ اللَّهُمَّ نَزَقَ الْخُرُوقِ مِنِّي بِأَزْمَةِ الْقُنُوعِ،

And discipline, O Allah, the recklessness of my folly with the reins of contentment.

إِلَهِي إِنْ لَمْ تَبْتَدِئْ بِي الرَّحْمَةُ مِنْكَ بِحُسْنِ التَّوْفِيقِ،

My Lord, if mercy from You does not initiate any fair success for me,

فَمَنْ السَّالِكُ بِي إِلَيْكَ فِي وَاضِحِ الطَّرِيقِ؟

then who can [possibly] lead me to You on the clear path?

وَإِنْ أَسْلَمْتَنِي أَنَا تُكَ لِقَائِدِ الْأَمَلِ وَالْمُنَى،

And if Your forbearance leaves me to the impulses of [my vain]
hopes and aspirations,

فَمَنْ الْمُقِيلُ عَثْرَاتِي مِنْ كَبَوَاتِ الْهَوَى؟

then who will pardon my slips from the false steps of desire?

وَإِنْ خَذَلَنِي نَصْرُكَ عِنْدَ مُحَارَبَةِ النَّفْسِ وَالشَّيْطَانِ،

If Your help should forsake me in the battle against the carnal
soul and Satan,

فَقَدْ وَكَلَنِي خِذْلَانُكَ إِلَى حَيْثُ النَّصْبِ وَالْحِزْمَانِ،

then Your abandonment will leave me to encounter hardship
and deprivation.

إِلَهِي أَتَرَانِي مَا أَتَيْتَكَ إِلَّا مِنْ حَيْثُ الْأَمَالِ،

My Lord, do You see how I have only come to You from the
direction of hopes,

أَمْ عَلَّقْتُ بِأَطْرَافِ حَبَالِكَ إِلَّا حِينَ بَاعَدْتَنِي ذُنُوبِي عَنْ دَارِ
الْوَصَالِ،

or [how I] have only clung to the ends of Your cord when my
sins have distanced me from the Abode of Proximity?

فَبِئْسَ الْمَطِيئَةُ الَّتِي امْتَطَّتْ نَفْسِي مِنْ هَوَاهَا،

What an evil mount my soul has mounted, namely its caprice!

فَوَاهَا لَهَا لِمَا سَوَّلَتْ لَهَا ظُنُونُهَا وَمَنَاهَا،

So woe to it for being lured by its own conjectures and wishes,

وَتَبَّأَ لَهَا لِحُجْرَاتِهَا عَلَى سَيِّدِهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا!

and may it perish for its audacity towards its Master and
Guardian!

إِلَهِي قَرَعْتُ بَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ بِيَدِ رَجَائِي،

My Lord, I have knocked the door of Your mercy with the hand
of my hope,

وَهَرَبْتُ إِلَيْكَ لَاجِئًا مِنْ فَرْطِ أَهْوَائِي،

and fled to You seeking refuge from my excessive caprice,

وَعَلَّقْتُ بِأَطْرَافِ حَبَالِكَ أَنَامِلَ وَلَايِي،

and clutched the ends of Your cord with the fingers of my love.

فَاضْفَحِ اللَّهُمَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُ أَجْرَمْتُهُ مِنْ زَلَلِي وَخَطَائِي،

So overlook the slips and errors I have committed, O Allah,

وَأَقْلِنِي مِنْ صَرَعَةٍ رِدَائِي،

and pardon me for the falling [and entanglement] of my robe.

فَإِنَّكَ سَيِّدِي وَمَوْلَايَ وَمُعْتَمِدِي وَرَجَائِي،

For You are my Master, my Guardian, my Support, and my Hope,

وَأَنْتَ غَايَةُ مَطْلُوبِي وَمُنَايَ فِي مُنْقَلَبِي وَمَثْوَايَ،

and You are the object of my quest and my desire, in my
transient life and [in] my ultimate abode.

إِلَهِي كَيْفَ تَطْرُدُ مِسْكِينًا التَّجَاءَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ هَارِبًا،

My Lord, how can You drive away a beggar who seeks refuge in
You as he flees from sins?

أَمْ كَيْفَ تُخَيِّبُ مُسْتَرْشِدًا قَصَدَ إِلَى جَنَابِكَ سَاعِيًا

Or how can You disappoint one who comes running to Your
threshold seeking guidance?

أَمْ كَيْفَ تَرُدُّ ظَمَانًا وَرَدَ إِلَى حِيَاضِكَ شَارِبًا؟

Or how can You turn away a thirsty person who comes to Your
pools to drink?

كَلَّا وَحِيَاضُكَ مُتْرَعَةٌ فِي ضَنْكِ الْمُحُولِ،

Never! For Your pools are full [even] in the hard times of
drought,

وَبَابُكَ مَفْتُوحٌ لِلطَّلَبِ وَالْوُغُولِ،

and Your door is open for petition and entrance,

وَأَنْتَ غَايَةُ الْمَسْئُولِ وَنَهَايَةُ الْمَأْمُولِ،

and You are the goal of petitions and the object of hopes!

إِلَهِي هَذِهِ أَرْمَةٌ نَفْسِي عَقَلْتُهَا بِعَقَالِ مَشِيَّتِكَ،

My Lord, these are the reins of my soul which I have fastened to
the ties of Your will.

وَهَذِهِ أَعْبَاءُ ذُنُوبِي دَرَأْتُهَا بِعَفْوِكَ وَرَحْمَتِكَ،

These are the burdens of my sins [that] I have averted with Your
forgiveness and mercy.

وَهَذِهِ أَهْوَائِي الْمُضِلَّةُ وَكَلَّتُهَا إِلَى جَنَابِ لُطْفِكَ وَرَأْفَتِكَ،

And these are my perverse caprices that I leave at the
threshold of Your clemency and kindness.

فَاجْعَلِ اللَّهُمَّ صَبَاحِي هَذَا نَازِلًا عَلَيَّ بِضِيَاءِ الْهُدَى،

So, O Allah, make this morning of mine enter upon me with the
illumination of guidance,

وَبِالسَّلَامَةِ فِي الدِّينِ وَالدُّنْيَا،

and with safety in religion and this world.

وَمَسَائِي جُنَّةً مِنْ كَيْدِ الْعِدَى وَوَقَايَةً مِنْ مُزْدِيَاتِ الْهَوَى،

And [make] my evening a shield against the guile of enemies,
and a protection against the fatal blows of caprice,

إِنَّكَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى مَا تَشَاءُ،

indeed You have power over whatever You will!

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ،

You give sovereignty to whomever You will, and You take away
sovereignty from whomever You will;

وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ،

You exalt whomever You will, and You abase whomever You will;

بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ،

in Your hand is all [that is] good; indeed You have power over all things.

تُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ،

You make the night pass into the day and You make the day pass into
the night.

وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ،

*You bring forth the living from the dead and You bring forth the dead
from the living,*

وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ.

and You provide for whomever You will without reckoning.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ،

*There is no god but You! Glory be to You, O Allah, and by Your
praise [do we extol You].*

مَنْ ذَا يَعْرِفُ قَدْرَكَ فَلَا يَخَافُكَ؟

Who knows Your station without fearing You?

وَمَنْ ذَا يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتَ فَلَا يَهَابُكَ؟

And who knows what You are without being in awe of You?

أَلْفَتْ بِقُدْرَتِكَ الْفِرَقَ،

With Your power, You have brought together the dispersed,

وَفَلَقْتَ بِلُطْفِكَ الْفَلَقَ،

and with Your kindness, You have cleaved open the dawn,

وَأَنْزَلْتَ بِكَرَمِكَ دِيَاجِي الْعَسَقِ،

*and with Your munificence, You have illuminated the night's
veils of darkness.*

وَأَنْهَزْتَ الْمِيَاهَ مِنَ الصُّمِّ الصَّيَاحِيدِ عَذْبًا وَأَجَاجًا،

You have made waters, sweet and briny, flow forth from hard,
solid rocks,

وَأَنْزَلْتَ مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً تَجَّاجًا،

and sent down water pouring from the rain-clouds,

وَجَعَلْتَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لِلْبَرِيَّةِ سِرَاجًا وَهَاجًا،

and have made the sun and moon a shining lamp for the
creatures,

مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ تُمَارِسَ فِيمَا ابْتَدَأْتَ بِهِ لُغُوبًا وَلَا عِلَاجًا،

without experiencing weariness or hardship in what You
originated.

فِيَا مَنْ تَوَحَّدَ بِالْعِزِّ وَالْبَقَاءِ،

So O He who is alone in [eternal] might and subsistence,

وَقَهَرَ عِبَادَهُ بِالْمَوْتِ وَالْفَنَاءِ،

and prevails over His servants with death and annihilation,

صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الْأَتْقِيَاءِ،

bless Muḥammad and his family, the Godwary.

وَاسْمَعْ نِدَائِي، وَاسْتَجِبْ دُعَائِي،

Hear my call, and answer my supplication,

وَحَقُّكَ بِفَضْلِكَ أَمَلِي وَرَجَائِي،

and let my aspiration and hope materialize through Your grace.

يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ دُعِيَ لِكَشْفِ الضَّرِّ وَالْمَأْمُولِ فِي كُلِّ عُسْرٍ وَيُسْرٍ،

O the best of those who are called to remove affliction, and the
object of hope in every hardship and ease!

بِكَ أَنْزَلْتُ حَاجَتِي فَلَا تُرَدِّدْنِي مِنْ سِنِّي مَوَاهِبِكَ حَائِبًا،

I have come to You with my need, so do not turn me away from
[receiving] Your lofty gifts, disappointed!

يَا كَرِيمُ يَا كَرِيمُ يَا كَرِيمُ،

O Munificent One! O Munificent One! O Munificent One!

بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ،

By Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful!

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى خَيْرِ خَلْقِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

And may Allah bless the best of His creatures, Muḥammad, and
his family all together.

Then go into Sajdah and recite:

إِلَهِي قَلْبِي مَحْجُوبٌ، وَنَفْسِي مَعْيُوبٌ،

My Lord, my heart is covered, my soul is deficient,

وَعَقْلِي مَغْلُوبٌ، وَهَوَائِي غَالِبٌ،

my intellect is defeated, my caprice prevails,

وَطَاعَتِي قَلِيلٌ، وَمَعْصِيَتِي كَثِيرٌ، وَلِسَانِي مُقَرَّرٌ بِالذُّنُوبِ،

my obedience is little, my disobedience is much, and my tongue
acknowledges [my] sins.

فَكَيْفَ حِيلَتِي يَا سَتَّارَ الْعُيُوبِ، وَيَا عَلَامَ الْعُيُوبِ، وَيَا كَاشِفَ
الْكُرُوبِ،

So what recourse do I have? O Concealer of faults! O Knower of
all that is Unseen! O Remover of troubles!

إِغْفِرْ ذُنُوبِي كُلَّهَا بِحُرْمَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ،

Forgive my sins, all of them, by the sanctity of Muḥammad and
the family of Muḥammad!

يَا غَفَّارُ يَا غَفَّارُ يَا غَفَّارُ، بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

O Oft-forgiver! O Oft-forgiver! O Oft-forgiver! By Your mercy, O
Most Merciful of the merciful.

Commentary

اللَّهُمَّ يَا مَنْ دَلَعَ لِسَانَ الصَّبَاحِ بِنُطْقِ تَبْلُجِهِ،

O Allah, O He Who brought out the dawn's tongue with the expression of its brightness,

Some manuscripts do not contain the word 'Allāhumma' at the start of the *du'ā'*.⁸ The verb *dala'a* means removing or bringing out something. *Taballuj* comes from *balaja* meaning brightness and clarity. Daybreak has been metaphorically described as bringing out the tongue because of how the darkness of night is cleft by the first rays of the sun.⁹ Additionally, just as the tongue is a means of exposing what lies deep within the heart as well as one's otherwise hidden thoughts and intentions, so too does the light of day dispel all the darkness that had covered and concealed things, making them manifest for all to see.¹⁰

Some commentators have posited that one of the phases of dawn that directly precedes daybreak has a pillar of light that appears somewhat like a tongue.¹¹ Others have offered more esoteric interpretations of this line of the *du'ā'*, claiming that the rise of dawn and its accompanying illumination is a reference to the coming of the Final Messenger (ﷺ) and the brightness of the

⁸ Al-Khawājū'i, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ wa Miṣbāḥ al-Najāḥ fi Sharḥ Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ*, p. 14.

⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

¹⁰ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 77.

¹¹ Khū'i, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 57.

divine teachings and *sharīḥ* he brought,¹² or it refers to the rise of the awaited Qā'im (atf) and the brightness of justice he will bring.¹³ Of course, these esoteric interpretations do not negate the apparent meaning of this line of the supplication.

Indeed, the dawn of a new day that is marked by its sunrise is considered one of the most wonderful sights to behold. Not only does it fill one with awe and wonder, it also gives one a sense of hope – hope that in the new day one will attain part of his goals and achieve some of his aspirations.¹⁴ Perhaps this is one of the reasons why rising early is highly recommended in Islam, and believers are encouraged to start their work soon after daybreak. Furthermore, there are many traditions that speak about the importance and benefits of being awake between ‘the two dawns’, meaning between true dawn and sunrise, as this is the moment when the sustenance of the creatures is allotted.¹⁵

¹² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 14.

¹³ A‘badallah, *Tarjome va Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 32.

¹⁴ This has also been attested to in some research papers and articles. See for example: Smalley & White, “Beyond Blue-sky Thinking” in *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 86, 2023.

¹⁵ See the advice of Imam al-Sajjād to Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī regarding this in: Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 343, ḥ. 9. Furthermore, it is interesting that the Night of Qadr, which is also known to be the night when sustenance (among other things) is decreed for the creatures, has been called ‘illuminating’ (*baljah* – from the same root as *taballuj* in this first line of the *du‘ā*) in some narrations.

وَسَرَّحَ قِطَعَ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ بِغَيَاهِبٍ تَلْجُجِهِ،

*and dismissed the fragments of the dark night with its dismal
incoherence,*

This line of the supplication is linked to the preceding one. The verb *sarraḥa* means to let go or send away. *Ghayāhib* is the plural of *ghayhab*, which means darkness, blackness, and gloom, while *talajluj* denotes defective, indistinct, and incoherent speech.¹⁶ It also refers to stuttering and stammering. The ‘fragments (*qiṭaʿ*) of night’ is understood to mean the last hours of the night (as mentioned in some verses like Q11:81). With the dawn of a new day, and its sunrise, the darkness of night and its accompanying obscurity is dispelled.

If the previous line is taken to refer to the rise of the Noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), this phrase of the supplication would be in reference to the darkness [and evil practices and customs] of the Age of Ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) that preceded him, and which was dismissed and relegated to history through his lofty teachings.¹⁷ Similarly, if the meaning of the awaited Qāʾim’s rise is taken for the preceding line, this phrase would connote the injustice and evil that would be prevalent all around the world before his coming.

¹⁶ There is an interesting Arabic saying (that employs both the terms used in the first lines of this *duʿāʾ*) which states: *al-ḥaqqu ablaḥ wal-bāṭilu lajlaj*, meaning: ‘the truth is clear while falsehood is incoherent.’

¹⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 16.

The diurnal cycle of day and night is a great blessing of Allah. The Glorious Qurʾān mentions it numerous times, and in two beautiful verses, a rhetorical question is asked with the aim of making people reflect:

Say, "Have you considered: if Allah were to make the night endless for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god besides Allah could bring you light? Will you not then listen?" Say, "Have you considered: if Allah were to make the day endless for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god besides Allah could bring you night in which to rest? Will you not then see?" (Q28:71-2)

The day and night are both required for the creatures to work for their sustenance and to rest. Furthermore, the way in which the day passes into the night and the night gives way to the day is a wondrous sight to behold, and is a great sign of Allah that we should all reflect upon.

The 'dismissal' of the 'fragments' of night mentioned in this line may be an allusion to the gradual passing away of the night to give way to the day, just as a shepherd guides his flock, herding them gradually from place to place. The 'incoherence' of the dark night is an allusion to the fact that just as in a dark night one is unable to make out things clearly, with incoherent speech one cannot easily understand the meaning that the speaker is trying to convey.¹⁸

¹⁸ Al-Khawājī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 27.

وَأَتَقَنَ صُنْعَ الْفَلَكَ الدَّوَارِ فِي مَقَادِيرِ تَبْرُجِهِ،

and [Who] perfected the design of the revolving firmament with its display of beautiful configurations,

This line is also joined to the previous one. The verb *atqana* means to firmly establish, entrench, or make perfect, and *ṣunʿ* means creation from nothingness.¹⁹ *Tabarruj* denotes manifesting or displaying beauty.²⁰ Indeed, Allah has adorned the heavens, as stated in the verse: *Verily We have adorned the lowest heaven with the stars as an adornment* (Q37:6). This is aside from the tremendous and awe-inspiring beauty of the celestial objects that we have only recently been able to see, through the advancement of science and technology.

The aptness of this line after the mention of day and night is evident in the allusion to the measured revolution and rotation of the celestial spheres, in various configurations, as that is what gives rise to night and day, and the varying lengths thereof during the year.²¹ The vastness, beauty, and precision of space and all the celestial objects in it makes up one of the strongest evidence for the existence of a wise, omnipotent, and omniscient Creator.

When we experience the start and end of a day and night, we should take a second to ponder the beautiful, precise, and reliable

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁰ The same term is used when the wives of the Prophet are instructed in the Qurʿān not to display their beauty to others. See: Q33:33.

²¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 81.

system which has been perfected to such a degree that we know the exact second when the sun will rise and set in any part of the world. The same is true for the position of constellations and stars, that acted as bright guides for night travellers for thousands of years. This exact and unwavering system, which has been relied upon by humankind, and indeed, all of creation, could not have come about randomly.

Thus the stunning display of the measured configurations and movement of celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars, is not for mere exhibition and only to please onlookers. Rather, the way these phenomena are systematically arranged, being unfalteringly accurate such that they can be depended upon to keep time and show direction, for example, tells us that their beauty has a deeper and more profound purpose.

The science of astronomy has existed since the beginning of human history, and the first known recordings of astronomical observations date back to 1,600 BC.²² Human beings have always marvelled at the stars in the sky and even medieval scholars knew that there was something out there that was more than what could be perceived by the eyes. Today, despite all our advances, scientists do not know how big the universe is, and can only tell us about the edge of the ‘observable’ universe.

²² See: A History of Astronomy:
<https://pages.uoregon.edu/jschombe/ast121/lectures/lec02.html>

وَشَعَّعَ ضِيَاءَ الشَّمْسِ بُنُورٍ تَأْجُجِهِ،

*and extended the sun's beaming light with the resplendence of its
radiance!*

In continuing with the same theme, this line talks about the beautiful radiance and illumination of the sun. The term *sha'sha'a* means to beam or shine brightly over an extended area. *Ta'ajjuj* literally means to be inflamed or to blaze and radiate. The sun's light is described as being such that its illumination is radiant and resplendent. As a blessing for mankind, Allah causes the sun's rays to extend and beam forth until its radiant light reaches the creatures on earth, providing them with illumination and heat, aside from other known and unknown benefits.

Traversing a distance of about 148 million kilometers in eight minutes, the sun's light extends to the earth and spreads over half the globe. Its rays play a primary role in the process of photosynthesis in plants, as well as in the production of Vitamin D in human beings. Sunlight enhances the mood and brings a sense of positivity in the life of people. A bright, sunny day is a source of joy and enjoyment while a cloudy, gloomy day brings people down. These are just some of the known benefits of the radiance of the sun, which is one of Allah's great blessings upon His creatures.

Some commentators have suggested that this line of the supplication has an esoteric meaning, saying that it refers to the

radiance of divine love that fills the hearts of the friends of Allah.²³ Alternatively, it could also be a reference to the ‘sun of prophethood’ which extended its radiance of guidance for all the people.²⁴ Some have even said that it refers to the ‘universal intellect’,²⁵ which is a concept that is usually discussed by gnostics and philosophers, and is beyond the scope of this brief commentary.

The sun and its illumination are great signs of Allah. The Qurʾān has a sūrah named after the sun which begins with an oath taken by *the sun and its brightness* (Q91:1). Indeed, science tells us that the sun makes it possible for life to exist on earth, not only through its light and heat, but also due to its gravitational force which holds the planets in orbit. Solar energy can be harnessed for many purposes, including for the generation of electricity.

These first four lines of the *duʿāʾ* all speak about some of the favours and blessings of Allah. Furthermore, they allude to the fact that nothing in creation has been made without purpose. Additionally, they implicitly point to the fact that the Creator of the universe is also its Sustainer (*Rabb*), and nothing we see around us functions independently.²⁶

²³ Khūʾī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 109.

²⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 20.

²⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 82.

يَا مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى ذَاتِهِ بِذَاتِهِ،

O He Who guides to His Being through His Being,

The term *dhāt* denotes essence, self, and being. Allah guides His servants to Himself through what He creates as signs, and reveals as guidance. For this reason, commentators say that the phrase *bi-dhātihi* in this line actually means *bi-āthāri dhātihi* (through the effects of His being).²⁷ That is because the actual essence of Allah is beyond the comprehension of any creature, and is known only to Him. Since we cannot fathom His essence, we can only be guided to Him through His signs as found in His creation, which is what is meant by ‘the effects (*āthār*) of His being’.

Another possible meaning of this line is that Allah’s proof of His Being is His Being itself. He does not need anything as proof for His Being, which is self-evident, as opposed to everything else in creation which requires something to prove their being and existence.²⁸ He is the proof of His own Being, since He is eternally manifest, as is His omnipotence and omniscience.²⁹ Nevertheless, for His creatures, who are limited by their senses of perception and intellects, and can thus not comprehend Him, He made signs that constitute incontrovertible evidence of His existence, His power, and His wisdom, so that they may recognize Him and know Him.

²⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 20.

²⁸ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 41.

²⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 144.

In his supplication on the Day of ʿArafah, Imam al-Ḥusayn (a) says, “Can anyone other than You ever be so manifest that he becomes a means of making You [known and] manifest? When have You been hidden such that You need a proof or a guide to show that You exist! When have You been so far that signs are the only means of allowing one to reach You! Blind is the eye that does not see You...”³⁰ This is a beautiful explanation of [the line]: *O He Who guides to His Being through His Being.*

Indeed, knowledge of the Almighty Creator’s existence is programmed in the intrinsic nature (*fiṭrah*) of every human being. Furthermore, everything around us proclaims its createdness by its presence, and shows us that it has to have a Creator and Sustainer. It is not surprising, then, that in the same *duʿāʾ* on the Day of ʿArafah, Imam al-Ḥusayn (a) says, “You introduced Yourself to me in every thing, so I saw You manifested in every thing...”³¹ Hence, with the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, there is no excuse left for any human being not to believe in the Creator.

It should be noted here that there are a number of traditions in which believers are instructed not to ponder over the Essence of Allah, but rather to reflect upon the greatness of His creation.³² In fact, one tradition from Imam ʿAlī (a) warns that whoever contemplates on the Essence of Allah apostatizes.³³

³⁰ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl*, vol. 1, p. 349.

³¹ Ibid, p. 350.

³² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 93.

³³ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (trans. T. R. Jaffer), ḥ. 532.

وَتَنْزَّهَ عَنْ مُجَانَسَةِ مَخْلُوقَاتِهِ،

and is above any similarity to His creatures,

The Qurʾān clearly tells us that nothing is like Allah (Q42:11) and none is comparable to Him (Q112:4). *Mujānasah* literally means being of the same type, or genus. Here, it refers to resemblance or similarity, and the sharing of any trait.³⁴ The necessarily existent Creator (*wājib al-wujūd*) can never be like the creatures that are contingently existent (*mumkin al-wujūd*). Therefore, even when it comes to the most basic concept of ‘being’, namely existence itself, there can be no comparison between Allah and His creatures.³⁵

This line of the *duʿāʾ* can be taken as a further explanation of the previous one, since Allah’s Essence cannot be known by the creatures, so whatever they imagine in their minds is always other than Him. The creatures can never comprehend His Being, and may only know Him through His qualities that He has made manifest and known in the description He gives of Himself in revelation. Therefore, any anthropomorphic concepts cannot be ascribed to Him.

Once this reality is properly grasped – and it has been discussed at length by scholars and philosophers for those who wish to glean a more profound understanding of it – then the

³⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 27.

³⁵ Khūʾī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 124.

verses of the Qurʾān that refer to the ‘hand’ of Allah, or the ‘face’ of Allah, and so on are clearly recognized as metaphorical and do not in any way imply that He has body parts like those of His creatures. Likewise, any narrations that describe something similar would also necessarily be interpreted as allegorical or figurative.

The beautiful way in which Amīr al-Muʾminīn (a) portrays this reality in the first sermon of *Nahj al-Balāghah* is worthy of note. He says, “The heights of intellectual endeavor cannot grasp Him, nor can the depths of understanding reach Him. There exists no definable limit for His description, no available epithet, no specified time, and no extended duration... Thus whoever describes Allah has paired Him, and whoever pairs Him has doubled Him, and whoever doubles Him has divided Him, and whoever divides Him has misunderstood Him, and whoever misunderstands Him points at Him, and whoever points at Him has limited Him, and whoever limits Him has counted Him.”

Even when it comes to certain Divine attributes like His knowledge, sight, etc. the attributes of Allah are not comparable to those of His creatures. His knowledge is all-encompassing and unlimited, as are His other attributes. Furthermore, He does not depend on anything for His actions. For instance, eyes are not needed by Him to see, nor ears to hear, and so on. As such, even when it comes to His attributes, they cannot be compared to those of the creatures.

وَجَلَّ عَنْ مُلَاءَمَةِ كَيْفِيَّاتِهِ،

and is exalted beyond conformity with His qualities!

Mulā'amah connotes harmony, agreement, and conformity. Allah is far above having to conform with anything, be they attributes, conventions, or anything else. 'His qualities' here has been interpreted by some to refer to the qualities He has given His creation.³⁶ Therefore it refers to the qualities that He has created, and not the Divine attributes that He has chosen for Himself.³⁷ One commentator says that perhaps this phrase refers to the fact that the qualities and attributes that are specific to Him can never conform or be akin to those of His creation.³⁸

Just as human beings are limited, so too are their qualities and attributes. There are certain restrictions and deficiencies that cannot be overcome by them due to their very nature as created beings. On the other hand, Allah has no such limitation. He is not restricted by anything and can never be deficient in any way. Hence, while people cannot have two apparently contradictory qualities at the same time, such as mercy and wrath, because with the appearance and manifestation of one of the two, the other one disappears, albeit temporarily, the same is not the case for the Almighty.³⁹

³⁶ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 28.

³⁷ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 50.

³⁸ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 127.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Perhaps it is for this reason that Divine attributes are beyond human comprehension. This reality is again beautifully expressed by Amīr al-Mu'minīn in the first sermon of *Nahj al-Balāghah* when he says, "The perfection (*kamāl*) of regarding Him immaculate is negating [external] attributes from Him, since every attribute testifies that it is different from what it describes and everything that is described testifies that it is different from the attribute [that describes it]." Therefore, human beings cannot truly grasp the reality of Divine attributes.

The question of 'what' or 'how' can never be asked about Allah, for He is far too exalted to be limited by any such thing. Since He is also not bound by place and time, there is likewise no question of 'where' or 'when' that can be posed regarding Him. In a tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) where he explains why people cannot describe Allah, he says, "He cannot be described with 'howness', 'whereness' or direction. How can I describe Him with 'howness' when He is the one who put the 'how' in 'howness' until it became its quality...? And how can I describe Him with 'whereness' when He is the one who put the 'where' in 'whereness' until it became its location...?"⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 103, h. 12.

يَا مَنْ قَرَّبَ مِنْ خَطَرَاتِ الظُّنُونِ،

O He Who is close to the inner musings of the minds,

The ‘closeness’ of Allah to His servants has been mentioned in the Qur’ān, like in the verse that states: *Know that Allah stands between a man and his heart* (Q8:24). In some versions of this supplication, the word *khawāṭir* has been used instead of *khaṭarāt*. However, both these terms refer to thoughts, ideas, and reflections in the mind and heart of an individual, be they new or of past memories.⁴¹ These thoughts can, according to some scholars, be divided into four distinct types. They can either be divinely inspired and thus considered revelation (*waḥy*), or angelic and thus considered inspiration (*ilhām*), or a personal thought or idea (*hājis*), or satanic insinuation (*waswās*).⁴²

The term *zunūn*, which is the plural of *ẓann*, refers in this instance to the hearts or minds.⁴³ The fact that Allah is ‘close’ to the inner thoughts of human beings might also be a reference to how any human being can, through the simple act of reflection, attain certitude of His existence. This is because belief in Allah is part of the *fiṭrah* (intrinsic nature) of human beings, so seeing the signs around oneself and pondering over them quickly leads one to the realization that there exists a higher power, a Creator.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 129.

⁴² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 29.

⁴³ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 52.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 53.

The phrase: *indeed Allah knows well what is [hidden] within the hearts* has been repeated more than ten times in the Glorious Qurʾān, and there are many other verses that echo the same meaning. There is no thought, idea, feeling, or intention that one conceals within himself which remains hidden from Allah. In fact, He not only knows everything that is in our minds and hearts, but also knows us better than we know ourselves. An awareness of this fact keeps believers mindful and helps them avoid any action that would displease their Creator.

As noted earlier, the concept of ‘closeness’ mentioned here is not spatial, since Allah is not in any place. Since ‘whereness’ cannot apply to Him, the closeness being referred to in this line is a metaphysical reality, not a physical one. Furthermore, from the perspective of supplication, understanding that Allah is nearby and knows what is in the heart and mind of an individual helps a person pray to Him with certitude that He hears his supplication, and is aware of His plight and situation. An inspiring and oft-quoted verse of the Qurʾān states in this regard: *When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearby. I answer the supplicant’s call when he calls Me...* (Q2:186).

وَبُعْدَ عَنِ لِحَظَاتِ الْعُيُونِ،

and far from the glances of the eyes,

This statement, which continues from the previous one, affirms that Allah cannot be perceived by eyesight. *Ba‘uda* means being far off, but just as closeness in the previous line was not spatial but metaphysical, so too is the distance mentioned here. The reason for this is the same as that which explains why He cannot be seen – because He is not limited by a body, or by space and time. *Laḥazāt* literally refers to glances from the corner of the eyes.⁴⁵ The Qur’ān clearly states: *Vision cannot perceive Him, yet He encompasses all vision...* (Q6:103).

When Imam ‘Alī (a) was once asked by Dhi‘lib al-Yamānī, “Have you seen your Lord, O Amīr al-Mu’minīn?” He replied, “Can I worship what I do not see?” Dhi‘lib enquired, “How do you see Him?” So he said, “Eyes do not perceive Him by the witnessing of sight, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of faith.”⁴⁶ Hence we note that even when there is a reference to ‘seeing Allah’ in certain supplications, traditions, or verses (like Q75:23), it does not refer to physical vision and sight. Rather, it is the witnessing and perception of the heart that is meant.

There is no contradiction between the closeness of Allah to the inner musings of the minds and His distance from the vision

⁴⁵ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 55.

⁴⁶ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 179.

of His creatures. That is because we are not referring to the physical concepts of place and location here. Furthermore, since Allah is not limited in any sense, His closeness *is* His being distant, and vice versa. This has been stated in a tradition by Amīr al-Mu'minīn wherein he said, "...He is near in His being far off, and is far off in His being near."⁴⁷ Of course, such a joining of contraries is beyond the comprehension of the limited human mind.⁴⁸

Some gnostics have referred to the fact that Prophet Mūsā (a) asked Allah to allow him to see Him, as mentioned in the verse: *When Mūsā... asked, "My Lord, show Yourself to me so that I may see You." Allah answered, "You can never see Me, but look at the mountain: if it remains standing firm, you will see Me"* (Q7:143). And then we are told that when Allah manifested His glory to the mountain, it crumbled to dust and Mūsā collapsed, unconscious. The gnostics then say that this shows that there must be some kind of vision of the Divine which is possible since it is not conceivable that Mūsā, a Prophet of Allah, would be ignorant of the impossibility of seeing Him and make such a request.⁴⁹

However, exegetes of the Qur'ān have offered other possible interpretations for this request by Prophet Mūsā (a), and those who are interested in delving deeper can refer to the available *tafāsīr*.

⁴⁷ Al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 239.

⁴⁸ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 136.

⁴⁹ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 59.

وَعَلِمَ بِمَا كَانَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ،

and knows what will be before it comes into existence!

Being All-Knowing and Omniscient, Allah's knowledge is not limited by time. As such, He knows about each and every thing even before it comes into being. It is not like the knowledge that humans possess, which only comes about after encountering something that already exists or had existed in the past. Since our conception of knowledge is limited to what already exists, we cannot understand the limitless nature of Allah's knowledge, which, traditions tell us, is no different from His Essence.⁵⁰

Furthermore, due to the all-encompassing nature of Allah's knowledge, there is never any change in it. Change can only come about in the knowledge of a contingent, created being who learns from his experience or from what he is taught by others. Human beings can know something, then later realize that what they knew was actually false, after which they can learn the real truth about that thing. They can also know something today and forget it tomorrow. Hence, there is a possibility of change in human knowledge. However, Allah's knowledge never changes since there is nothing He does not know.⁵¹

His knowledge of what will exist before it comes into existence pertains to everything, including any quality, trait, or action. This

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 60.

⁵¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 159.

fact has been beautifully described in the famous supplication, said to have been reported from the Infallibles, known as Du‘ā’ al-‘Adīlah, in which we read: *He was Powerful before the existence of power and strength. He was all-Knowing before the existence of knowledge and cause. He has always been the Sovereign, even when there was no kingdom or wealth, and has been and shall always be Immaculate under all circumstance.*⁵²

Since there is no change in the knowledge of Allah, His knowledge of things before their existence is no different from His knowledge of them after their existence. Therefore, any change that occurs within the creation, be it voluntary or involuntary, is already known to Allah.⁵³ Recognition of the unlimited and timeless knowledge of Allah gave rise to theological debates about Divine justice and how or why Allah created beings whom He knew would come to disobey Him, only to later punish them for doing so. This question, and others related to the idea of God’s knowledge, were addressed and discussed among Muslim and non-Muslim theologians throughout history, and a variety of answers were offered by them. Suffice it to say that Allah is just, and His knowledge does not influence the free will He has given His creatures, otherwise punishing them would be unjust.⁵⁴

⁵² Al-Majlisī, *Zād al-Ma‘ād - Miftāḥ al-Jinān*, p. 422.

⁵³ Khū‘ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed discussion on this question, refer to Shahid Muṭahharī’s work: *Divine Justice*.

يَا مَنْ أَرْقَدَنِي فِي مَهَادٍ أَمْنِهِ وَأَمَانِهِ،

O He Who put me to sleep in the cradle of His peace and safety,

Sleep is one of the blessings of Allah which benefits both the mind and the body. Those who suffer from insomnia know how valuable this commonly overlooked blessing is. The verb *arqada* means ‘put to sleep’ or ‘cause to sleep’. Thus, even though it may seem that people are entirely in control of their sleep, that is not the case. Not only does Allah control the causes and factors that are required for sleep, such as day and night, He is also the One who provides the peace and safety which is essential for repose, and without which a good sleep would be impossible.

The word *mihād* is the plural of *mahd*, which refers to a place that is prepared for a child to sleep in, commonly called a cradle. Just as the baby feels safe and comfortable in his cradle, the human being feels a sense of comfort and ease when he sleeps. It has been suggested that the reason why the plural form *mihād* has been used instead of the singular *mahd* is that Allah has prepared various different means of safety and comfort for human beings so that they may sleep peacefully.⁵⁵ In most cases, we remain oblivious to the way in which we are protected by Allah and kept secure from many harms that come our way.

One commentator recounts a report by the famous mystic Dhū ‘l-Nūn al-Miṣrī in which he recounts how he once saw a huge

⁵⁵ Khūṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 144.

scorpion at the bank of the Nile and followed it to see where it was heading. He saw it crossing the river on the back of a frog and then rushing towards a young man who was fast asleep under a tree. As he came closer, Dhū 'l-Nūn noticed that there was a poisonous serpent near the sleeping youth. The scorpion attacked that serpent, stinging it. The serpent also bit the scorpion, and both the creatures died there, while the young man slept safely.⁵⁶ This anecdote serves as one example of how Allah keeps His servants safe as they sleep, as a blessing from Him.

The importance of sleep for human beings has been affirmed by science. We are told that sleep is essential for every process in the body, and even impacts our ability to fight disease and develop immunity.⁵⁷ In *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (a) mentions the importance of sleep, and says, “*He created for them the night, so that they might rest in it from tiring efforts and wearisome exertions [during the day], and He made it a garment for them so that they might be clothed in its ease and its sleep, which can be a [means of] refreshment and strength, and so that they may attain through it pleasure and passion.*”⁵⁸

Islam offers instructions on the etiquette of sleeping.⁵⁹ Like any blessing, to show gratitude one must not misuse the blessing.

⁵⁶ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁷ See: <https://sph.umich.edu/pursuit/2020posts/why-sleep-is-so-important-to-your-health.html>

⁵⁸ ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, supplication no. 6.

⁵⁹ See: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Sunan al-Nabī (ṣ)*, chapter 7.

In the case of sleep, we are told that it is reprehensible to sleep too much, as that makes one lazy and lethargic. There are also certain recommended actions to be performed just before one goes to sleep, such as relieving oneself, performing ablution, and reciting certain verses and supplications.

وَأَيْقَظَنِي إِلَىٰ مَا مَنَحَنِي بِهِ مِنْ مِّنِّهِ وَإِحْسَانِهِ،

and awakened me to the favours and kindness He bestowed upon me,

Just as Allah causes sleep, He awakens those who are asleep. And just as sleep is a blessing, so too is wakefulness. When one awakes from sleep, he finds that Allah has provided him with innumerable blessings in his life, enabling him to sustain himself and progress towards his goals. The verb *manaḥa* means to grant or bestow, and *minan* is the plural of *minnah*, meaning favour or blessing, though some have said that it specifically refers to great blessings. For instance, the Qurʾān uses this verb to describe the blessing of prophethood: *Their Messengers said to them, “We are but mortals like you, but Allah favours (yamunnu) whoever He chooses of His servants...”* (Q14:11).

Some commentators have suggested that this line refers to being awoken from the slumber of neglect and heedlessness, and given the realization of the countless blessings He has bestowed.⁶⁰ Indeed, both kinds of wakefulness (one from actual slumber and the other from heedlessness) are blessings from Allah. Waking up in the middle of the night while others are asleep, and spending that quiet time worshipping Allah and pondering over His beautiful creation enhances one’s spiritual position and strengthens one’s faith. This kind of night vigil and worship is highly recommended and has also been described as one of the qualities of those who

⁶⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 33.

will be granted admission into Paradise.⁶¹

The awakening of the soul (*al-yaqzah*) is considered one of the first steps towards the path of spiritual wayfaring. That is because it is only through this spiritual awakening that one can attain the realization that the human being is a traveler, and as a traveler he needs some provisions for his journey. No preparation will be more beneficial than espousing good moral traits and merits, piety of the heart, righteous deeds, and purity of conscience. Yet one would only prepare for this journey if he is awake. So by remaining in a state of heedless spiritual slumber, there is no possibility of making preparations, much less embarking on the journey itself.

Aside from spiritual wayfaring, being truly awake to the realities of the world, its nuances, its evil forces, and its trials, is a requirement for the attainment of any level of enlightenment. Those who go about their daily lives oblivious to what is going on around them, or what lies beneath the surface of local and global events, are like zombies – the living dead. Such people will only wake up to the realities once they leave this world, but by then it will be too late for them to do anything. It is to this reality that Amīr al-Muʿminīn (a) alluded when he said, “*People are asleep; when they die, they wake up.*”⁶²

⁶¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 645, ḥ. 7.

⁶² Al-Raḍī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ Amīr al-Muʿminīn*, p. 112.

وَكَفَّ أَكُفَّ السُّوءِ عَنِّي بِيَدِهِ وَسُلْطَانِهِ،

and held back from me the claws of evil with His hand and authority!

The term *akuffa* is the plural of *kaff*, which refers to the hand, from the wrist joint to the fingers, and may also refer to the palm only. We have translated it here as ‘claws’ simply to depict the evil nature of the hands of those who would harm us. Of course, when we talk of evil hands, we are actually referring to the evil of the possessors of those hands, or claws. Hence we mean the hands of the evil people or of everything evil.⁶³ Allah holds back the hands of the evil ones from harming us with His ‘hand’, meaning His power and His authority.

The fact that the plural form has been used shows that there are many creatures that would harm us, had it not been for the protection of Allah. Aside from enemies among the human beings, Shayṭān and his minions among the jinn are always plotting against people, looking for ways to harm them and beguile them. Given the context, and the fact that this line is preceded by, and linked to, the previous lines that talk about sleep and wakefulness, one of the interpretations is that Allah protects us while we are asleep, and unable to protect ourselves in that state.⁶⁴

It bears repeating that whenever we see any physical thing attributed to the Almighty, it is only metaphorical since Allah is

⁶³ Khūṭī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 147.

⁶⁴ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 64.

not a physical being. Here, the hand of Allah refers to His power. In a tradition from Imam al-Bāqir (a), when he was asked about a verse of the Qurʾān that uses the term ‘hands’ in reference to Allah, he said that in the language of the Arabs, the word ‘hand’ refers to power or blessing, and then he proceeded to give a number of examples of the usage of this term with each of these connotations.⁶⁵

From the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth, we learn that one of the ways by which Allah protects human beings is through the use of guardian angels. *Each individual has guardian angels in front of him and behind him, protecting him by Allah’s command* (Q13:11). It has also been reported that Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) said, “There is no servant but that he has two angels watching over him [and protecting him], but when the command [of death] comes from Allah, they [depart and] leave him to the command of Allah.”⁶⁶ Therefore, just as human beings have many unseen enemies, they also have unseen guardians sent by Allah to protect them from harm.

Reflecting on this line of the *duʿāʾ* gives one the appreciation that Allah’s authority and power is the best [and indeed only] thing to rely upon for protection from harm. Depending on one’s own devices and cleverness can do little in the face of the numerous ‘claws’ that seek to harm a person, many of which are not known and cannot even be perceived. As such, the best recourse is to put one’s entire trust in Allah and seek His

⁶⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*, p. 153, ḥ. 1.

⁶⁶ Al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, vol. 2, p. 205, ḥ. 16.

protection from harm. Indeed, if one is under His protection, no harm can come to him whatsoever.

صَلِّ اللَّهُمَّ عَلَى الدَّلِيلِ إِلَيْكَ فِي اللَّيْلِ الْأَثْوَلِ،

O Allah, bless the guide [who guided mankind] to You in the darkest of nights,

This line marks the beginning of a section of the supplication wherein we send salutations and pray for Allah to send blessings upon the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and his progeny. The way in which the Prophet is described here is unique to this *du'ā'*. He is portrayed as the guide of mankind in the darkest of nights. The 'night' being referred to here is the period of ignorance and disbelief that preceded the mission of the Noble Prophet (ﷺ), and what is commonly referred to as the Age of Jāhiliyyah. The term *alyal* is an adjective that describes the intense darkness of that 'night'. In Arabic, whenever an adjective is derived from the word it describes (just as *alyal* comes from *layl*), it gives the meaning of emphasis and intensity.⁶⁷

Sending salutations upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and his family is part and parcel of the etiquette of *du'ā'*, and it is rare to find a taught (*mā'thūr*) supplication that does not contain the *ṣalawāt* within it in one form or another. Even when there is a supplication that does not have *ṣalawāt* in it, the general recommendation is to start and end every *du'ā'* with *ṣalawāt* on the Prophet and his family. Indeed, asking Allah to shower the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) with His blessings is a supplication whose fulfilment is guaranteed. Allah

⁶⁷ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 150.

and His angels also send *ṣalawāt* on the Prophet, as the Qurʾān clearly states: *Verily Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet; O you who believe, invoke blessings on him and greet him with an invocation of peace* (Q33:56).

Ṣalawāt is the plural of *ṣalāt*, which literally means supplication (*duʿāʾ*). However, some scholars have said that the term means different things depending on who is carrying it out. When Allah sends *ṣalawāt*, it means He showers His mercy; when the angels send *ṣalawāt* on the Prophet, it means that they seek forgiveness for him; and when human beings send *ṣalawāt*, it means they invoke blessings on him (ṣ).⁶⁸ It has also been posited that the reason why, in this line of the supplication, the word *ṣallī* has come before *Allāhumma* is because it intends to convey the meaning of intercession (*tawassul*).⁶⁹

The Noble Prophet (ṣ) was a light of guidance for the people – a light that shone bright and dispelled the darkness of disbelief, idolatry, and ignorance. His light was so bright that its rays covered the whole world, and that is why he is known as *a mercy to all the worlds* (Q21:107). Whenever the darkness of error and misguidance begins to spread, it is the Prophet (ṣ) who, through his lofty teachings, guides the believers through the darkness towards the light. May Allah continually shower His blessings on His beloved Messenger, Muḥammad, and the pure ones among his progeny – Āmīn.

⁶⁸ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 68.

⁶⁹ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 34.

وَالْمَاسِكِ مِنْ أَصْبَابِكَ بِحَبْلِ الشَّرَفِ الْأَطْوَلِ،

who held fast to the lengthiest cord of nobility from [all] Your means,

Here we are mentioning one of the characteristics of the Noble Messenger (ﷺ). He was the one who held fast to the cord of nobility and honour. *Māsik* means one who clutches or holds fast, and according to some commentators, the longest cord of nobility (*ḥabl al-sharaf al-aṭwal*) being referred to in this line is the Glorious Qurʾān.⁷⁰ Indeed, the Qurʾān is the final revelation, the firm rope of Allah, the ultimate means of guidance, the unaltered word of Allah, and the divinely preserved scripture which cannot be corrupted until the end of time.⁷¹

Other possible meanings have also been given for the 'lengthiest cord of nobility'. For instance, some say that it could refer to the religion of Islam, and the fact that Islam will remain the right religion for the longest time (until the Day of Judgment).⁷² It has also been suggested that the phrase refers to the rightful successor of the Prophet, Imam ʿAlī (a). Indeed, there are some narrations wherein the verse: *And hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not be divided* (Q3:103) has been interpreted as referring to Amīr

⁷⁰ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 151. This is the meaning that most commentators agree upon, and it is the one that is most likely being referred to here.

⁷¹ See the beautiful description of the Qurʾān by Amīr al-Muʾminīn in: al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon no. 175.

⁷² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 35.

al-Mu'minīn (a).⁷³ This meaning can then be extended to include all the infallible Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (ṣ). In some traditions, the Imams described themselves as the 'cord of Allah' (*ḥablullāh*).⁷⁴

Another less likely meaning of the phrase in question is the lineage of the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) which was noble,⁷⁵ and extends back to Prophet Ibrāhīm (a). In any case, this line is a continuation of the previous one and describes the Noble Prophet (ṣ). The word *sharaf* originally referred to an elevated and lofty place, and later it came to be used in reference to the noble status of an individual or thing. The fact that the cord or rope in this line is being described as the longest may also signify its strength and reliability in getting one to his desired goal.⁷⁶ Therefore, if any other means is chosen, it would not enable one to achieve the same results since it is not the 'longest rope'.

Following in the footsteps of the Noble Prophet (ṣ), we too must hold on firmly to the cord of guidance that he showed to us, and in doing so we may be able to arrive at the goal for which we were ultimately created. In the tradition of 'the two weighty things' (*al-thaqalayn*), the Messenger of Allah clarified for us what we must hold on to if we wish to remain on the right path, namely the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt (a).

⁷³ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 164-165.

⁷⁴ See for instance: al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 654.

⁷⁵ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 152-153.

⁷⁶ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 73.

وَالنَّاصِعِ الْحَسْبِ فِي ذُرْوَةِ الْكَاهِلِ الْأَعْبَلِ،

whose pure lineage is the peak of the loftiest ancestry,

The term *nāṣiʿ* refers to something that is pure and clear. *Kāhil* literally means the space on the back between the shoulders, but it is a term that is also used to describe an important and central figure in any tribe or community. The word *aʿbal* denotes something huge, strong, and great. Here, it is a metaphoric reference to the Prophet's great ancestry. Standing on the shoulders of a strong, towering figure is a way of depicting the fact that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had ancestors who were pure, noble, and great, and indeed he (ﷺ) is at the peak (*dhirwah*) of that family tree in terms of greatness.⁷⁷

Ḥasab is the esteem and honour of an individual that results from his noble lineage, but it can also come from his own positive traits such as magnanimity and benevolence. A tradition from Amīr al-Muʾminīn (a) states, "The most noble esteem (*ḥasab*) is good etiquette." And in another tradition, he (a) said, "One who is abased because of his poor etiquette will not be elevated by his noble lineage (*ḥasab*)."⁷⁸ Hence, we see that though the primary meaning of *ḥasab* relates to the respectable ancestry of an individual, it is not the only factor that raises a person's status and position.

⁷⁷ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 153.

⁷⁸ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurur al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (trans. T. R. Jaffer), ḥ. 465 & ḥ. 493.

The greatness of the Prophet of Allah was multi-dimensional. He not only had the greatest character, the most sublime morals and etiquette, the kindest heart, and the gentlest demeanor, he was also the most eloquent in speech. His words were clear and to the point. At the same time, he (ﷺ) was the bravest of all in battle. He never once retreated or fled from the battlefield, and would frequently be seen leading the charge against the enemies. He was also the most generous, and there are many examples of this narrated in the books of ḥadīth and history.⁷⁹

Some commentators have suggested that one of the possible interpretations of this line of the *du‘ā’* is that the Prophet was the one who purified and clarified religion from every flaw and polytheism during the peak of his prophethood.⁸⁰ However, this may be taken only as a secondary meaning, since its primary meaning has to do with the lineage of the Noble Messenger (ﷺ). Indeed, in one tradition, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “Allah continued to transfer me from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure women until he brought me out in this world of yours, and He did not allow me to be sullied by the filth of ignorance.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Al-Khawājī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 75.

⁸⁰ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 187.

⁸¹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 15, p. 117.

وَالثَّابِتِ الْقَدَمِ عَلَى زَحَالِفِهَا فِي الزَّمَنِ الْأَوَّلِ،

whose feet remained steady in the slippery stretches of the former times,

This line continues from the previous one and also describes the Noble Prophet (ﷺ). The word *zahālif* is the plural of *zuḥlūfah* which refers to a slippery place where the feet can slide and cause one to lose balance. The description of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as one whose feet remained firm and did not slip in the former times is a reference to how he remained steadfast during the Age of Ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) that preceded his prophetic mission. That was a time of rampant vice, and many people slipped into the darkness of evil that was pervasive in those days. The Prophet, however, remained unfalteringly upon the path of truth and virtue.⁸²

The pronoun 'hā' at the end of *zahālifihā* refers back to *al-qadam* (foot/feet),⁸³ or it refers to the elided yet implied word *al-dunyā*, since it is understood that the slippery stretches were in this world.⁸⁴ The former times (*al-zaman al-awwal*) may also be a reference to the early days of Islam, which was a period of great trial for the Muslims. The Prophet (ﷺ) remained unwavering during the multitude of trials, hardships, and even battles that had to be fought against the unbelievers. He never backed down

⁸² Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 156.

⁸³ Ibid. Of course, 'feet' here is used metaphorically.

⁸⁴ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 78.

nor did he give up on his mission; rather, he remained firm and steadfast. This was a testament to his bravery, strength, and courage.⁸⁵

Indeed, when we recount the tribulations faced by the Noble Prophet (ﷺ), and recall how he is reported to have stated in no uncertain terms, “No Prophet [of Allah] has been troubled [by the people] the way I have been troubled,”⁸⁶ we realize that it must have taken a tremendous amount of patience and fortitude to withstand all these difficulties. This line of the supplication may also be an inference to the infallibility of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and the fact that he neither errs in matters of religion, nor in worldly matters.⁸⁷

In an interesting tradition, it is reported that someone from Quraysh once asked the Prophet, “In what way do you have precedence over the [other] Prophets, while you have been sent last among them?” So he (ﷺ) replied, “I was the first to believe in my Lord, and the first to respond when my Lord took the covenant... (Q7:172), so I was the first Prophet and preceded them by acknowledging Allah before them.”⁸⁸ Indeed, the Noble Prophet was the greatest of all the Prophets of Allah, peace be upon them.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* (a), vol. 3, p. 247.

⁸⁷ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 81.

⁸⁸ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 441, ḥ. 6.

وَعَلَىٰ آلِهِ الْأَخْيَارِ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَبْرَارِ،

and [bless] his family, the virtuous, the chosen, the pious.

A man's family (*āl*) generally include his wives and children, but in the case of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), it refers specifically to his infallible progeny. Some commentators have suggested, however, that it includes all pious and pure individuals, since it is reported that the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Every pious and pure one is part of my *āl*."⁸⁹ However, the primary reference about which there is no doubt is that his (ﷺ) family are the infallible individuals among his progeny, namely al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah (a) and the twelve Imams (a), and it is they who are being referred to in this line of the *du'ā'*.

The term *akhyār* refers to those whose actions are filled with virtue (*khayr*) and righteousness, and *muṣṭafayn* is the plural of *muṣṭafā*, meaning one who is chosen. These were the individuals who were chosen by Allah and purified by Him with a thorough purification (Q33:33). *Abrār* is the plural of *barr*, or *bārr*, which refers to one who is kind and caring.⁹⁰ When it is said that these lofty personalities were chosen, it means that they have been chosen among all sentient beings, including humans, jinn, and angels.⁹¹ As such, their position is superior to all other creatures who have not been chosen by Allah as they have.

⁸⁹ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 81.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 86.

⁹¹ Khūṭī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 157.

Whenever salutations are sent upon the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), they must include mention of his progeny since that is how the Prophet (ﷺ) himself instructed believers to recite the *ṣalawāt*. It is reported that some of his companions once asked him how they should send blessings upon him, so he (ﷺ) said, “You should say: O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad, the way you send blessings upon Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm, indeed You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.”⁹² Hence we find that Muslims generally send salutations to the Prophet along with his family.

Love for the family of the Prophet (ﷺ) has been prescribed for believers even in the Qurʾān itself: *Say [O Prophet], “I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for [my] near relatives,”* (Q42:23). Given that they were loved by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), and chosen by Allah Himself, it behoves believers to revere them, love them, and follow them. As such, we find that in every supplication that contains *ṣalawāt*, there is always mention of the pure progeny of the Beloved Prophet (ﷺ). Nowhere can one find an authentic tradition or a supplication that mentions the *ṣalawāt* yet avoids or overlooks the mention of the family of Rasūlullāh (ﷺ). Indeed, any such salutation would be considered incomplete.

⁹² al-Maghribī, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 28-29.

وَأَفْتَحِ اللَّهُمَّ لَنَا مَصَارِيحَ الصَّبَاحِ بِمَفَاتِيحِ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالْفَلَاحِ،

And open for us, O Allah, morning's folding door with the keys of mercy and felicity.

The word *maṣārīḥ* is plural of *miṣrāḥ* which refers to either half of a folding door, or one of two doors that are set up in such a way that they meet up in the middle, and the entrance is between them, in the center. Since the whole theme of this supplication revolves around the dawning of a new day, and praying for the day to be one filled with blessings and goodness, this line and those that follow it verbalize the intent of this *du'ā'*. Of course, Allah already knows what we need, and what we desire to ask for from Him, but expressing it is beneficial for us as it gives us a sense of neediness before our Creator.

Mafātīḥ is the plural of *miftāḥ*, meaning key. The opening of the folding door is a metaphor for the rising of the sun, and perhaps due to the nature of sunrise, which is gradual and happens differently in different lands, depending on various factors such as altitude, season, etc. the terms *maṣārīḥ* and *mafātīḥ* have been mentioned in the plural forms.⁹³ This possibility is enhanced by the fact that '*lanā*' (for us) is used in this line instead of '*lī*' (for me), meaning that it includes all the believers, or all of the creatures in general. Therefore, the reference is to sunrise wherever it is

⁹³ Al-Khawājirī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 87.

experienced around the world.⁹⁴

Falāḥ means felicity and success, particularly in the Hereafter. Hence, we are asking for the blessings that would enable us to work for the Hereafter and attain salvation and success therein. And since this is something that cannot be attained merely by human effort itself, it has to be accompanied by Divine mercy (*rahmah*). Some commentators have also offered a deeper, esoteric meaning for this line, saying that *ṣabāḥ* (morning) refers to the Divine illumination that enters the hearts of wayfarers towards the Truth, and the ‘opening’ refers to the openings of the heart which is achieved through the ‘doors’ of knowledge and action, with the ‘keys’ of mercy and success in avoiding sin.⁹⁵

Another possible [secondary] interpretation of this line is that it refers to the opening of the seven doors of heaven for the benefit of the creatures, namely: the door of rain, the door of sustenance, the door of administration [of affairs] (*tadbīr*), the door through which the angels and *rūḥ* descend, the door through which the deeds of human beings ascend, the door through which messenger-angels bringing glad tidings descend, and lastly the door of Divine mercy.⁹⁶ In the end, however, since the apparent theme of this supplication pertains to the beginning of a new day, this line primarily refers to the start of morning though sunrise.

⁹⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 43.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 44.

⁹⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 190.

وَأَلْبِسْنِي اللَّهُمَّ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ خَلَعِ الْهِدَايَةِ وَالصَّلَاحِ،

*Clothe me, O Allah, with the best garments of guidance and
righteousness.*

One of the questions that may be asked regarding this line is: why is it not general like the last line? Why is one asking for himself or herself (*albisni*) instead of for all the believers (*albisnā*)? A number of possible explanations for this have been offered by some commentators. It may be that there was a copyist error and it was actually wrongly transcribed. Alternatively, the previous line of the *du‘ā’* was general because it was for all people, whereas true guidance that is sought here is exclusively for those who follow the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), as instructed by the Noble Prophet (ﷺ).⁹⁷

The word *khilā‘* is plural of *khil‘ah*, and refers to a garment or robe which is commonly given to someone in order to honour him. The supplicant is hence asking Allah to grant him success in following the path of guidance and rectitude, such that he may properly fulfill his duties as commanded by Him. These include carrying out the obligatory actions and staying away from what has been forbidden, while also being cognizant of the rights of the people (*ḥaqq al-nās*).⁹⁸ It is also possible that righteousness (*ṣalāḥ*) here refers to repentance for one’s sins and reforming oneself

⁹⁷ Khū‘ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 160.

⁹⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 191.

thereafter, as the Qurʾān states: *...then after that you may [repent and] become righteous people* (Q12:9).⁹⁹

The metaphor of wearing a garment is also used in the Glorious Qurʾān, where we are told that *the garment of Godwariness is the best* (Q7:26). And just as robes of honour are granted only to those who please a sovereign, the robes of guidance and righteousness are granted to those servants of Allah who are humble and obedient before Him. Guidance is sought from Allah because it is only He who can grant true guidance. *Ṣalāḥ*, meaning righteousness or rectitude, is the opposite of *fasād* which means corruption. Since the commands and prohibitions of Allah are for the benefit of human beings themselves, it is through adhering to His laws that one can attain rectitude and righteousness.¹⁰⁰

A question that may be posed here is: how can one who is infallible ask Allah for guidance and righteousness? Is he not already the most rightly guided and righteous individual of his age? To answer this, some commentators point to the fact that guidance and righteousness has degrees and levels. As such, the guidance that an Infallible seeks is not the same as the guidance sinful people seek. Furthermore, sometimes the terms used here refer to something else. For example, when Yūsuf (a) asked Allah, “*... join me with the righteous*” (Q12:101), he was asking Allah to join him with his righteous forefathers in the Hereafter.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 89.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 90.

وَإِغْرِسِ اللَّهُمَّ بِعَظَمَتِكَ فِي شَرْبِ جِنَانِي يَنْبَاعِ الْخُشُوعِ،

*Implant, O Allah, by Your greatness, springs of humbleness in the canals
of my heart.*

This line continues from the previous one, and in it we ask Allah to place humbleness within our hearts. The first thing we note here is that humility and reverential fear of Allah (*khushūʿ*) is something that comes from the heart, while humbleness (*khudūʿ*) is usually demonstrated through the body, by lowering one's voice, gaze, etc.¹⁰² The term *gharasa* is used to mean planting a tree in the ground, and since there is no reference to planting any tree here, some commentators have suggested that the term could be a derivative of the name of one of the springs of Paradise called Ghars, as mentioned in one of the narrations.¹⁰³

The metaphor of seeking a spring of humility to be implanted within one's heart also includes its corollaries, which are submission to Allah's will and entrusting all of one's affairs to Him.¹⁰⁴ The humility of an individual, which springs forth from his heart, is also manifested in his body and comportment. It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) once saw a man fidgeting with his beard while he was praying, so he said, "If his heart had been humble, his body would [also] have been humble."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 161.

¹⁰³ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 192.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Ashʿath, *al-Jaʿfariyāt*, p. 36.

Therefore, even though humility is something based in the heart, its effects are visibly seen on the body and the way one carries himself.

Since the verb *gharasa* is generally not used for anything other than trees or plants, various explanations have been presented for its usage in this line. Some have mentioned that in other manuscripts the term *aghriz* (from *gharaza*) has been used instead of *aghris*, and this gives a similar meaning and fits in well with implanting springs, but is problematic in other ways. Besides, the more authoritative manuscripts contain the term *aghris*, not *aghriz*. Others have said that *yanābī*¹⁰⁶ in this line is the plural of *nab*^c which is a certain type of tree.¹⁰⁶ However, if simply deemed a metaphor, it does not need to conform to the literal meanings and usage of the words, and in that case the translation we have offered above is still applicable.

The fact that we are supplicating to Allah to grant us humility means that firstly, it is a quality that can be attained only with the help of Allah. True humbleness which takes root deep in the heart cannot be easily achieved and is something that one has to strive and pray for. And secondly, it shows that humility has great value and importance, and is an essential ingredient for a life of servitude to Allah that would lead us to felicity in this world and the next.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Khawājū^{ṭī}, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 93.

وَأَجْرِ اللَّهِ لَهَيْبَتِكَ مِنْ آمَاقِي زَفَرَاتِ الدُّمُوعِ،

*Make flow, O Allah, due to [my] awe for You, tears from the corners of
my eyes.*

Weeping out of fear and awe of Allah is a praiseworthy act. According to some commentators, the phrase *zafarāt al-dumū*¹⁰⁷ refers to weeping accompanied by heavy sighs and moans.¹⁰⁷ Other commentators have instead used the word *dharafāt* which is the plural of *dharaf*, meaning flowing. That is perhaps because it is more in line with the meaning of the sentence than *zafarāt*, and since both terms have been used in different manuscripts they have opted for the former.¹⁰⁸ Yet others have offered a somewhat different definition of *zafarāt*, saying that it comes from *al-zafr*, which is a river that is overflowing with water.¹⁰⁹

Āmāq is the plural of *mauq*, meaning the inner corner of the eye, which is also where the tear ducts are located. Tears can flow for various reasons, and here we are specifically referring to the tears that result from one's awe of Allah. The kind of weeping where one sheds tears out of the fear, love, and awe of Allah results from a soft heart, which is itself a sign of sincerity, just as the inability to cry and shed tears in this way is a sign of a hardened heart. Both these opposite states (of being soft or hard-hearted) are the consequence of human actions in this world. In

¹⁰⁷ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 95.

one narration, we find that Allah once told Mūsā (a), “O Mūsā, do not lengthen your aspirations in the world, such that your heart becomes hard thereby, for indeed one who has a hard heart is far from Me.”¹¹⁰

We are also told in the traditions that in Paradise, there will be certain stations that are reserved only for those who would often weep out of the fear of Allah (*al-bakkāʿūn*). Furthermore, we are told that teardrops will be placed on the scales of deeds, and some tears will extinguish part of the Fire. In addition, one tradition states that the teardrop that falls in the darkness of night out of the fear of Allah is most beloved to Him.¹¹¹ These are just some of the many merits and rewards mentioned for weeping out of humility before Allah, the Exalted.

Since humbleness (*khushūʿ*) is one of the factors that leads to shedding tears and weeping in front of Allah, how could one whose heart and mind are heedless and negligent of Allah ever expect to sincerely shed tears of awe and fear before Him? That would be something quite impossible to achieve. Therefore, in order to gain the ability of weeping before one’s Creator, the first required step is inculcating humility and humbleness in oneself. Perhaps that is why we first supplicate for humility (as in the previous line of the *duʿāʾ*) and then ask for the ability to shed tears before Allah.

¹¹⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 329, ḥ. 1.

¹¹¹ Al-Ahwāzī, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, p. 76, ḥ. 204.

وَأَدِّبِ اللَّهُمَّ نَزَقَ الْخُرْقِ مِنِّي بِأَزْمَةِ الْقُنُوعِ،

And discipline, O Allah, the recklessness of my folly with the reins of contentment.

Even in disciplining oneself in order to attain a better character, and reform the flaws in one's personality, one is required to seek Divine assistance. In this line of the *du'ā'*, we are asking Allah to reform, rectify, and correct the flaw of recklessness and lack of deliberation, which leads to unsound decisions and improper actions, through the calming effect of contentment. According to scholars, *adab* means keeping in mind and adhering to the proper limits of everything. The imperative *addib* also means keep away or prevent. Therefore, the supplicant is asking Allah to keep away from him the negative traits he mentions through the bounty of contentment.¹¹²

Other commentators have expanded the scope of the term 'folly' to include all kinds of bad traits and qualities, such as rudeness, that stem from ignorance and foolishness.¹¹³ Use of the term *azimmaḥ*, which is the plural of *zimām* meaning rein, is an allusion to the fact that the untrained and undisciplined soul is like a wild, recalcitrant animal.¹¹⁴ Just as a refractory camel is tamed and then bridled, so too does the unruly soul need to be disciplined and then reined in through the calming effect of

¹¹² Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 97.

¹¹³ Khūṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 168-169.

¹¹⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 47.

contentment. Indeed, when he was asked about the meaning of a 'good life' (*ḥayātan ṭayyibah*, as mentioned in Q16:97), Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) said, "It is [a life with] contentment."¹¹⁵

Contentment is the quality that gives one independence and freedom from having to ask anyone for anything, thereby becoming the master of his soul, and not being beholden to anyone. Hence, according to one commentator, apparently the folly being referred to here is dependence on others, which only leads to abasement and disgrace. With contentment, those who are suffering hardships such as poverty, health problems, or any other difficulty, are able to bear these temporary difficulties of the transient life in this world without degrading themselves or losing their dignity by extending a needy hand to other people.¹¹⁶

The debate about whether moral traits are part of the ingrained character of an individual (or, to put it differently, part of one's genes) and hence unalterable, or whether they are learned and earned by volition and through one's own life choices, continues to engage the minds of scholars and researches. The answer to this question in light of the traditions is that character traits are primarily intrinsic, but have the potential of being perfected through self-discipline. That is why we have been encouraged to work at bettering our characters and morals.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, saying no. 229.

¹¹⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 194.

¹¹⁷ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 97.

إِلَهِي إِنْ لَمْ تَبْتَدِئْ نِي الرَّحْمَةُ مِنْكَ بِحُسْنِ التَّوْفِيقِ،

My Lord, if mercy from You does not initiate any fair success for me,

The address in this part of the *du‘ā*³ changes and becomes more intimate. Previously in the supplication, we were addressing Allah formally by saying, “O Allah,” now we are addressing Him as one who is close to us by saying, “My Lord.” This is perhaps a result of the recognition and acknowledgement of His great bounties mentioned earlier, such as His keeping us safe and secure as we sleep, and granting us innumerable bounties when we awake. Those who appreciate the deep sense of delight that is achieved by addressing the Creator in such an intimate way say that it is incomparable to anything else for those who love Him.¹¹⁸

Mercy and kindness that is initiated, and not a response to any action on the part of the recipient of that kindness and mercy, holds much greater value. It is quite different from showing kindness to someone who has done one a good turn, or reciprocating compassion. That is why Allah’s general mercy and kindness is always initiatory and is not a result of any human action. Yet it is different from the special mercy He shows to those who believe and do good deeds, which is also initiatory in that the ability, inspiration, and success (*tawfīq*) for performing those good deeds come from Him to begin with, only that the human being made the right decision in choosing to obey Him, and is thus

¹¹⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 50.

rewarded for that with special mercy and kindness. This is something worth pondering upon.

The phrase *ḥusn al-tawfiq* refers to bringing together all the factors and causes that enable one to find, follow, and adhere to the right path which leads one towards Allah, thereby resulting in felicity and success in both worlds. The literal meaning of *tawfiq* is placing something in an expedient, suitable, and agreeable manner in relation to something else. However, it is commonly used to refer to how Allah makes the actions of His servant agreeable to, and in accordance with, what He likes. Though there can also be ‘negative’ *tawfiq* (*sū’ al-tawfiq*), which means the hinderance of all or some of the causes and factors that lead to felicity, the term is mostly used only in its positive sense.¹¹⁹

Some commentators say the fact that mercy (*raḥmah*) has been mentioned first shows that it is a prerequisite. Only when Allah shows mercy to a servant, overlooking his faults and forgiving his sins, can he then be a recipient of *tawfiq* from Him.¹²⁰ Since this line is the first half of a conditional statement, we will read about what would happen if one is deprived of this blessing of mercy that leads to ‘fine success’ in the next line, which comprises the second half of the statement.

¹¹⁹ Al-Khawājūzī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 105.

¹²⁰ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 194.

فَمَنْ السَّالِكُ بِي إِلَيْكَ فِي وَاضِحِ الطَّرِيقِ؟

then who can [possibly] lead me to You on the clear path?

This line is the second half of the conditional statement that began in the previous line. It is a rhetorical question which implies that were it not for the mercy of Allah through which He grants ‘fair success’ (*ḥusn al-tawfiq*), there would be no other way to be led on the clear path of guidance and righteousness towards Him.¹²¹ Indeed, as the Cause of all causes (*musabbib al-asbāb*), if Allah does not initiate His mercy through which He grants guidance and success, there would be no one else who could guide a person to the right path that leads to felicity. Every good deed we do, therefore, is the result of the initial mercy of Allah.¹²²

In some of the supplications taught to us by the Prophet (ﷺ) and his pure progeny (a), we come across the phrase, “O He who initiates every blessing [upon us] before we become deserving [of them].”¹²³ This clearly shows that all the good that is done by human beings results from the initial blessing of guidance from Allah. According to some commentators, the meaning of being led towards Allah is attaining proximity to Him by turning away from this world and its glitter, and carrying out what has been prescribed by Him while staying away from what He has

¹²¹ Khūṭbā, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 169.

¹²² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 50.

¹²³ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*, p. 222. (Yā mubtadi‘a kulli ni‘matin qabla istiḥqāqihā).

forbidden.¹²⁴

In one of his sermons, Imam ‘Alī (a) has elucidated the way in which Allah guides human beings and leads those who accept His guidance upon the path of felicity. He describes it as a gradual, transformative process in which the intellect is enlivened while base desires are extinguished. In the end, by following the path of guidance, one arrives at the door of salvation and the abode of perpetual bliss.¹²⁵ Of course, it bears reiterating that the guidance has to be accepted by one’s own volition, and there is no compulsion involved in it.

The phrase *wāḍiḥ al-ṭarīq*, meaning clear path, refers to a path that is not ambiguous, confusing, or difficult to recognize. However, it is a frightening path which can at times be difficult to traverse. It even has some deep holes and pits that one can fall into. That is why we need the blessings of Allah in the form of guidance, since as long as a person is traversing this path, he is in a state of apprehension and trepidation, thinking about his end, until he arrives at his final destination. Indeed, many an individual has trodden on the right path only to deviate therefrom in the end, thereby losing his way just before he arrives at his goal.¹²⁶ Thus it is important that we constantly pray to Allah to continually guide us at every moment, until the end of our lives.

¹²⁴ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 106.

¹²⁵ See: al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon no. 219.

¹²⁶ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 107.

وَإِنْ أَسْلَمْتَنِي أَنَا تُكَ لِقَائِدِ الْأَمَلِ وَالْمُنَى،

*And if Your forbearance leaves me to the impulses of [my vain] hopes
and aspirations,*

This is the first part of another conditional statement. The word *anāt* means forbearance, deliberateness, and staidness. It is the opposite of haste and recklessness. *Munā* is the plural of *munyah*, meaning aspiration. When we talk of the forbearance of Allah leaving us, it is only metaphorical, because in reality the doer of the action is Allah.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the phrase alludes to the fact that Allah is not in need of the obedience and worship of His creation, nor is He harmed in any way by their defiance and disobedience. This fact has been proven by both rational and scriptural evidence (*barāhīn ‘aqliyyah wa naqliyyah*).¹²⁸

The term *qā'id* here is a reference to the inciting soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) which urges individuals and impels them to seek out their vain desires and pleasures at the cost of sinning and disobeying Allah. Whoever makes his base soul his leader (*qā'id*), handing over the reins of his life to it and allowing it to lead him wherever it wishes, will obviously end up wretched and ruined. Such an individual is truly abandoned and forsaken, as we note from the verse in which Yūsuf (a) is quoted as having said: *And I do not claim to be blameless, verily the soul impels towards evil, except*

¹²⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 51.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

[in] what my Lord shows mercy... (Q12:53). This means that one is only kept safe from the urges of the base soul by the mercy of Allah.¹²⁹

Three words are commonly used to mean hope for the attainment of something: *rajāʿ*, *ṭamaʿ*, and *amal*. The last of the three has been used in this line. *Amal* is normally used to refer to something that is difficult to attain or is far off. When a person intends to travel to a distant land, he says, “I hope to arrive there (*ammaltu al-wuṣūl ilayh*).” On the other hand, *ṭamaʿ* is used to refer to things that are close at hand and easier to attain. *Rajāʿ* is between *ṭamaʿ* and *amal*.¹³⁰ Since *amal* is mostly used when it comes to desire for worldly gain, and is therefore responsible for one becoming heedless of the Hereafter, it has been frowned upon in Islam.

A tradition from Amīr al-Muʾminīn (a) states, “I fear only two things for you: the following of [base] desires and having lengthy aspirations (*ṭūl al-amal*). As for following [base] desires, it hinders one from the truth, and as for lengthy aspirations, they cause one to forget the Hereafter.”¹³¹ It is evident that when a person has lengthy worldly aspirations and hopes, he is always engrossed in them and in thinking about how to attain them, and that leads him to forget the Hereafter and the true purpose of his life on this

¹²⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 196.

¹³⁰ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 109.

¹³¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, pp. 335-336.

earth. The second part of the conditional statement follows in the next line.

فَمَنْ الْمَقِيلُ عَثْرَاتِي مِنْ كَبَوَاتِ الْهَوَى؟

then who will pardon my slips from the false steps of desire?

This is the second half of the conditional statement mentioned in the previous line. *Al-Muqīl* comes from *iqālah*, which means to overlook and pardon someone's fault. *‘Atharāt* is the plural of *‘athrah*, meaning mistake, error, or slip. Similarly, *kabawāt* is the plural of *kabwah*, meaning to slip or stumble due to a misstep. Therefore, according to some commentators, in this part of the supplication we are saying: O Allah, Your forbearance, respite, and delay in punishment has left me under the reins of hopes and aspirations, which lead me wherever they want, and this leads to many mistakes and errors. So who [but You] can pardon these missteps that result from following my desires?¹³²

There are indeed some people who take their whims and desires as their god. The Noble Prophet (ﷺ) is asked by Allah in the Glorious Qur’ān: *Have you seen the one who has taken his own desires as his god? Could you then be his guardian?* (Q25:43). Indeed, if – looking at the previous statements of this supplication – one does not follow the guidance of Allah and espouse contentment (*qanā‘ah*), then he will surely allow himself to be led by his worldly desires and aspirations, and this will in turn cause him to make many errors in judgment and commit sins and misdeeds.¹³³

¹³² Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 112.

¹³³ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 51.

Like other parts of this *du'ā'*, and many other supplications taught to us by the Infallibles, this statement is meant to be a lesson for the people, because those who are infallible never give in to their base desires or have lengthy worldly aspirations. It is our belief that they do not even make minor mistakes or lapses, let alone commit major sins.¹³⁴ Therefore, the Imam is actually teaching us how to supplicate, and making us aware of the fact that succumbing to the influence of the base soul, and giving in to worldly desires, will only lead one towards error and sin.

There are also a number of implied meanings one can glean from this statement. Firstly, the hastening of punishment in this world is actually a blessing of Allah to His servants, as it awakens them to the consequences of their misdeeds, and makes them turn away from this world and focus on the Hereafter. On the other hand, the delay in punishment is a gradual heightening of punishment (*istidrāj*) as people are left to their own devices and allowed to compound their misdeeds, only to face a terrible punishment later.¹³⁵ Secondly, if one makes the mistake of following his base desires, there is still hope for him in the form of repentance and reform. Allah is indeed Oft-Forgiving so there is no need to lose hope. Thirdly, just as we seek forgiveness after committing a sin, we should pray for protection from the things that lead us to sin in the first place.

¹³⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 196.

¹³⁵ Al-Khawājū'i, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 113.

وَإِنْ خَذَلْنِي نَصْرُكَ عِنْدَ مُحَارَبَةِ النَّفْسِ وَالشَّيْطَانِ،

If Your help should forsake me in the battle against the carnal soul and Satan,

This first part of the third conditional statement aims to remind the supplicant that while he is in this world, there are two forces which constantly try to make him deviate from his goal and purpose, namely the base soul and Satan. Indeed, in numerous verses of the Qurʾān we are reminded that Satan is the sworn enemy of humankind, so we must be wary of him. For instance, we are told: *Verily Satan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy. He only invites his followers to become inmates of the Blaze* (Q35:6). At the same time, we are informed that the base soul is also an enemy to be wary of. One tradition from the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) states, “Your most hostile enemy is the carnal soul within you.”¹³⁶

Some commentators note that this line of the *duʿāʾ* is a negation of the belief in determinism (*jabr*), just as it is against the idea of complete and unrestricted free-will (*tafwīd*); rather, it advocates for a middle course (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*). This is because it shows that one who is compelled to do something cannot be rewarded for it, and one who is left completely free does not have the ability to ward off the urges of the base soul and the temptations of Satan on his own, that is why he prays for

¹³⁶ Warrām ibn Abī Fāris, *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir (Majmūʿat Warrām)*, vol. 1, p. 59.

Allah's help and protection.¹³⁷

The help (*naṣr*) being sought here refers to the very same divinely granted success (*tawfiq*) that was also mentioned earlier in the supplication. That is because *khidhlān* (abandonment) is the opposite of *tawfiq*.¹³⁸ The term *muḥārabah* refers to fighting one another in battle. Some commentators have interpreted this line as referring to the battle of the soul against Satan, and say that the soul (*nafs*) here refers to the rational soul. Thus, we are asking Allah not to abandon the soul in its fight against Satan, otherwise it will be overcome by him.¹³⁹ However, most of the commentators have understood *nafs* to refer to the carnal or base soul, which one seeks protection against just as he seeks protection against Satan.

The fight against one's base soul, which constantly urges and impels one towards fulfillment of illicit desires, is known as 'the greater struggle' (*al-jihād al-akbar*). This is in contrast to fighting actual battles against enemies on the battlefield, which is considered 'the lesser struggle' (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*).¹⁴⁰ As such, the former is understood to be both more important and harder than the latter. We have been taught how to fight against the insinuations of Satan using certain supplications. To combat the urges of the soul, however, one needs to purify his heart and discipline his soul through certain exercises, such as eating less

¹³⁷ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 173.

¹³⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 52.

¹³⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 5, p. 12, ḥ. 3.

and sleeping less. Scholars of Islamic ethics have mentioned some of these practices in their manuals of ethics and spiritual wayfaring.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 114.

فَقَدْ وَكَلَنِي خِذْلَانُكَ إِلَىٰ حَيْثُ النَّصَبِ وَالْحِرْمَانِ،

then Your abandonment will leave me to encounter hardship and deprivation.

This completes the conditional statement that began in the previous line, and mentions the outcome of being forsaken by the Almighty. Though the only thing one needs to do to fight Satan and his base soul is to reject their insinuations and urges, this cannot be accomplished except with the help of Allah.¹⁴² When this help is not available, then one would give in to his vain desires and this would lead him to encounter great hardship in this world, as well as deprivation from felicity in the Hereafter. That is why we need to regularly supplicate to Allah and ask for His help in countering these two great enemies.

In one tradition, we are told that Ādam (a) complained to Allah about the negative influence of Satan, so Allah gave him and his progeny two gifts by which to counter Satan's influence. The first is that when a human being thinks of sinning, nothing is recorded against him unless he carries out his intention, and even then only one sin is recorded against him. On the other hand if he thinks of doing a good deed, he is rewarded immediately, and if he carries it out, he gets ten rewards for it. The second gift is that human beings have the door of repentance open to them until

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 117.

their very last breath in this world.¹⁴³

The term *naṣab* means hardship and difficulty. *Ḥirmān* refers to deprivation from something beneficial and good. One who is deprived from such is known as *mahrūm*. Hence, we see that if one gives in to the temptations of his base self and Satan, he might enjoy some worldly pleasures for a brief time, but the ultimate consequence will be nothing but hardship and deprivation. Conversely, if one rejects their temptations, he might not enjoy the same worldly pleasures but he will end up attaining true joy and felicity.

One of the phrases we find in the supplications taught to us by the Infallibles is, “My Lord, never leave me to my own devices even for the blink of an eye!”¹⁴⁴ And in *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, we see that Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (a) supplicated, “Do not leave me to Your creation.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, we realize that it is important to constantly depend on Allah alone, and not on oneself or on any other individual. The reason for this is clear – we do not possess the power or strength to independently counter the influence and enticement of Satan and our carnal souls. We need the help of Allah for this.

¹⁴³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 440, ḥ. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 581, ḥ. 15. (*Ilāhī lā takilnī ilā nafsī ʿarfata ‘aynīn abadā*).

¹⁴⁵ ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, supplication no. 22. Along the same lines, in another supplication, the Imam says, “Do not leave me to my own strength and power, instead of [helping me with] Your strength and power.” (See: Ibid, supplication no. 47).

إِلَهِي أَتَرَانِي مَا أَتَيْتُكَ إِلَّا مِنْ حَيْثُ الْأَمَالِ،

My Lord, do You see how I have only come to You from the direction of hopes,

Here, we admit our poor state and acknowledge that we are only supplicating to Allah for the fulfilment of our hopes and desires. The rhetorical question we pose is actually an admission of our lack of sincerity. We are not supplicating to seek proximity to Him, we actually just want something from Him.¹⁴⁶ Of course, Allah knows the intention of every individual, so this is already known to Him. However, by admitting it, we are showing our own lowliness before His greatness and compassion.¹⁴⁷

Human beings are selfish by nature, and it takes effort and will on their part to do things with sincere intentions. Even when they help others, or show kindness, it is because it brings them joy or because they hope to one day exact a favour in return. To be selfless, which is a highly praiseworthy trait, is something that requires serious determination. That is why it is reported that Imam ‘Alī (a) said, “One of the qualities of the virtuous is that they impel themselves to be selfless.” Furthermore, he is also reported to have stated, “Self-sacrifice is the greatest worship and the most sublime eminence.”¹⁴⁸ Thus we see that removing or suppressing the trait of selfishness is considered a virtuous act.

¹⁴⁶ Khū’ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 174.

¹⁴⁷ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 35. & ḥ. 19.

The quality of supplicating and praying to Allah only when one has certain needs and desires, or when faced with some hardships, is clearly mentioned in the Qurʾān. We are told: *And when We bless the human being, he turns away and withdraws [selfishly]; but when evil touches him, he is full of lengthy supplications* (Q41:51). So we see that while he is in a state of wellbeing, enjoying the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon him, the human being forgets Allah and turns away, thinking only about himself. However, when some affliction befalls him, he turns yearningly to Allah, with long supplications.

True believers who have attained the realization of their position before Allah do not worship Him or pray to Him for such selfish reasons. In a famous statement attributed to Imam ʿAlī (a) we find him saying, “[O Allah,] I did not worship You out of fear of Your [punishment in the] Fire, nor out of desire for Your [rewards in] Paradise; rather, I found You worthy of worship, so I worshipped You.”¹⁴⁹ Of course, attaining such a level of sincerity is not possible for every individual, and it requires a heightened level of certitude that only the closest friends of Allah possess. Nevertheless, we should always try to better ourselves and remove the selfish streak within us in order to keep our actions and worship sincere, to the best of our ability.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Abī Jūmhūr, *ʿAwālī al-Laʿālī*, vol. 2, p. 11, h. 18.

أَمْ عَلِقْتُ بِأَطْرَافِ حَبَالِكَ إِلَّا حِينَ بَاعَدْتَنِي ذُنُوبِي عَنْ
دَارِ الْوَسَالِ،

or [how I] have only clung to the ends of Your cords when my sins have
distanced me from the Abode of Proximity?

This line continues from the previous one, and reiterates how human beings commonly remember Allah and supplicate to Him only when they are in dire straits and difficulties. Together, these two lines of the *du‘ā* underscore the selfish nature of humankind. They do not approach Allah except to have their desires fulfilled, or to seek forgiveness for sins they know will prevent them from attaining Paradise and the blessings of Allah. Indeed that is the practice of most people in this world.¹⁵⁰

The term *hibāl* is the plural of *ḥabl*, meaning cord or rope, and in this context it refers to the ways by which a servant can reach his Lord. It has been mentioned in the plural form because of the availability of numerous means by which one can attain closeness to Allah. *Dār al-wisāl* refers to the abode of nearness and proximity to the Almighty, from which a servant is distanced when he commits sins and misdeeds. This may be in the form of neglecting what has been made obligatory or embarking on what has been forbidden. It could also be generally anything worldly that preoccupies one and makes him forget Allah.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 175.

¹⁵¹ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 57.

As far as Infallibles are concerned, the term ‘sin’ does not apply to them in the conventional sense. Rather, even a permitted action that is undertaken in a manner that leads to forgetting Allah momentarily may be considered by them to be a sin. Some such actions are unavoidable in this world and are part and parcel of the human condition. That is why we find that they also sought forgiveness from Allah. In one tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a), we are told that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) used to seek forgiveness from Allah seventy times a day.¹⁵² Additionally, as we have noted earlier, the Infallibles would do this as a way of training their followers and teaching them the importance of seeking repentance for their sins.

According to some commentators, the reason for mentioning the ends or edges (*aṭrāf*) of the cords instead of the cords themselves is to demonstrate weakness and inability. In this instance, the act of clutching the ends of the cords signifies repentance, remorse, and regret. It is only when we are absolved of sin that we can truly connect with Allah. And proximity and nearness to Allah is the goal of all true, cognizant believers, so they always seek out means to attain this goal and do whatever they can to avoid any action that might hinder them from it.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 438, ḥ. 4.

¹⁵³ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, pp. 121-124.

فَبِئْسَ الْمَطِيَّةُ الَّتِي امْتَطَّتْ نَفْسِي مِنْ هَوَاهَا،

What an evil mount my soul has mounted, namely its caprice!

A good mount is one that is docile and tame, taking its rider in the direction he wishes to go without causing problems for him. On the other hand, a stubborn, wild mount that does not follow its rider's instructions and takes him away from his intended destination is considered very dangerous. Here, the whims and vain desires of an individual are likened to a recalcitrant mount that carries a person away from the right path, leading him into dangers that can result in harm and destruction. When a person gives in to such desires, it is as if he has ridden on an unruly animal which only takes him where it desires to go, not to where he directs it.

The consequence of following one's whims and caprice in this manner has been described beautifully in the Qur'ān when it states: *Have you considered the one who has taken his whims [and desires] to be his god and whom Allah has let stray knowingly, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and placed a cover on his sight? Who will then guide him after Allah? Will you not then reflect?* (Q45:23). Therefore, one who purposely gives his desires free rein and allows them to control his decisions in life, ends up losing all vision and insight, and his heart and mind are sealed, unable to reflect.

Indeed, even worshipping idols is considered less dangerous because idols do not make demands, nor do they entice the people

like the vain desires and caprice do. Worldly desires are endless, and the fulfilment of one desire only gives rise to another. That is why riding the mount of caprice is considered more dangerous than idolatry.¹⁵⁴ It is a known fact that wishes and wants never end. There has never been a person who attained all that he ever wanted in this world. As such, one should be moderate and practical when it comes to seeking what he desires in this world.¹⁵⁵

It is reported that Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) said, "The most beneficial cure [for spiritual maladies] is abandoning [false] aspirations." And it is also reported that he said, "Keep away from vain hopes, for they take away the delight of the blessings of Allah from you and make them seem small and insignificant, thereby increasing your ingratitude."¹⁵⁶ So we note that by continually riding the mount of desires, and seeking out worldly hopes and aspirations, we exacerbate spiritual ailments within ourselves and end up becoming unthankful for the numerous bounties with which Allah has blessed us.

Self-scrutiny and introspection are important steps towards reformation and scholars tell us that those who seek proximity to Allah must always reprimand themselves for giving in to their base desires. That is a necessary step towards self-reform and development.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁵ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 200.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurur al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 675. & ḥ. 658.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Khawājūṟī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, pp. 125-126.

فَوَاهَا لَهَا لِمَا سَوَّاتْ لَهَا ظُنُونُهَا وَمَنَاهَا،

So woe to it for being lured by its own conjectures and aspirations,

The word *wāhan* is an exclamation which signifies regret, grief, and sad incredulity. *Sawwalat* comes from *taswīl*, which denotes embellishment and temptation. It is the process by which something is made to seem good and beautiful, so that a person gets attracted to it and undertakes it. This is one of the tricks used by Satan to beguile human beings. The Qurʾān states: *Verily those who turned their backs after the guidance had become clear to them, it was Satan who enticed them (sawwala lahum) and lured them with false hopes (Q47:25)*. At the same time, the base soul of human beings also entices them. Prophet Yaʿqūb (a) is quoted as telling his sons: *“No! Your souls have enticed you (sawwalat lakum) to something. But patience is beautiful, and it is to Allah [alone] that I pray for strength to cope with what you are saying to me,” (Q12:18)*.

The thing that is usually portrayed or depicted as beautiful, good, beneficial, or pleasurable by Satan or the base self through *taswīl* is, in reality ugly, harmful, and evil. It is therefore a deception that leads one who falls for it astray from the right path. In this line of the supplication, we attribute such deception to the conjectures and aspirations of the soul since these are the two tools used by it to implant temptations in the mind of an individual, thereby deceiving him.¹⁵⁸ One commentator of this

¹⁵⁸ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 176.

supplication gives the example of an individual who is deeply attached to the pleasures and comforts of this world, wearing its best attires, eating its best foods, and enjoying all its luxuries, yet when he is questioned about this, he justifies his behaviour by quoting the verse of the Qurʾān: *Who has forbidden the adornments and lawful provisions Allah has brought forth for His servants?* (Q7:32).¹⁵⁹

An interesting narration states, “The believer is a patcher of the frayed.”¹⁶⁰ This means that a believer is one who repents after he has committed a sin, just as one whose clothes have frayed patches them. It is interesting that this narration employs a term from the same root (*wāhin*), and just as this line expresses regret for giving in to the enticement of the base soul, so too does the narration depict a believer as one who repents for his misdeeds.¹⁶¹

When one imagines a thing to be an avenue of attaining happiness and success, and aspires to achieve or acquire it, he will do anything to reach it, even if it means acting unwisely and transgressing the limits or disobeying divine injunctions. In the end, however, either that thing is impossible to attain (such as immortality in this world), or one is able to attain it only to realize that it does not provide what he imagined it would. Hence, he ends up beguiled and deceived.

¹⁵⁹ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 59.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (Qum: Muʾassasat Ismāʿīliyān, 1409 AH), vol. 5, p. 234, (*al-muʾminu wāhin rāqīʿ*).

¹⁶¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 201.

وَتَبَّأَ لَهَا لِحْزَاتِهَا عَلَى سَيِّدِهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا،

and may it perish for its audacity towards its Master and Guardian!

The word *tabban* is a prayer for the destruction of someone or something. In the Glorious Qur^ʿān, the same term is employed regarding Abū Lahab: *May the hands of Abū Lahab perish, and may he perish!* (Q111:1). This kind of malediction is usually uttered in response to some negative actions or misdeeds. In this line of the *duʿāʿ*, we are praying against our own base soul because it has been impudent and audacious in front of its Creator and Master. For a slave to act in such a brazen manner before his master is a grievous offence that is liable and deserving of punishment. So what of those who behave in such a manner towards their Lord who created them and sustains them?!¹⁶²

It is actually surprising how impertinent a human being can be while he is so weak and helpless that he would not survive for a single moment without the grace and bounty of Allah. Such a feeble creature still has the audacity to defy his Master and disobey His commands!¹⁶³ Then indeed he is worthy of punishment. This line also implicitly conveys the reality of the inability of human beings to properly show gratitude for the innumerable blessings of Allah, or to worship Him the way He deserves to be worshipped. Hence, after acknowledging the blessings of the Almighty in the

¹⁶² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 60.

¹⁶³ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 176.

preceding section of the supplication, we are now admitting our own flaws and faults before we go on to present our petition and ask for our needs.¹⁶⁴

Audacity and boldness can be a positive trait when it is manifested in front of an enemy, and is used as a means by which a person defends his dignity and faith. However, the same trait is undoubtedly blameworthy when it is displayed before one whose obedience is obligatory. Of course, when an Infallible utters these words, it does not mean that he has actually given in to the temptations of his base soul, or has shown the slightest audacity towards his Lord. Rather, as mentioned earlier, it is only meant to teach the believers about the reality of their condition. Furthermore, as they were mortals, the Infallibles also had to face the same challenges that other human beings face. And even though they were infallible, it does not mean that they did not have the ability to sin. Rather, despite having the ability, they never sinned.¹⁶⁵

This line of the supplication also gives us an understanding of the attitude we must espouse when we stand before our Creator, namely humility and subservience. We cannot have an opinion or a say in any matter that Allah has decreed, and must follow His command to the letter without even an iota of defiance. That is what is expected of us as believers.

¹⁶⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 202.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 129.

إِلٰهِي قَرَعْتُ بَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ بِيَدِ رَجَائِي،

My Lord, I have knocked the door of Your mercy with the hand of my hope,

This line of the *du‘ā* beautifully depicts our need for the mercy of Allah. The word *qara‘a* means to knock, and among the Arabs there is a saying: “Whoever knocks on a door persistently, it will be opened to him.”¹⁶⁶ After having admitted our faults and misdeeds, we now turn to Allah seeking His mercy and pardon. Indeed, no matter how grave our sin, we should never become despondent and lose hope in the mercy of Allah, for He has told us Himself: *O My servants who exceeded the limits against their own souls! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Verily Allah forgives the sins – all of them; indeed He is the Oft-Forgiving the Merciful* (Q39:53).

In other words, this line of the supplication aims to say: My Lord, despite my numerous sins and misdeeds, as well as my brazen audaciousness and disregard for Your commands, I have not lost hope in Your mercy and forgiveness, and hereby present myself at Your door as a humble servant, hoping to attain Your pardon.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, it is the past experience of mercy and respite from Him that leads us to think positively and retain hope in His compassion, even after we have perpetrated acts of disobedience. Allah has never hastened His chastisement upon us, and He

¹⁶⁶ Khū‘ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 176 (*man qara‘a bāb^{an} wa lajja walaj*).

¹⁶⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 61.

always gives us every opportunity to repent and return to the right path. Hence, even in this instance, we remain hopeful of His mercy.¹⁶⁸

The process of seeking forgiveness, as seen in these passages, includes admission and remorse, followed by turning to Allah with hope and seeking His mercy. Amīr al-Mu'minīn listed six conditions and requirements for repentance, namely: regret for what one has done, firm determination and resolve that one will never repeat the sin again as long as he lives, giving back the rights of others that he has usurped, making up for any of the obligatory actions that he had missed, melting away all the flesh of his body that grew out of sin through sorrow and hardship, and finally making himself taste the pain and difficulty of arduous worship.¹⁶⁹ It is only after these conditions are met that one has truly repented.

The act of knocking on the door of Allah's mercy may therefore be interpreted as a metaphor for undertaking the required effort and the necessary actions to attain Divine mercy, namely fulfilling the requirements of true repentance. It is the duty of a sinful person to take concrete measures and make real changes in his life before he can be deserving of forgiveness from Allah, and it is not sufficient to utter words alone, albeit with sincerity. In the end, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

¹⁶⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 202.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, saying no. 417.

وَهَرَبْتُ إِلَيْكَ لِاجْتِنَاءٍ مِنْ فَرْطِ أَهْوَائِي،

and have fled to You seeking refuge from my excessive caprice,

The verb *haraba* is used to describe the act of fleeing and escaping something in order to save oneself and take refuge from some danger. *Fart* (from *afraṭa*) refers to going beyond the bounds in terms of excessiveness, and according to some commentators, it can also be used in the opposite sense of falling short.¹⁷⁰ Seeking refuge with Allah is a practice taught to us in Islam, and is reflected in many verses, traditions, and supplications. For instance, in one supplication, we pray, “I seek refuge with Your forgiveness from Your punishment; and I seek refuge with Your pleasure from Your wrath; and I seek refuge with Your mercy from Your reprisal; and I seek refuge with You from You!”¹⁷¹

Seeking refuge with Allah in this manner, and fleeing from Allah’s wrath towards His mercy, is a positive act that leads to the attainment of Divine mercy. It has been likened to the way a child who is being scolded by his mother turns towards his mother with tearful eyes, expecting her compassion, or the way a subject who is punished by a king turns towards him submissively, hoping for his compassion. By doing this, the child shows that he has no one else to turn to but his mother, and the subject shows he has no one else to seek refuge from but the king. This is what then leads to the latter showing mercy. In an interesting statement attributed

¹⁷⁰ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 178.

¹⁷¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 324, h. 12.

to Plato, it is reported that he said, “The cosmos is a bow, the events that transpire are arrows, the target is human beings, and the archer is Allah; then to where can one flee!”¹⁷²

In the Glorious Qurʾān we read how, after describing the way Allah created the world, the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) was instructed to tell the people: *So flee towards Allah; indeed I am a clear warner to you from Him* (Q51:50). In this line of the supplication, excessive vain desires have been likened to enemies from which one has to flee in order to save himself. It also implies that just as one would run away from an overpowering foe who is too strong to face, the nature of such excessive desires is that they overpower an individual’s weak soul and mind, so he needs to seek refuge with the Omnipotent Lord and seek His help to overcome the desires.¹⁷³

Other types of fleeing have been rebuked, especially fleeing from an enemy in battle out of cowardice and fear. Believers are meant to be strong and brave. Their belief in Allah should be unshakable and when they face an enemy in *jihād*, they must stand their ground and never turn to flee. The Qurʾān clearly states that running away from the enemy out of fear has no benefit and leads only to wretchedness in this world and the next: *Fleeing will do you no good if you flee from death or slaughter, since you will not be allowed to enjoy [life] but for a little while [longer]* (Q33:16).

¹⁷² Qūchānī, *Sharh-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 61.

¹⁷³ Al-Khawājūṟī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 130.

وَعَلَّقْتُ بِأَطْرَافِ حَبَالِكَ أَنَامِلَ وَلَائِي،

and clutched the ends of Your cords with the fingers of my love!

The verb *‘allaqa* means to attach, cling, or clutch, and *anāmila* is the plural of *anmulah* (or *unmulah*), meaning the ends or tips of one’s fingers. However, some commentators say that in this instance, it figuratively refers to the whole hand.¹⁷⁴ The love here either refers to love for Allah, or love for His chosen servants, since the latter are also a means of attaining proximity to Allah, as noted in a number of traditions. The most famous among these is where the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) prayed regarding ‘Alī (a) and by extension, his progeny the Ahl al-Bayt (a), “O Allah, love those who love him, and be an enemy to those who have enmity for him.”¹⁷⁵

Unlike in other religious traditions like Christianity, in Islam love for Allah has to be expressed through practical submission and obedience to His commands. It is not sufficient to say that one loves God and is loved by Him, so somehow he automatically deserves to be the recipient of Divine grace and forgiveness. In the Qur’ān, we find that Allah commanded the Prophet to tell those who claimed that they love Him: Say [to them, O Prophet], “If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Merciful.” (Q3:31). Therefore we see that love without its practical expression through obedience is insufficient.

¹⁷⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 62.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 294, h. 3.

Walā' and *walāyah* refer to a kind of closeness and proximity which brings two things or individuals together to such a degree that there is hardly any gap between them. Keeping this in mind, we realize that *walāyah* is different from what is commonly perceived as love. It is not merely an emotion. It is a voluntary action undertaken on purpose, with complete volition. This action is known as *tawallī*, and its opposite is *tabarrī* (dissociation). Both *tawallī* with the friends of Allah and *tabarrī* with the enemies of Allah are obligatory in Islam. The Glorious Qur'ān unequivocally states: *O you who believe! Do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends, offering them affection, for they have certainly disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth...* (Q60:1).

Just as we, as believers, love Allah and all those whom He loves, especially the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and the Ahl al-Bayt (a), we should also espouse *walā'* and closeness towards other believers as well. The Qur'ān tells us: *The believing men and the believing women are awliyā' of one another...* (Q9:71). Indeed, those who adhere to the same beliefs are automatically drawn towards each other. They are like a single body, as the well-known saying of the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) states, “The example of believers, in their loving one another and being merciful towards each other, is like that of a single body; when part of it is afflicted [with an ailment], the other parts rally to it through sleeplessness and fever.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 58, p. 150.

فَاصْفَحِ اللَّهُمَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُ أَجْرَمْتُهُ مِنْ زَلَلِي وَخَطَائِي،

So overlook the slips and errors I have committed, O Allah,

The 'fa' at the beginning of this sentence links it to the previous one, meaning that after you have knocked at the door of Divine mercy, fled towards Allah, and clutched His cords, you seek His pardon and forgiveness. The term *zalal* refers to slips and specifically denotes lapses in action or behaviour, whereas *khaṭā'* is more general and encompasses all kinds of human errors, and even sins, be they in speech or action.¹⁷⁷ In some manuscripts, the phrase '*ammā kānā minnī min zalālī wa khaṭā'ī*' is found instead,¹⁷⁸ though this does not change the meaning of the statement.

It is important to note that the action of acknowledging and admitting one's mistakes and sins is a necessary step in seeking repentance. There are a number of traditions that underscore this fact. For instance, it is reported that Imam al-Bāqir (a) said, "Allah only requires two qualities from people: that they acknowledge His blessings, so that He may increase it for them, and that they admit their sins, so that He may forgive them."¹⁷⁹ And he also said, "By Allah, none is saved from sin except he who admits it."¹⁸⁰ And it is likewise reported that Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (a) said, "By Allah, the only way a servant can be saved from sin is through admission

¹⁷⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 63.

¹⁷⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 203.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 426, ḥ. 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, ḥ. 1.

[of guilt, followed by repentance].”¹⁸¹ So we see how important it is to admit our sins before Allah.

Some scholars note that there are at least five benefits that can be gained by admitting one’s sins before Allah, namely: Turning towards Allah and away from everything else (*al-inqitā‘ ilā Allah*); becoming broken-hearted (*inkisār al-qalb*), which is a merit, and indeed Allah is with those who are heartbroken; it may lead to softheartedness (*riqqat al-qalb*), which is a sign of sincerity; it might lead to weeping out of awe, which is a praiseworthy act; and finally, it is in accordance with what has been taught to us by the Infallible guides, as seen in the traditions mentioned above.¹⁸²

The term *al-ṣafḥ* means to overlook, and originally it meant to turn one’s face away from something. So essentially, it denotes turning one’s face away from someone’s misdeed, thereby overlooking it. Though the two terms are similar in meaning, there are some intricate differences between *al-ṣafḥ* and *al-‘afw*. While both generally mean ‘to forgive’, *al-ṣafḥ* is said to be like turning away from someone’s sin, but without doing away with its effects, whereas *al-‘afw* is complete forgiveness with no effects of sin left remaining. Others say that *al-‘afw* means that one will not be punished for the forgiven sin, whereas with *al-ṣafḥ*, one is not taken to account or blamed; rather, his sin is overlooked.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 484, ḥ. 3.

¹⁸² Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 132.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

وَأَقْلِنِي مِنْ صَرْعَةٍ رِدَائِي،

and pardon me for the falling [and entanglement] of my robe.

This line of the supplication has been interpreted in different ways by commentators. Some commentators say that the term *ridāʿī* means ‘my destruction’ (from *radāʿ*) and not ‘my robe’. Furthermore, the structure of the sentence is such that *ṣarʿah* can be read as transitive or intransitive, so it could mean: for falling into destruction, or from being thrown into destruction.¹⁸⁴ The term ‘falling’ here is considered by some to be a reference to being distanced from Allah due to all the sins that one commits, and this leads one to destruction.¹⁸⁵

The falling of one’s robe is deemed a metaphor for exposure of one’s flaws and sins. That is because the robe or garment one wears hides the flaws of the physical body. It also gives one outer beauty, presenting a positive impression to others, but once it falls off, that is no longer the case. Likewise, some commentators say that the meaning of this metaphor is deficiency of the human soul in those traits that give it beauty, such as courage, chastity, and wisdom.¹⁸⁶ It has been noted that in some manuscripts the word *dāʿī* has been recorded instead of *ridāʿī*, and that gives the meaning of sickness, in which case it would refer to sickness of

¹⁸⁴ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁵ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 204.

¹⁸⁶ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 63.

the heart.¹⁸⁷ However, it is also likely that this is a scribal error, or that the first letter of the word has been effaced.

It is worthy of note that *ṣarʿah* is related to the ailment called *ṣarʿ* (epilepsy) and thus, there is a possibility that this line of the *duʿāʾ* is referring to the internal diseases that plague the human soul, from which we seek Allah's protection.¹⁸⁸ Some commentators have interpreted the term *ridāʾ* (robe) as representing the many sins and misdeeds committed by an individual, until he is covered from head to toe in them, just as his body would be covered by a robe.¹⁸⁹

An interesting point to note is how the consequence of evil actions and disobedience is always negative, and it makes one fall lower and lower, whereas the outcome of good deeds and submission to the commands of Allah is rising up and ascending. Becoming lowlier and vile is the result of the former whereas becoming loftier and virtuous is the effect of the latter. The ranks through which one is raised higher is referred to as *darajāt*, whereas the levels through which one descends lower is known as *darakāt*. Indeed, these two terms have been employed in the Qurʾān itself when it says: *Verily the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths (al-dark al-asfal) of the Fire, and you will find no one to help them (Q4:145). And: ...We elevate in rank (narfaʿu darajāt) whoever We will... (Q6:83).*

¹⁸⁷ Khūʾī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 179.

¹⁸⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 63.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Khawājūʾī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 133.

فَأَنْتَ سَيِّدِي وَمَوْلَايَ وَمُعْتَمِدِي وَرَجَائِي،

For You are my Master, my Guardian, my Support, and my Hope,

In this line of the supplication, one reiterates his relationship with Allah. He clearly states that Allah is his master, thereby admitting that he is His slave and thus has a responsibility to submit to His will and obey His every command. He acknowledges that Allah is his guardian, and without Him he would not have security and protection from anything or anyone that might harm him. He also emphasizes that Allah is the only one Whom he can rely upon for support, since it is only He who is omnipotent. And he has hope in Him because He is a kind and compassionate Sustainer.

In essence, this line gives the reason for the supplicant's prayer and beseeching Allah, since it is but natural that when a slave errs in some way, he has no recourse and nowhere else to turn but to his master. The use of emphasis through *innaka* underscores this fact.¹⁹⁰ The word *mawlā* itself has numerous meanings including master, benefactor, provider, emancipator, helper, adorer, follower, companion, cousin, servant, protector, guardian, and so on.¹⁹¹ It is the context of the statement that gives us an understanding of the intended meaning. In this line, it is quite evident that the meaning intended is protector or guardian.

The term *rajāʾī*, meaning 'my hope', actually means the one in Whom I place my hope (*marjuwwī*). According to the traditions, the hope one has in Allah and His mercy should be balanced by a

¹⁹⁰ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 134.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

similar level of fear (*khawf*) of His punishment. Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) reported from his father, Imam al-Bāqir (a), who said, “There is no believing servant but that there are two lights in his heart: the light of fear and the light of hope. If one was measured against the other, it would not exceed it (meaning both are equal in intensity).”¹⁹² Scholars tell us that the reason for this important balance is that if a believer has more hope, he will feel a sense of security from Divine punishment, whereas if he has more fear, he will feel a sense of despondency and hopelessness.

The mystics often refer to hope and fear as two wings that are required to take off in spiritual flight. If both of them are symmetrical and balanced, one can fly and soar, but if one of them is shorter than the other, or deficient and flawed in any way, then any attempt at flying will only result in falling face first on the ground. Indeed it is reported that Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) was once told, “A group of your followers (*mawālī*)¹⁹³ keep committing sins while saying, ‘We have hope [in Allah’s mercy].’” He responded, “They have lied. They are not our followers. They are a people who have been misled by their false hopes. Whoever hopes for something should work for it, and whoever fears a thing should flee from it.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 71, ḥ. 13.

¹⁹³ *Mawālī* can mean friends, lovers, admirers, servants, followers, etc. In this context it means followers.

¹⁹⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 68, ḥ. 6.

وَأَنْتَ غَايَةُ مَطْلُوبِي وَمُنَايَ فِي مُنْقَلَبِي وَمَثْوَايَ،

and You are the object of my quest and my desire, in my transient life
and [in] my ultimate abode.

The two terms *munqalab* and *mathwā* have been interpreted differently by commentators. Some consider the meaning to be ‘the Hereafter’ and ‘the grave’ respectively.¹⁹⁵ Others have considered both terms to be in reference to the Hereafter, if *munqalab* is taken to mean a place of return, and *mathwā* means a place of settlement. Nevertheless, there are a number of other possible meanings for these two words. For example, they could also mean this world and the Hereafter, or journeying and remaining in one’s abode, respectively.¹⁹⁶ Most commentators say, however, that *munqalab* refers to the transient life of this world while *mathwā* refers to the Hereafter, and this meaning fits best with the context of this line of the *du‘ā*.¹⁹⁷

Mystics and those engaged in spiritual wayfaring often note that one’s goal should be Allah, and not Paradise or other rewards that have been promised to those who submit to Him and worship Him. They say this is because yearning for Paradise is also a form of avarice and selfishness, and these are vile traits to possess. Since everything other than Allah is imperfect, seeking anything other than Him would be like an imperfect being seeking something imperfect, and that is of little use or benefit. Rather, the ultimate goal for human beings is to seek proximity to the All

¹⁹⁵ Khū‘ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 205.

¹⁹⁷ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 64.

Perfect Being. That is why they say that spiritual wayfaring is a journey towards perfection.¹⁹⁸

As noted in the tradition of Amīr al-Muʿminīn quoted earlier, there are three types of worship, namely: worshipping Allah out of fear, worshipping Allah out of desire for Paradise, or worshipping Him because He is worthy of worship. Another similar tradition tells us that there are three types of worshippers: those who worship Allah out of fear – this is the worship of slaves, those who worship Allah seeking reward thereby – this is the worship of hired hands (*ujarāʿ*), and those who worship Allah out of their love [and reverence] for Him – this is the worship of the free.¹⁹⁹ It is perhaps in trying to depict this reality that the story of the lady mystic Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah rushing to “extinguish Hell” with her bucket and “burn Paradise” with her torch became famous.

When it is said that Allah is one’s goal (*ghāyah*), that can have three possible meanings. It could mean that Allah is one’s goal in that one turns towards Him and seeks proximity to Him, in which case *ghāyah* would mean purpose (*maqṣūd*) or aim (*gharaḍ*). Or it could mean that Allah is one’s end and objective (*nihāyah*) meaning that it is He who is sought and we will all return to Him. Finally, it could mean that Allah is the goal of all thoughts and deliberation, and one wishes to reflect upon His glory, and Divine attributes. These are the possible meanings of this line of the supplication according to one of the commentators.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 84, ḥ. 5.

²⁰⁰ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, pp. 136-137.

إِلٰهِي كَيْفَ تَطْرُدُ مِسْكِينًا اَلْتَجَأَ اِلَيْكَ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ هَارِبًا،

My Lord, how can You drive away a beggar who seeks refuge in You as he flees from sins?

The word *miskīn* refers to an indigent, needy, and poor person. Here, it specifically connotes one who is spiritually poor and has little in the way of good deeds, virtuous actions, and sincere worship. The seeking of refuge in Allah by such an individual is a metaphor for repentance. Just as a beggar would turn to a generous individual with hope for his assistance, a sinner turns to Allah, as He is the most generous of all, with hope for His forgiveness.²⁰¹ The reality is that all human beings are needy and indigent before Allah, and it is only Allah who is without need. The Qur^{ān} clearly states: *O humankind! It is you who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised* (Q35:15).

Being aware that one is needy before Allah is a positive trait, and according to some commentators, that is why the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “Poverty is my pride.”²⁰² This is because when one realizes that he is always, at every moment of his existence, in need of Allah, and understands that everything belongs to Allah, even what man himself possesses, then that realization and understanding is praiseworthy and leads to a person’s enlightenment.²⁰³ The seeking of refuge here shows that one is not only needy, but also desperate. And indeed, it is this desperation that leads one to the door of Allah, seeking His mercy

²⁰¹ Khū^ṭī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 179.

²⁰² Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 69, p. 30.

²⁰³ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 67.

and forgiveness from sins that have engulfed him, and are causing harm to him in his life.

It is obvious that the question being asked in this line of the supplication is a rhetorical one. It implies denial and also signifies dismay and surprise. Indeed, Allah would never drive away any of His servants who sincerely turn to Him. The word *taṭrudu*, from *ṭarada*, means to drive away or repel, and it depicts not simply withholding assistance from one who asks, but rather shooing him away and spurning him, which is far worse. Indeed, even when one is unable to assist a beggar, we are taught that he should at least offer some solace in the form of kind words. The Qurʾān states: *A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by hurtful words... O believers, do not nullify your charity with reminders and hurtful words...* (Q2:263-4).

The fleeing of a servant towards Allah has certain stages. The first stage is fleeing from one consequence to another, such as fleeing from the wrath of Allah to His mercy. It is as though one only sees Allah in His actions (*afʿāl*), so he flees from one to the other. The second stage is where a servant ascends from witnessing of actions to the state of proximity to Allah and the source of the actions, namely the Divine attributes (*ṣifāt*). The third stage is one where a person finally ascends from the stage of focusing on Divine attributes towards the Divine Essence (*dhāt*). In this lofty stage, one flees from Allah to Allah, as described in the verse of the Qurʾān: *...they knew for certain that there was no refuge from Allah but in Him...* (Q9:118).²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 139.

أَمْ كَيْفَ تُخَيِّبُ مُسْتَرْشِداً قَصَدَ إِلَى جَنَابِكَ سَاعِياً

Or how can You disappoint one who comes running to Your threshold seeking guidance?

This is also a rhetorical question, for indeed Allah would never cause anyone who sincerely came to Him for guidance to fail and be disappointed. The word *sā'iyā* denotes striving, rushing, and running. It shows that the seeker is truly desirous of the guidance that he seeks, and wishes to attain it as soon as he can.²⁰⁵ In other versions of the supplication, the word *sāghibā* is found instead of *sā'iyā*, and some commentators prefer this reading because it means hungry or tired, and they say that it fits better with the context of this passage of the *du'ā'*. As such, there is a possibility that a scribal error occurred here and *sāghibā* was written mistakenly as *sā'iyā*.²⁰⁶

Seeking guidance from Allah is of the utmost importance for believers, and is something that is practiced in every prayer, since the phrase *guide us on the right path* is part of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* which is recited at least twice in every *ṣalāh*. If it merely meant being a Muslim and professing faith in the religion of Islam, what would be the purpose of continually repeating this supplication in every prayer? The answer to this is found in the *Qur'ān* itself. Firstly, guidance has degrees just as faith has degrees. One verse states: *...But if you forget, then remember your Lord and say, "May my Lord guide me to what is closer to the right than this."* (Q18:24).

²⁰⁵ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 205.

²⁰⁶ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 67.

Secondly, one also has to pray to remain on the right path and not stray from it. A supplication that is found in the Qurʾān, and is often recited by believers, states: *Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself; indeed, You are Ever Giving* (Q3:8).

The verb *tukhayyab* comes from *khāba* which means to be deprived or disappointed, and here it means that one is made to face disappointment by being prevented from attaining what he seeks. That which is being sought here is *rashād*, meaning right guidance and steadfastness, as understood from the term *mustarshid*. It is related to the term *rushd*, which refers to attaining some goodness or rectitude. Hence, guiding someone who has lost his way is termed *irshād al-ḍāl*. For this reason, some have said that *rushd* is a special blessing that makes a person succeed in acquiring what is good for him, and keeps him away from that which would cause him harm. That is why Allah says in the Qurʾān: *And indeed we granted Ibrāhīm rectitude [and sound judgment] (rushdahu), for We knew him well* (Q21:51).²⁰⁷

The way in which a person should seek out right guidance is implied in this line – it should be something one strives for seriously. Indeed, the importance of guidance is such that it deserves one’s full attention, focus, and effort. Along with supplication to Allah, one should do all he can to follow the means of guidance that Allah has granted to humankind, in the form of revelation (the Glorious Qurʾān), and the teachings of the specially selected guides (the Infallibles). Indeed, we are told in

²⁰⁷ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 141.

the Qurʾān that: *man will have nothing but what he strives for*
(Q53:39).

أَمْ كَيْفَ تَرُدُّ ظِمَانًا وَّوَرَدًا إِلَىٰ حِيَاضِكَ شَارِبًا؟

Or how can You turn away a thirsty person who comes to Your pools to drink?

The quintessential sign of an individual's humanity and compassion is how he reacts to a person, or even an animal, who is thirsty. Sharing water with the thirsty is not a favour, it is a requirement. This rhetorical question means that just as it could never be imagined that the Most Merciful Creator would ever turn away one of His thirsty creatures, He would surely not turn the humble supplicant away unheeded. In fact, according to some commentators, the term *hiyād* (pools) has been mentioned in plural to signify the numerous ways in which Allah shows His mercy to the creatures.²⁰⁸

Water is so abundant that one who shares some with a thirsty person would not fear loss, as he may easily then reacquire the water later. This makes it a good example to employ, since when Allah grants us anything out of His mercy, it reduces naught from His limitless treasures.²⁰⁹ The term *zam'ān* means thirsty, and is the opposite of *rayyān* which means quenched. In this line, however, it actually metaphorically refers to the sinful, needy supplicant who desperately requires Allah's forgiveness and mercy just as a parched individual is in dire need of water to quench his thirst.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 68.

²⁰⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 206.

²¹⁰ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 142.

The pools of Allah are a figurative reference to the mercy, pardon, and forgiveness of Allah. The word *shāribā* denotes the purpose for which the thirsty person comes towards the pools, i.e. to drink therefrom and quench his thirst. The traditions also mention certain pools that are of special significance for believers. For instance, the Pool of Kawthar, about which it is reported that Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a) said, "I will be with the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), and with me will be my progeny at the Pool [of Kawthar], and we will verily drive away our enemies from it and let our close friends drink therefrom. And whoever takes a drink from it will never be thirsty again after that."²¹¹

The Arabs lived in harsh deserts and water that was sweet and cool was considered to be of great value to them. Finding an oasis in the desert was deemed a great opportunity and blessing. In one tradition, Imam 'Alī (a) says, "Whoever finds a place where sweet water flows and he can quench his thirst with it but does not take advantage of it, he will soon feel thirsty and seek it, but will not find it."²¹² Likewise, the opportunity to repent for one's sins and reform oneself in this world should be seized before it is too late. Therefore, using this metaphor of thirst and water in this line of the *du'ā'*, we express our desire to repent for our sins and seek Divine mercy.

²¹¹ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 2468.

²¹² *Ibid*, ḥ. 7880.

كَلَّا وَحِيَاضُكَ مُتْرَعَةٌ فِي ضَنَّاكَ الْمُحُولِ،

Never! For Your pools are full [even] in the hard times of drought,

The notion that Allah could ever turn away a desperate, needy, and thirsty individual never crosses our minds. This is something unfathomable for those who believe that He is the All-Merciful and Omnibenevolent Creator. Furthermore, His pools are ever brimming and full, meaning that His treasures never deplete, and His mercy and kindness is endless. This is even when there are times of drought and the pools of others have gone dry, and there is no expectation of getting quenched or having one's needs met from their pools. Since one only turns away the needy either because of his niggardliness or because he does not have enough to give, and both of these scenarios do not apply to Allah in any way, therefore He would never turn away a sincere seeker.²¹³

In fact, in one supplication we are told that the more Allah grants, the more His generosity abounds.²¹⁴ This is quite the opposite of what we find among human beings who may start off giving generously, but as they continue giving, their generosity diminishes. The word *ḍank* means narrow or strait, and *muḥūl* is the plural of *maḥl*, meaning drought and lack of rainfall. This line of the supplication proves that the mercy of Allah is always available and present. When one has nowhere else to turn, having had all the doors shut on his face, he can still always turn to the door of Allah, which remains accessible for him at all times in his

²¹³ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 68.

²¹⁴ Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, vol. 3, p. 109. (*Lā tazīduhu kathrat al-‘aṭā’ illā jūdan wa karama*).

life.

The *kallā* at the beginning of this line aims to express one's complete negation of any such possibility – Allah would never turn one away, especially since His mercy is overflowing and encompassing. This reality keeps hope alive for every sinner who wishes to repent and reform himself. Allah says in the Qurʾān: *...Verily Allah forgives all sins. He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful* (39:53). One report attributed to the Noble Prophet (ṣ) states that Allah will show such mercy on the Day of Resurrection that is beyond what any creature ever imagined; [seeing this,] even Iblīs will entertain some hope of attaining some of His mercy.²¹⁵

As mentioned earlier, repentance has certain conditions that must be met. It is foolhardy and delusional to hope for mercy and forgiveness without taking any concrete steps to mend one's ways and reform oneself. Simply hoping and expecting to be granted pardon through Divine mercy without undertaking any action is wrong, and such kind of hope is actually one of the ways in which Satan beguiles believers.²¹⁶ A beautiful tradition from Imam al-Riḍā (a) states that Allah, the Almighty, sends down an angel every night, on the last third of the night – and on Thursdays from the beginning of the night – commanding him to proclaim, 'Is there any seeker so that I may grant what he seeks? Is there any penitent one so that I may forgive him?...' and he continues saying this until dawn.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 145.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

وَبَابِكَ مَفْتُوحٌ لِلطَّلَبِ وَالْوُغُولِ،

and Your door is open for petition and entrance,

The terms *al-ṭalab* and *al-wughūl* have been interpreted by some commentators to refer to ‘the invited’ and ‘the uninvited’ respectively.²¹⁸ Other commentators interpret these two words as meaning ‘seeking’ and ‘entrance’ respectively.²¹⁹ Those who have proposed the first interpretation say it is possible that one is expressing his lowliness and inferiority, thinking himself unworthy of being invited into the realm of Divine mercy. However, since Allah has invited certain groups, like the Prophets, Imams, and the *Awliyā*,³ and the door is opened for them, he seeks to gain entry through Allah’s door along with them.²²⁰

If a person fails to go through the door of Allah’s forgiveness and mercy, it is due to his own obstinacy and recalcitrance, because the door is open and accessible to all. The word *bāb* here could be a reference to Allah’s door of forgiveness (*maghfirah*) which includes His mercy, grace, kindness, and compassion. Alternatively, His door is a metaphor for a means (*waṣīlah*) through which His blessings may be attained.²²¹ In a way, this line of the supplication is an answer to the question: how do you know that the beggar, the seeker, and the thirsty one will never be turned away? It is because the door of Allah’s mercy is open and accessible for everyone.

²¹⁸ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 180.

²¹⁹ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 69.

²²⁰ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 209.

²²¹ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 146.

It is narrated that a man once asked Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah, “I have committed many sins, do you think that Allah will forgive me if I seek repentance?” She responded, “Woe to you! He invites those who have turned their backs to Him, so how would He not accept one who turns towards Him [in repentance]?!”²²² Indeed, Allah has issued an open invitation to His servants to call out and supplicate to Him, promising that He will indeed respond to their supplications (Q40:60).

In the traditions, we find that the Ahl al-Bayt (a) are described, and they even describe themselves, as the ‘door of Allah’. For instance, in one tradition Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a) said, “We are the proofs of Allah, we are the door of Allah, we are the speech of Allah, we are the face of Allah, we are the eyes of Allah among His creatures, and we are the bearers of the authority of Allah among His servants.”²²³ Furthermore, Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a) has also specifically been called the ‘door of Allah’, such that if one wishes to approach Allah, he needs to go through him.²²⁴

A noteworthy point here is also that the door is described as being open (*maftūḥ*), and that means that once one arrives at it, there is nothing preventing him from entering it. It does not need to be unlocked or opened, since it is already open and one only has to walk in through it. This shows the extent of Allah’s mercy and how easily accessible it is. Hence there is no excuse for anyone to remain unrepentant and deprive himself of Allah’s mercy.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 145, ḥ. 7.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 196, ḥ. 1.

وَأَنْتَ غَايَةُ الْمَسْئُولِ وَنَهَايَةُ الْمَأْمُولِ،

and You are the goal of petitions and the object of hopes!

Some versions read ‘su’ul’ instead of ‘mas’ul’, but the meaning is the same. Allah is the final goal and objective that is sought and petitioned. That is because every human being seeks to attain perfection in all his qualities, and the All-perfect Being is only Allah, and He alone is the source of all perfection. That is why He is the final goal and objective of all seekers and petitioners.²²⁵ Furthermore, all petitions and pleas end up with Allah, and He is the ultimate One in Whom all have hope, since the affairs of all of creation are in His hands.²²⁶

Every individual has certain needs and wants which he seeks in his life, but striving for Allah’s proximity and pleasure is the highest goal, above which there can be nothing that is sought. Some commentators say that even though this line of the supplication seems to be a statement of fact, it actually gives the meaning of an imperative. It instructs us to make Allah the ultimate goal, such that whatever action we undertake in our lives, even if it is as mundane as changing our clothes or eating food, it should be done with the intention of preparing ourselves to worship Allah and thereby seek His proximity and pleasure.²²⁷

Since Allah has control and authority over everything in creation, and nothing is independent of Him, every action that is performed can be undertaken for His sake. That is why the *alif* and

²²⁵ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 69.

²²⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 209.

²²⁷ Al-Khawājūṟī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 147.

lām before the words *masʿūl* and *maʿmūl* are to show inclusion of all possible instances (*istighrāq*).²²⁸ However, it is also possible that this line means once a person has tried and failed to acquire what he needs from others, and becomes despondent, there is still a final hope for him that Allah will respond to his pleas and provide him with what he needs.

Traditions tell us how those who have no other recourse but to turn to Allah for assistance, especially after they have been oppressed and there is no one to stand up in their defense, have their prayers quickly answered by Allah. And those who oppress them face a terrible yet deserved punishment for their tyranny. Amīr al-Muʿminīn (a) is reported to have said in this regard, “The most piercing arrow is the supplication of the oppressed.”²²⁹ Furthermore, having hope only in Allah is one of the ways of ensuring that your supplications are answered. Imam ʿAlī (a) is reported to have said, “If any of you wishes that he should never ask Allah for anything but that He grants it to him, then he must lose hope in people and abandon hope in anyone other than Allah, the Glorified.”²³⁰

The greatest thing that one can hope for is being among those with whom Allah is pleased, and that is what every believer should strive towards and make the goal of his or her life.

²²⁸ Ibid, p. 148.

²²⁹ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 3091.

²³⁰ Ibid, ḥ. 3096.

إِلٰهِي هَذِهِ اَزْمَةٌ نَفْسِي عَقَلْتُهَا بِعِقَالِ مَشِيَّتِكَ،

*My Lord, these are the reins of my soul which I have fastened to the ties
of Your will.*

The pronoun ‘these’ in this line of the supplication is considered by some commentators to refer to the preceding eighteen lines of the *du‘ā*, and all that one has expressed in those statements as being that which stem from one’s soul. The supplicant leaves all his pleas to the will of Allah, knowing and trusting that He will only do what is best for him.²³¹ It has alternatively been suggested that perhaps the word ‘reins’ is mentioned in the plural form because it represents the numerous inclinations and desires of the soul (*nafs*). By saying that one has fastened these reins to the will of Allah, a person is expressing his satisfaction and contentment with whatever Allah decides for him.²³²

Use of the term ‘reins’, like the reins used to control animals, is a kind of self-debasement and an indication of utter humbleness before the All-powerful Creator. And giving up these reins is akin to giving up all control and decision-making, leaving it solely in the hands of Allah.²³³ The term *‘aqala* means to fasten and tie tightly, to prevent movement or escape. For this reason, intelligence is called *‘aql* since it holds back the intelligent one from doing improper and inappropriate things. *‘Iqāl* refers to the rope that is used to tie camels’ forelegs in such a manner as to prevent them from walking.

²³¹ Khūṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 181-182.

²³² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 70.

²³³ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 210.

The soul is thus, in this line, likened to a refractory camel. And indeed, the base soul does tend to incline obstinately towards things that have been forbidden. It is perhaps due to this stubborn nature that a single rein is not sufficient to control it, and many reins are required to bring it under control. And it is all these reins that we are placing under the control of the Omnipotent Lord.²³⁴ By doing this, we are in a way acknowledging the fact that without His help, we are incapable of fighting off all the urges and desires that beset our soul.

In the materialistic world wherein we live, many are beguiled into thinking that the source of joy, happiness, and success is the amount of material wealth one possesses. This kind of thinking opens up the doors for Satan and the inciting soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) to push an individual further away from the path of truth and righteousness. As such, contentment and trust in Allah is of even greater importance to us today than it ever was in the past. Indeed, Imam ‘Alī (a) is reported to have said, “One who lacks contentment is not made affluent by riches.”²³⁵

In the same way, realizing one’s own weaknesses and inability while leaving matters in the hands of Allah, placing one’s full trust in Him, leads one to felicity in both worlds. Furthermore, trusting Allah has many other benefits. Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a) is reported to have said, “Whoever trusts in Allah, doubts get cleared for him, his sustenance is catered for, and he is saved from tribulations.”²³⁶

²³⁴ Al-Khawājī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 149.

²³⁵ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 8379.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, ḥ. 10780.

وَهَذِهِ أَعْبَاءُ ذُنُوبِي دَرَأْتُهَا بِعَفْوِكَ وَرَحْمَتِكَ،

These are the burdens of my sins [that] I have averted with Your forgiveness and mercy.

A'ba' is the plural of 'ib^{um}, which refers to a packed load or burden that is heavy to carry. Indeed, one's sins are a heavy burden on an individual's soul. The Glorious Qur'an itself describes sins and misdeeds as a burden when it says: *No bearer shall bear the burden of another and if one who is heavily burdened calls for it to be carried [by another], nothing of it will be carried [for him], even if he is near of kin...* (Q35:18). In this line of the supplication, we are saying: O Allah, here is my heavy burden of sins which I have only managed to avert, hinder, and repel with the help of Your mercy and forgiveness.²³⁷

Describing one's sins as a large pack of goods, or a heavy material burden that one has to carry, gives it a tangible feeling as something very real and not just a concept or idea. Thinking of sins in this way and visualizing them as something that can be perceived by the senses gives one the realization that sins do indeed have an actual effect on a person, and their consequences are very real and tangible. Some commentators have suggested that the heavy burden being referred to here is actually the book of deeds that has been filled with the records of one's sins in the world.²³⁸

²³⁷ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 210.

²³⁸ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 150.

After having admitted that one has committed so many sins that they are like a heavy load which he has to carry with himself, it is as though he is asked the question: then what will you do about them, given that you are aware of the severity of Allah's chastisement in the Hereafter? So he replies: I hereby repel them and avert them and their effects from myself through repentance and seeking forgiveness, with complete reliance on the encompassing mercy of Allah.²³⁹

It is important for believers to constantly remind themselves of the misdeeds they have committed and seek forgiveness for them. Acknowledgement of one's mistakes and errors is the first step in repentance, and those who stubbornly stick to their sinful ways without admitting their fault are in for a rude awakening once they leave this world and the reality of their state becomes apparent to them. Therefore, as we see in this line of the supplication, we should always be cognizant of our sinful state and admit our wrongdoings. Imam 'Alī (a) is reported to have said in this regard, "One who admits his wrongdoing deserves forgiveness."²⁴⁰ And the converse of this must therefore also be true: one who does not admit his wrongdoing does not deserve forgiveness.

Thinking of sins as heavy burdens is useful in understanding the effects of misdeeds in one's life. Imagine having to traverse a long distance carrying such a heavy burden – it would certainly be something quite arduous. On the other hand, the same distance travelled with a very light burden would be much easier.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 6244.

Similarly, having fewer sins and misdeeds leaves one with a lighter burden in the Hereafter, making it much easier for him.

وَهَذِهِ أَهْوَائِي الْمُضِلَّةُ وَكَلَّتْهَا إِلَى جَنَابِ لُطْفِكَ وَرَأْفَتِكَ،

*And these are my perverse caprices that I leave at the threshold of
Your clemency and kindness.*

Leaving one's misguiding and perverse desires and caprices at the threshold of Allah's grace and kindness means relying on Him for protection against such corrupting whims, so that one is not swayed by them from the right path.²⁴¹ Some commentators say that since the adjective 'perverse' (*muḍillah*) has been used, these caprices are actually a reference to the temptations and incitements of Satan which mislead and misguide a person, causing him to divert from the straight path.²⁴² Others say that it refers to innovations and other forms of misguidance that turn away a person from righteousness.²⁴³

It is possible that this line is a reference to the desires that are brought about by looking at what others possess and coveting those things, which in turn leads one astray. By leaving such desires 'at the threshold' of Allah, one is essentially asking to be freed from the jealousy and greed that one feels due to witnessing the blessings of others.²⁴⁴ The word *janāb*, translated as threshold, refers to a place of alighting, a courtyard, or a neighbourhood.²⁴⁵ Basically, this phrase means leaving the matter of one's caprices before the grace of Allah, so that He may assist one regarding

²⁴¹ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 184.

²⁴² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 71.

²⁴³ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 210.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 211.

²⁴⁵ Al-Khawājī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 152.

them and grant protection from their misleading effects.

The grace (*luṭf*) of Allah is considered by scholars to be something subtle, and refers to His knowledge of the minutest details of His creation, as well as what would harm or benefit them. Even when it is not apparent to the creatures themselves, He always grants them that which is beneficial to them, with kindness and clemency. It also refers to the subtle way in which He deals with His creatures, providing them with what is good for them.²⁴⁶ As with the previous line of the supplication, we are again expressing our reliance on Allah and leaving our corrupting inclinations in His hands, so that He may remove their ill effects from us and protect us from their misguidance.

Unfortunately, many people in the world are slaves to their vain desires and caprice (*ahwāʾ*), and even act subserviently before them, as if their desire was their god! The Qurʾān says about such individuals: *Have you considered the one who has taken his whims [and desires] to be his god and whom Allah has let stray knowingly, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and placed a cover on his sight? Who will then guide him after Allah? Will you not then reflect?* (Q45:23). And Amīr al-Muʾminīn (a) has warned believers not to submit to their whims and desires in this manner when he said, “Do not be a slave to vain desires and coveted objects.”²⁴⁷ Since it can be difficult to counter the deluge of desires that besets one’s mind and heart, the best thing to do is to pray to Allah and seek His help in dealing with such misleading inclinations.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurur al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 10949.

فَاجْعَلِ اللَّهُمَّ صَبَاحِي هَذَا نَازِلًا عَلَيَّ بِضِيَاءِ الْهُدَى،

So, O Allah, make this morning of mine enter upon me with the illumination of guidance,

The whole theme of this supplication relates to the rising of a new dawn and the start of a new day. In this line of the supplication, we are asking Allah to make this morning one that brings guidance along with its illumination. The letter *fa* at the beginning links this statement to those that preceded it. It is as if one is declaring that he has fastened the reins of his soul to His will, and laid down his burden of sins before His mercy and forgiveness, placing his corrupting vain desires at the threshold of His clemency and kindness. He has done all this asking Allah to make this morning of his one that is filled with the light of His guidance.

Guidance and righteousness are often likened to illumination and light, whereas misguidance and wickedness are portrayed as darkness and obscurity. The Glorious Qurʾān states: *Allah is the Guardian of the believers; He brings them out of darkness into light. As for the disbelievers, their patrons are the Tāghūt, who drive them out of light into darkness. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever]* (Q2:257). Indeed, it is in the illumination of light and its brightness that one can clearly see where he is and make out the path he needs to follow to get to his goal. But when it is pitch dark, one cannot see anything and easily stumbles and loses his way.

Some commentators have said it is possible that the ‘illumination’ of guidance refers to the tools and means by which one attains faith and guidance, including personal qualities as

well as other factors and causes, which include rational proofs that give rise to belief, as well as divinely inspired success (*tawfiq*). It also includes the luminous teachings imparted by the Infallible guides that enter the hearts of believers like a bright light which illuminates the path to strong, unshakable belief, good actions, and sincere intentions. All of this, in turn, repel negative inclinations and aspirations from an individual.²⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that all the factors that lead one towards guidance and righteousness are commonly considered bright and luminous while those that mislead one towards wrongdoing and misguidance are considered dark and murky. That is why the *sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) and all the knowledge and guidance that has reached us from him has been described as a bright light. Conversely, the innovations that have been introduced into religion, or have crept in, and have led to ignorance and misguidance, are often depicted as darkness.²⁴⁹

The idea that this light of guidance descends from above can either be considered a metaphor, or could be a reference to the way the sun's light comes down to the earth, thereby illuminating it for all those who are upon it. This matches perfectly with the description of early morning, where the darkness of night is dispelled by the rays of sunlight that reaches the earth. In any case, as stated in the words of the supplication itself, the light that is being referred to is the light of guidance, not merely any kind of illumination.

²⁴⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 211.

²⁴⁹ Al-Khawājūṟī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 153.

وَبِالسَّلَامَةِ فِي الدِّينِ وَالدُّنْيَا،

and with safety in religion and this world.

Aside from the light of guidance, let this new day bring with it safety for us in both our religious and worldly affairs. That is what this line means. Since the word *dīn* originally meant recompense, some commentators consider it to refer, in this line, to the cause of recompense, namely faith and obedience.²⁵⁰ *Dunyā* either comes from *dunuw*, meaning close by, since it is closer to the living human being than the Hereafter, or from *danā'ah* meaning lowly, because it is the lowliest of realms. In any case, here it refers to the natural life of this world.²⁵¹

Safety in religion refers to remaining free of sins and acts of disobedience to Allah, or all those flaws of the soul that would lead to punishment in the Hereafter. On the other hand, safety in this world means being secure from physical harm and pain, hardships and afflictions. Remaining free from these difficulties in the world should give one the opportunity to devote his time and effort to worshipping Allah, and to perform righteous deeds that would ensure a prosperous future for him in the Hereafter.²⁵²

It is interesting to note that even for the ability to properly follow the tenets of religion, one needs to seek help from Allah. Those people who try to portray themselves as pious, thinking that they have independently reached some lofty station of religiosity and piety which is unmatched, are only fooling

²⁵⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 71.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 212.

themselves. Even the most basic ability to follow the injunctions of religion and avoid what it has proscribed requires the assistance of Allah. This is what the commentators say regarding the meaning of safety in religion.²⁵³

Safety in this world is attained through the acquisition of benefits and avoidance of loss and harm. However, true harm for an individual is in immersing himself in this world and its glamour. Therefore, to be truly safe here means to renounce the world and its pleasures. Being unattached to this world is the essence of *zuhd*, which is a trait of the Prophets and their vicegerents. Hence, we can understand the request for security and safety in this world to be like asking to be kept free from worldly attachments.

When Imam ‘Alī (a) describes the Noble Prophet (ﷺ), he says, “Certainly there was in the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that which apprised you of the evils of this world and its flaws; when he remained hungry in it along with his dearest ones, and despite his nearness [to Allah], the allurements of the world remained away from him. So let the observer observe intently: did Allah honour Muḥammad as a result of this or disgrace him? If he says that Allah disgraced him, he has certainly lied and uttered a grave falsehood. But if he says Allah honored him, he should know that Allah disgraced others when He extended the world to them while keeping it away from the closest of all people to Him. So let the follower emulate His Prophet, tread in his footsteps, and enter through his entrance; otherwise he will not be safe from ruin.”²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 154.

²⁵⁴ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon no. 159.

وَمَسَائِي جُنَّةً مِنْ كَيْدِ الْعَدَى وَوَقَايَةً مِنْ مُرْدِيَّاتِ الْهَوَى،

And [make] my evening a shield against the guile of enemies, and a protection against the fatal blows of caprice.

After having supplicated for how one wishes to start his morning, one now supplicates for how he wishes the end of his day to be. The term ‘*idā*’ here is the plural of ‘*adu*’, meaning enemy (as is the term *a‘dā*’ – there can be more than one plural form in Arabic). *Murdiyāt* is the plural derived from *murdī*, meaning that which leads to one’s fall, ruin, and destruction. According to some commentators, the fatal blows (*murdiyāt*) of one’s vain desire are generally linked to the two extremes of three qualities, namely chastity, courage, and wisdom. The two extremes of chastity are covetousness and passivity. The two extremes of courage are cowardice and impetuosity. And the two extremes of wisdom are cunning and imbecility. These six negative traits make up the core of the *murdiyāt*, with all the other evils being linked to them in one way or another.²⁵⁵

Just as one prays for the start of his day to be good and positive, filled with light and guidance, he must pray that the end of his day should also be safe and secure. Praying for a good end to one’s day, and indeed to one’s life, is very important because even if everything goes well in the beginning, it is the end that is most significant. Praying for protection from one’s enemies, including the base soul which, according to one tradition, is the

²⁵⁵ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 72.

“most hostile enemy” of a human being,²⁵⁶ is especially pertinent for the evening and night time. That is because it is during these times when people are done with their daytime work, and have some free time to plot and scheme.²⁵⁷

The word *junnah* means shield and armor, while *wiqāyah* means protection. The two terms are thus related. *Kayd* refers to guile, plotting, scheming, and striving to deceive with the intention of causing harm. Since it is done secretly, often the one who is plotted against is unaware of the plan to harm him. It is therefore apt that one should seek Allah’s protection from such clandestine plots that would cause him harm, and about which he is unaware, while Allah is aware of all things.²⁵⁸

The protection of Allah should be sought at all times, and Allah safeguards His righteous servants in this world as well as in the Hereafter. The Qur’ān tells us, for instance, that some people will be shielded by Him on the Day of Judgment: *So Allah will protect them from the woe of that Day, and grant them radiance and joy* (Q76:11). The protection sought from vain desires and caprice is akin to the refuge sought from evil deeds and actions. We are also told that one of the supplications of the angels for the believers is: *And safeguard them from evil deeds; and whomever You safeguard from evil deeds this day, You will have [indeed] shown him mercy, and that is the great triumph* (Q40:9).

²⁵⁶ Warrām ibn Abī Fāris, *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir*, vol. 1, p. 59.

²⁵⁷ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 212.

²⁵⁸ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 159.

إِنَّكَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَشَاءُ،

Indeed You have power over whatever You will!

This line of the supplication explains why one is asking for Allah's protection from his enemies – it is because He is omnipotent and has power over all things. His omnipotence means that nothing else that exists has unlimited power, since just as there can never be two 'infinities'. In the same way, there can never be two omnipotent beings, because one will always be more powerful than the other. Therefore, no matter how powerful any creature is, his power is still limited and is no match for the limitless power of the Omnipotent Creator. Since Allah is All-powerful, He can also remove from us those vain desires that would lead to our destruction and downfall, and protect us from all our enemies, from within and without.²⁵⁹

One who truly has power over something is at liberty to decide whether to act regarding it or not. Thus Allah cannot be forced to undertake any action, and whatever He decides is based on His own will. This is the meaning of *al-Qādir*. And since, as we mentioned above, it is impossible to have two All-powerful beings at the same time, by acknowledging that Allah is omnipotent, that itself negates any possibility of polytheism or dualism.²⁶⁰ So the belief that Allah has power over all things is itself sufficient to refute any notion of another god or god-like power.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 212.

²⁶⁰ Dualism is generally the belief that there is a god of good and a god of evil.

²⁶¹ Al-Khawājūḍī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 160.

Furthermore, the fact that Allah is omnipotent and is capable of directly influencing and even controlling human action does not mean that He would do that, since it would go against His own will to grant human beings the freedom of choice. Indeed, that is what they will be judged on and either rewarded or punished in the Hereafter.²⁶² Therefore, we note that what we are supplicating for is not that Allah should take direct control of our lives and our decisions, but that He should assist us in facing those elements and factors that could potentially sway us from our purpose and goal in this world, and lead us astray.

When we talk of power and ability with respect to human beings, we know that their capacity is limited and nobody is capable of everything at every moment. A statement by Imam ‘Alī (a) depicts this beautifully, “Everyone who is called ‘one’ other than Allah, the Glorified, is little; every honoured one other than Him is inferior; every strong one other than Him is weak; every master other than Him is a slave; every knower other than Him is a learner; and every capable one other than Him is sometimes able and other times unable.”²⁶³

Certain actions are only given value when one has power and ability. For example, forgiving others becomes a virtuous trait when one has the power to exact revenge, yet he opts to show forgiveness. Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a) is reported to have said in this regard, “One of the best actions of the powerful person is for him to show forbearance when he is angry.”²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ibid, p. 161.

²⁶³ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 529.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, ḥ. 8140.

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ،

*You give sovereignty to whomever You will, and You take away
sovereignty from whomever You will;*

This is part of a verse from the Glorious Qurʾān (Q3:26) commonly referred to as *āyat al-mulk*. The word *mulk* refers to authority or control, and is thus commonly used to mean sovereignty or kingship. It is Allah who grants dominion and control to whomever He wishes, and it is He who strips the dominion and control from whomever He wishes. While some commentators believe that the authority being referred to here is the apparent and ostensible outward authority that one has over others, an alternative interpretation suggests that it could be a reference to the Divine authority in the form of prophethood or *imāmah* that was initially granted to the Banī Isrāʾīl, but then taken away from them and placed among the Banī Ismāʿīl.²⁶⁵

Since it is obvious that what is meant here is not complete and unlimited dominion, the statement is referring to how Allah gives some level of limited control and authority to whomever He wills among His servants.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, as some exegetes have mentioned, there were groups of disbelievers who wrongly supposed that they independently possessed power and sovereignty, and that false illusion led to their ruin.²⁶⁷ It was in response to this false notion that the above verse was revealed. Indeed, the only true King and independent Sovereign is Allah, as

²⁶⁵ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 213.

²⁶⁶ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 161.

²⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 3, p. 128.

He states in the Glorious Qurʾān: ... *the kingdom is His, and to Him all praise is due, and He has power over all things* (Q64:1).

Some accounts about the occasion of its revelation state that this verse was revealed when, after the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) promised the believers that they would one day conquer Rome and Persia as well, at which point the hypocrites and Jews expressed their disbelief at the possibility of ever conquering those great empires. Yet Allah says [in a *ḥadīth qudsī*]: “I am Allah, the King of kings. I hold the hearts and forelocks of kings in My hand, so if the servants obey Me, I make them (i.e. the kings) a mercy for them, but if they disobey Me, I make them a chastisement for them...”²⁶⁸

One question that may come to mind upon reading this verse of the Qurʾān is: does it not then offer validation or endorsement for every sovereign on earth, including the tyrannical and unjust rulers, since it is Allah who grants sovereignty to whomever He wills? And indeed, it is even reported that some evil tyrants, like Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah, quoted this verse to justify their actions. In response to this question, some exegetes have stated that this verse is specifically in reference to the divinely chosen authorities. Others accept the general purport of the verse but explain that Allah has put certain causes and effects in place that potentially lead to the strengthening or weakening of one’s power and authority, and it is through these factors that He grants or takes away authority from people.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqāʾiq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, p. 350.

²⁶⁹ Makārim Shirāzī, *Tafsīr-e Namūne*, vol. 2, p. 492.

وَتُعَزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ،

You exalt whomever You will, and You abase whomever You will;

The exaltation and abasement mentioned here may be in this world or in the Hereafter, and it could be the result of divine assistance or abandonment. There are certain factors that make one worthy of receiving Allah's help and exaltation, while others make one deserving of His abandonment and abasement. A tradition from the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) states, "Whoever humbles himself before Allah, Allah elevates him, and whoever acts arrogantly, Allah abases him."²⁷⁰ And in another tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a), we are told that two angels have been appointed to elevate and raise those servants who are humble and to abase those who are haughty and arrogant.²⁷¹

It is reported that 'Amr ibn Shaybah said, "I was in Makkah, between Ṣafā and Marwah, when I saw a man riding his mule with some young servants in front of him. They were pushing the people [to make way for him]. After some time, I went to Baghdad and was standing on the bridge when I saw a man barefoot, unclothed, with long unkempt hair, so I began staring at him. He asked me, 'Why are you staring at me?' 'Because you look just like someone I saw in Makkah a while ago,' and he described that man to him. The man said, 'That was me. I had acted haughtily in a place where humility was required, so Allah has abased me.'" This is an example of how Allah abases those whom He wills, and those

²⁷⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 122, ḥ. 3.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, ḥ. 2.

who are deserving of abasement.²⁷²

The term *‘izz* generally means being rare and hard to obtain, and a person is referred to as *‘azīz* when he is powerful and difficult to subdue. The term also came to mean something valuable and great. When Allah grants *‘izzah* to a person, it means that he makes that person exalted, respected, and dignified, such that the hearts of the people incline towards him and they have awe and reverence for him. Such a person is then not held in low esteem, and is not disparaged, disrespected, or insulted. The opposite of *‘izz* is *dhull*, and it means abasement, humiliation, and belittlement.²⁷³

Exegetes tell us that in reality, *al-‘izzah* belongs solely to Allah, and is an inseparable part of His Kingship. Whoever other than Him possesses any *‘izzah*, it is only because Allah has granted it to him. The Qur’ān clearly tells us: *...verily all honour (‘izzah) belongs to Allah* (Q4:139). The false sense of honour and might that is portrayed by some individuals is a mere illusion, and they are only deluding themselves into believing that they possess any real glory or power. In reality, everything other than Allah is abased and without honour itself, except for those who are exalted by Him.²⁷⁴ Therefore, if one wishes to be truly honourable, and to have respect and dignity in the eyes of the people, then he should seek that from Allah alone.

²⁷² Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 162.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, p. 132.

بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ،

in Your hand is all [that is] good; indeed You have power over all things.

The term *khayr* signifies perfection, and according to some commentators, it also denotes existence. That is because its opposite, which is *sharr* (evil), is considered to be a privation, or a lack of goodness, and is therefore something non-existent. Hence, one should not surmise that since *khayr* is in the hand of Allah, then *sharr* is in some other being's hand. Since evil is essentially non-existence of good, it does not need a source or an origin to begin with.²⁷⁵ Of course, not all scholars and philosophers agree with the premise that evil is a privation, or simply the lack of good. Therefore, this conclusion is contingent upon acceptance of the premise in the first place.

Two lines earlier, we said: *Indeed You have power over whatever You will.* Here, we are emphasizing the same point by reciting the part of the verse that states: *...indeed You have power over all things.* This second statement is more general and all-encompassing. There is nothing beyond the power of Allah, for He is All-powerful. As noted above, the very belief that Allah is omnipotent precludes the possibility of any other god, because just as there can never be two 'infinities', there can never be two omnipotent beings. Therefore, this statement is also a refutation of polytheism, and even of those who claim that God has offspring (like the Christians).²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 74.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Since it is in Allah's power to grant sovereignty and authority to whomever He wills, or to strip it away from whomever He wills, and to exalt or abase whomever He wills, and because His will is always accompanied by wisdom, therefore whatever He decides is good. And this is also evidence that Allah is never a doer of evil, and no evil can come from Him. Rather, all that is evil is the result of human actions.²⁷⁷ As such, no evil or imperfection can ever be attributed to Him. There are numerous examples of this in the Qur'ān, such as the story of Mūsā (a) and Khiḍr (a) in Q18:79, for example, where making the boat defective was not attributed to Allah, while in Q18:82 rebuilding the wall was attributed to Him.

The word *shay'*, commonly translated as 'thing', refers to anything that can be known and described, whatever it may be. It therefore encompasses any contingent thing that exists or does not exist. Of course, there are those who say that *shay'* may only refer to a thing that exists, since something that is non-existent has no essence or quiddity. However, there are some scholars who insist that the term is general and encompasses all things, be they currently in existence or not. In this particular instance, what is meant by Allah having power over all things is that He has unlimited power over anything that power may be exercised over, without any restriction or qualification such as being existent or having quiddity, and the like.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 213.

²⁷⁸ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 163.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ،

You make the night pass into the day and You make the day pass into the night.

The way in which day turns into night and night turns into day is a beautiful sign of Allah. Indeed, it is a constantly occurring phenomenon given that at every single moment, there are some locations on earth that are experiencing the conversion of daytime to night time. At the same moment, other places on earth are experiencing the exact opposite.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, this is a phenomenon that all human beings, and indeed all creatures, get to witness. The way in which day turns into night has been described in the Qurʾān as a kind of ‘wrapping’ or ‘winding’: *He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night* (Q39:5). This description depicts the process as something awe-inspiring and magnificent.

The word *tūliju* comes from *ilāj*, which means to insert, or to make enter. The day is made to enter into the night, and the night is made to enter into the day. This describes the gradual process of change between night and day. The moment when night passes into day and enters it, thereby bringing with it the beginning darkness of night time, is known as sunset, and the moment when day passes into night and enters it, thereby bringing with it the first rays of light, is known as sunrise. The process has been depicted in another verse of the Qurʾān as follows: *And a sign for*

²⁷⁹ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 187.

them is the night: We strip from it the [light of] day and there they are in darkness (Q36:37).

Some commentators suggest that the reason for commencing with mention of the night passing into the day before the day passing into the night is because the former occurred before the latter, since when the world was created, it was daytime and the first 'passing' that transpired was that of night into day.²⁸⁰ Others have linked the passage of night and day to the changing of seasons and variation of the lengths of days and nights, from the shortest to the longest and then back to the shortest. They have also noted that each geographical location is different in this regard, depending on how close it is to the equator, its altitude, and other factors.²⁸¹

It should be noted, however, that the passing of night to day and day to night happens simultaneously in two different and opposite horizons, so there is no real question of which precedes the other. The important point to learn from this part of the verse, and this line of the supplication, is that Allah has created everything with great precision and a systematic order based on wisdom. Indeed, if one celestial body was misaligned even a little, it would cause great catastrophe, and if the earth were to rotate even a little slower or faster, devastation would likewise result. Therefore, it behoves us to ponder and marvel over the perfect way in which Allah has created this universe.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 77.

²⁸¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 214.

²⁸² Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, pp. 164-165.

وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ،

*You bring forth the living from the dead and You bring forth the dead
from the living,*

A number of commentators have said that bringing forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living is a metaphor for causing a believer to grow from the progeny of a disbeliever, or a scholar to grow from the progeny of an ignorant person, and vice versa.²⁸³ Some have also said that the statement refers to bringing forth a soul, which is alive in essence, from a body, which is dead in essence, based on the principle of corporeal genesis (*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth*) of the soul, which was propounded by some philosophers like Mullā Ṣadrā. Likewise, we see how the body, such as that of a newborn, is brought forth from a living soul.²⁸⁴

In the exegesis of this part of the verse, it has been noted that there is a link with what precedes it, because exalting someone is similar to giving that person a new life. He would have remained unknown and unrecognized by the people had Allah not bestowed honour upon him. For this reason, it could be understood as a way of bringing forth life from the dead. In the same way, abasing someone is akin to causing the living to die, for abasement is like death for an individual. In addition, life is the fountainhead of knowledge whereas death is representative of ignorance, just as a dead person is unable to use any of his faculties to learn or grasp anything. That is why the phrase has been understood as bringing

²⁸³ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 187.

²⁸⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 77.

forth the learned from the ignorant and vice versa.²⁸⁵

It is possible, however, that this phrase has a more general meaning that encompasses all the meanings mentioned above. It could simply refer to the fact that a living being may be brought forth by Him from one that is dead, and the dead may be brought forth from the living. Even taken literally, examples of this are known. For instance, a living child may be brought forth from a womb of a dead mother, just as a stillborn child may be delivered by a living mother.²⁸⁶ Similarly, from a seemingly dead seed or egg, a living plant or animal is brought forth, and from dead land, herbage is made to grow, only to later become dry and die once more. Therefore, this phrase is also literally true and factual.

Another possible meaning of this statement is that it refers to the creation of living beings from elements that are non-living in themselves.²⁸⁷ In any case, the metaphoric meanings of this statement abound. A good offspring may come from an evil parent and vice versa, for example. Instances of this can also be seen in history. We had Zayd ibn Mūsā al-Kāẓim who, despite being the son of an Imam, burnt the houses of many innocent people during his rebellion, until he got the title Zayd al-Nār. Likewise, the Umayyad Saʿd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was a close companion of Imam al-Bāqir and had been given the title Saʿd al-Khayr by him, despite being from the accursed lineage of Banū Umayyah.

²⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 3, pp. 136-137.

²⁸⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 215.

²⁸⁷ Al-Khawājūʾī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 166.

وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ.

and You provide for whomever You will without reckoning.

Allah provides sustenance to all His creatures. His doing so without reckoning (*bighayri ḥisāb*) is an allusion to the vastness and greatness of His blessings, which are beyond what can be enumerated, listed, or counted by any creature.²⁸⁸ From His unlimited treasure, the bounties He bestows, and the sustenance He provides to all His creatures – giving each what it needs and more – cannot be fathomed or visualized, let alone counted and reckoned.²⁸⁹ Other possible meanings of *bighayri ḥisāb* include: without seeking or deserving it, without knowing the means by which the sustenance will come, or without any known measure or degree. Alternatively, He gives without holding Himself to account, or He gives without holding the creatures to account for the sustenance He grants them.²⁹⁰

Exegetes tell us that the term *rizq*, which means sustenance, has the connotation of bestowal by someone to another. Originally it meant only certain kinds of foodstuff, thereafter the meaning was expanded to include every kind of food, even when its giver was not known. It was then made even more general to include anything of benefit that is bestowed, whether it is tangible like food and clothing, or something else like honour and respect. Of course, the only true bestower of *rizq* is Allah. Whatever good people get and derive benefit from is ultimately from Allah. It

²⁸⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 78.

²⁸⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 215.

²⁹⁰ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 166.

should be noted, however, that if a person uses that which has been bestowed to him by Allah to commit a sin or an act of injustice and oppression, that is in no way attributed to Allah. Rather, it is the person's own misuse of the provision and bounty bestowed by Allah, for which he is answerable.²⁹¹

Allah decides how much *rizq* to give each of His servants, based on their individual capacities and on His wisdom and knowledge of what is good for each person. One tradition states that Allah told the Noble Prophet (ﷺ), “...Verily among My servants is he who cannot be reformed except by wealth [and affluence], and if I were to turn him towards something other than that, he would be destroyed. And verily among My servants is he who cannot be reformed except by poverty, and if I were to turn him towards something other than that, he would be destroyed...”²⁹² Furthermore, the means through which Allah grants *rizq* to His servants also cannot be reckoned by them. The Qurʾān states: *...And whoever is mindful of Allah, He shall make a way out for him, and provide for him from whence he does not reckon* (Q65:2-3).

Understanding this principle saves one from many heartaches caused by jealousy due to comparing oneself to others in terms of material wealth. Each person must know that what Allah has provided him is most suitable for him, and he should not covet what others possess. Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a) is reported to have said, “Whoever gazes at that which others possess, his sadness will be prolonged and his anger will never subside.”²⁹³

²⁹¹ Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 3, pp. 137-138.

²⁹² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 352, ḥ. 8.

²⁹³ Al-Ahwāzī, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, pp. 46-47, ḥ. 125.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ،

*There is no god but You! Glory be to You, O Allah, and by Your praise
[do we extol You].*

The whole purpose of supplication is to establish a connection with Allah and strengthen one's dependence, humbleness, and reverence for Him by presenting oneself as a truly needy servant who relies on none but Allah. This entails acceptance and admission that there is no power, might, or authority other than Allah. Indeed, a tradition from the Noble Messenger (ﷺ) states, "There is no speech that is more beloved to Allah, the Almighty, than the statement: 'There is no god but Allah.' And there is no servant who says, 'There is no god but Allah,' and extends his enunciation as he does so, but that once he has finished saying it his sins fall off under his feet just as the leaves fall off a tree."²⁹⁴ Indeed, this statement is most beloved to Allah because it is the clearest expression of belief in His oneness and *tawhīd*, and there is no other statement that conveys this meaning with the same clarity.²⁹⁵

The statement 'Glory be to You, O Allah, and by Your praise' is a proclamation that Allah is free of all imperfections and flaws, and He is worthy of praise and extolment.²⁹⁶ Some exegetes say that glorification (*tasbīḥ*) precedes praise (*taḥmīd*) because, in this particular instance, the former outweighs the latter. And a similar example of this is seen in a number of verses of the Glorious

²⁹⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawhīd*, pp. 21-22, ḥ. 14.

²⁹⁵ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 168.

²⁹⁶ Khūṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 191.

Qurʾān as well.²⁹⁷ *Tasbīh* is understood to be a means of remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah by sanctifying Him and declaring Him free of any defect or need. *Tahmīd*, on the other hand, is a means of praising and thanking Allah for His perfections and bounties.²⁹⁸ It is also a means of remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah which often follows the *tasbīh*. Indeed, the angels in the heavens likewise continually perform *tasbīh* and *tahmīd*, as the Qurʾān tells us (Q2:30).

These two statements can be summarized as: ‘I deem You free of any quality that is not befitting Your greatness and majesty, and I affirm those of Your qualities that You are worthy of.’ Commentators say that the letter *bāʾ* in *biḥamdika* is for accompaniment or concomitance (*muṣāḥabah*), since the *tahmīd* accompanies the *tasbīh*. In fact, it is also possible that the meaning of praise in this case is the divinely granted ability (*tawfiq*) to glorify and praise Allah, which is itself granted to the believer by Him.²⁹⁹ Alternatively, as al-Shahīd al-Thānī has stated, it (i.e. the letter *bāʾ*) may possibly be used to connote the means by which one takes recourse and help (*istiʿānah*) when seeking to glorify Allah. In which case it would mean: ‘I glorify Him by means of that with which He has praised Himself.’³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 13, p. 5.

²⁹⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāh*, p. 79.

²⁹⁹ Al-Khawājūʾī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 176.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 177.

مَنْ ذَا يَعْرِفُ قَدْرَكَ فَلَا يَخَافُكَ؟

Who knows Your station without fearing You?

This line of the supplication asks the rhetorical question: who is it that knows Your greatness yet remains unafraid of You? Meaning, it is obvious that whoever knows of the greatness of Allah would automatically have fear and awe of Him. That fear also encompasses the fear one has of the punishment he would suffer for disobeying Allah. In some manuscripts, the word *qudratika* has been used instead of *qadrika*. In that case, the translation would be: *Who knows of Your power without fearing You?*³⁰¹ Indeed, the Qurʾān clearly tells us it is those who possess knowledge that fear Him and have awe of Him: *Only those of His servants who are knowledgeable fear Allah* (Q35:28). For this reason we believe that piety is a sign of knowledge.

Interestingly, when people do not understand Allah and His omnipotence, they remain confused in their false sense of superiority and haughtiness. An example of this is seen in the conversation that took place between Firʿawn and Prophet Mūsā (a). The Qurʾān relates it thus: *Firʿawn asked, “And what is ‘the Lord of the worlds’?” He said, “The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them – if you [only] had conviction.” He said to those around him, “Do you not hear?” He said, “Your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.” He said, “Verily your messenger, who has been sent to you, is surely mad.” He said, “The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between them, if [only] you would apply reason.” He said, “If you take*

³⁰¹ Khūʾī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 191.

any god besides me, I will certainly place you among the imprisoned!” (Q26:23-29).

When one realizes that there is no power or might greater than Allah, and that His power is limitless and unrestricted, one cannot help but tremble with fear, since doing anything to displease Him could lead to consequences that would never be mitigated by anything else. Hence, anyone who knows Allah fears Him, and only those who have no recognition or understanding of Him have no such fear.³⁰² Of course, by knowledge of Allah a true recognition of His essence is not meant, for that is beyond the capacity of the creation. Rather, it is knowing Allah through His attributes as described by Himself.

Though the Arabic words *khawf* and *khashyah* are synonyms in that they both signify fear, there is a difference between them. *Khawf* describes the anguish felt by a person who is expecting a painful punishment for committing a forbidden action, or falling short in obedience and in performing a prescribed deed. And this is a condition that most of the creatures experience at one time or another, though it is based on doubt (since they are expecting the punishment and have not yet received it). On the other hand, *khashyah* is the fear that engulfs one due to his understanding of the greatness and majesty of his Creator. It is a state that does not occur often and is only experienced by a few who have knowledge and cognizance. Hence this is the term that has been used in the verse quoted above (Q35:28).³⁰³

³⁰² Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 179.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 180.

وَمَنْ ذَا يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتَ فَلَا يَهَابُكَ؟

And who knows what You are without being in awe of You?

This line continues from the previous line and uses the same format. Whoever knows Allah would automatically be in awe of Him. Indeed, it is only when one has fear and awe of the Creator who made this universe, and before Whom the angels, Prophets, and pious servants tremble in humility, that a person can truly attain the station of proximity to Allah. That is the only way to taste the true sweetness of worship and the spiritual ascent brought about thereby. Worship without fear and awe results in nothing but weariness and exertion, and it is only a means of wasting one's time.³⁰⁴

Traditions are replete with mention of the importance of having fear and awe of Allah. For instance, Imam 'Alī (a) is reported to have said, "Fear [and awe] of Allah is the attribute of the felicitous."³⁰⁵ And also, "The best form of worship is fear [and awe] of Allah."³⁰⁶ The direct relationship between the fear and awe of Allah on the one hand, and knowledge of Him on the other, is clearly noted in the following saying from Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a): "When the knowledge of a person increases, his etiquette improves and his awe for his Lord increases."³⁰⁷ Perhaps it is for this reason that knowledge of Allah has been linked to fear and awe of Him in these lines of the supplication.

³⁰⁴ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 192.

³⁰⁵ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 2936.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, ḥ. 2930.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, ḥ. 6927.

Practically, one can experience the difference between the quality of worship when he brings to mind and recalls that he is standing before the Mightiest and Most Powerful Lord as he rises to pray, for example. Thinking of the greatness of Allah during worship brings about an enhanced feeling of humility and lowliness before Him, which in turn heightens one's fear and awe of Allah. That then results in a deeper and more spiritually beneficial experience during worship when compared to rote recitation and ritual performance. This is something all believers should try to do whenever they stand for worship or supplicate to Allah.

Scholars have classified fear into different types, based on what has been mentioned in the Glorious Qurʾān. In his *al-Khiṣāl*, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says that there are five types of fear: (i) *khawf*, which is the fear felt by wrongdoers and sinners, (ii) *khashyah*, which is the awe felt by learned people and scholars, (iii) *wajal*, which is the fear and trepidation felt by the humble ones, (iv) *rahbah*, which is the fear felt by the subservient servants and worshippers, (v) and *haybah*, which is the awe felt by those who know Allah and have cognizance of Him. This classification is based on the following five verses of the Qurʾān (respectively): *For the one who would fear standing before his Lord, there are two Gardens* (Q55:46); *Only those of His servants who are knowledgeable fear Allah* (Q35:28); *They are those whose hearts are filled with fear when Allah is mentioned* (Q8:2); *They call upon Us, hoping and fearing* (Q21:90); *And Allah cautions you of Himself* (Q3:28).³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 281.

أَلَّفْتَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ الْفِرْقَ،

With Your power, You have brought together the dispersed,

With His power, Allah brings together the dispersed and separated among different groups of individuals or variant matters, qualities, and ideas, be they within a society, a family, or even within a single individual. By this we mean that due to the composite nature of human beings, they are made up of different attributes and qualities. Some of these qualities are completely contradictory and even opposites of each other. For instance, memory and forgetfulness, fear and audacity, generosity and stinginess, knowledge and ignorance, and other such contraries exist in a human being. These qualities are completely separate and different from each other, yet Allah has brought them together in a single creature, enabling the human being to access either of the contrary traits at any given moment.³⁰⁹

Some commentators have understood this line of the supplication as referring specifically to the bringing together of differing groups of people. Those who were bitter rivals and enemies before Islam were united together as brothers, as the Qurʾān says: *The believers are but brothers [to one another]* (Q49:10). Indeed, their previous enmity with each other was such that we are told nothing would have been able to bring them together, and it was only by Allah's will that they were brought together: *And He united their hearts; had you spent all that is on the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; indeed He is*

³⁰⁹ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 193.

*Mighty, Wise (Q8:63).*³¹⁰

Bringing together those who are disunited and separate also gives the meaning of inculcating a sense of closeness and affection between people who never used to get along, or bringing about harmony between different groups to enable them to coexist and live side by side peacefully.³¹¹ This leads us to understand a fundamental truth, which is that peace and lack of conflict or insecurity is one of the blessings of Allah, as is brotherhood amongst ourselves. Satan's continuous attempt to sow the seeds of discord among human beings, and specifically among believers, can only be rebuffed with the help of Allah.

Human beings are social creatures, so they have no choice but to live in close proximity with others. And since every person is unique in terms of his traits and attributes, there are bound to be differences that arise between them. However, since one person cannot undertake all the tasks that are necessary to lead a comfortable life, as that would result in overexertion and undue hardship, those who are better suited to certain tasks and occupations, either due to their intrinsic abilities or training, carry out those works for the benefit of the rest of the society. In that way, human communities are able to function efficiently and effectively. Yet for harmony to prevail, their differences and disagreements need to be overlooked or resolved, and that can then lead to unity and tranquility. The way this is done is through

³¹⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 81.

³¹¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 216.

submission to the commandments of Allah, which are aimed at securing that which is beneficial for mankind.³¹²

³¹² Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 181.

وَفَلَقْتَ بِرُحْمَتِكَ الْفَلَاقَ،

and with Your kindness, You have cleaved open the dawn

The first rays of light at daybreak mark a time when the mercy of Allah flows on earth, and supplications are answered. It is the time when people commence their quest for livelihood, and all the important activities of an individual and a society begin. Teaching, learning, working, earning, etc. all start in the morning. In some manuscripts, the word *khalaqta* (You created) is found instead of *falaqta*,³¹³ and the phrase *bi-rahmatika* (with Your mercy) is seen in place of *bi-ruhmatika*.³¹⁴ However, these differences do not alter the overall meaning of this line of the supplication.

It has been suggested by some commentators that *al-falaq* here is a metaphor for religion or matters pertaining to it. In that case, the meaning of this line would be: with Your kindness and mercy, You have cleaved open the darkness of ignorance through the light of religion, and the illumination of faith and certitude. Splitting apart ignorance and disbelief, however, is generally done in a way that is irreparable, so it can never return to its former state.³¹⁵ The cleaving or splitting apart that is mentioned in this line is the opposite of the bringing together or joining that is mentioned in the previous line of this supplication.

Just as the hearts of believers were joined together in brotherhood, the disbelievers were left split and scattered in confusion and defeat. And just as the souls and bodies of the

³¹³ Khūṣṭarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 194.

³¹⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 220.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

servants were brought together, the day dawned for the body of monotheism. In the same way that different and even opposite attributes were brought together within individuals, morning dawned on the articulate soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*).³¹⁶ Hence we see that when these two lines of the supplication are read together, a wealth of meaning can be derived therefrom.

Allah, the Exalted, has been referred to as the ‘Splitter’ (*fāliq*) twice in the Glorious Qur’ān, in two consecutive verses. In the first verse, Allah refers to Himself as the ‘*Splitter of the grain*’, and in the second verse, He is the ‘*Splitter of dawn*’. The verses read: *Verily Allah is the Splitter of the grain and the fruit stone. He brings forth the living from the dead and He brings forth the dead from the living. That is Allah! How can you then stray [from the truth]? Splitter of the dawn, He has made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for calculation [of time]. That is the ordaining of the Mighty, the Knowing (Q6:95-96).*

Daybreak, and the light it brings, is one of the great blessings of Allah. Indeed, were it not for this, the people would be deprived of the pleasure of sunlight and all their affairs would be affected. Their work would come grinding to a halt, since they would be unable to go out to work in order to earn their livelihood. And this would not affect only human beings, but all the creatures on this planet, even those that live in the seas and oceans, for indeed the light of the sun penetrates the water to bring about the much-needed natural processes even under water.³¹⁷ This is something worthy of reflection.

³¹⁶ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 82.

³¹⁷ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 182.

وَأَنْزَلَتْ بِكَرَمِكَ دِيَّاجِي الْغَسَقِ،

and with Your munificence, You have illuminated the night's veils of darkness.

It is out of His kindness and munificence that Allah illuminates the world, dispelling the darkness of night. *Dayāji* is the plural of *dujā*, meaning intense darkness, and it gives the impression of layer upon layer of darkness. *Ghasaq* specifically refers to the darkness of night time. This line could be in reference to the illumination of the moon and stars during the night, which keep it from being completely dark.³¹⁸ It may also be interpreted as the illumination of daylight which dispels the darkness of night.³¹⁹ The fact that Allah's kindness was mentioned in the previous line and His munificence is mentioned here, shows that the only reason for His blessing the creation with this bounty is His benevolence towards them.³²⁰

An alternative interpretation for this line of the supplication is that by His munificence, Allah sent the infallible guides to take people out from the darkness of ignorance and misguidance towards the light of knowledge, guidance, and righteousness. It is also an allusion to the great blessing of Allah to the people that He gave them a specific time to engage in worship, and a time when they can devote themselves to earning their livelihood.³²¹ Indeed, were we to reflect upon it and imagine what would

³¹⁸ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 220.

³¹⁹ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 194.

³²⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 82.

³²¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Šabāh*, p. 220.

happen if the night was prolonged to say a hundred or two hundred hours, it would lead many an animal and plant to stop its movement and die out of hunger.³²²

Allah tells us to ponder upon this in the Glorious Qurʾān: Say, “Have you considered: if Allah were to make the night endless for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god besides Allah could bring you light? Will you not then listen?” Say, “Have you considered: if Allah were to make the day endless for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god besides Allah could bring you night in which to rest? Will you not then see?” (Q28:71-72) Indeed, both night and day have importance for the harmonious functioning of life in this world. The diurnal cycle is necessary to keep both the mind and body healthy, as science has also shown.

Continuous darkness can also lead to depression. This is evident from the depressive episodes that are sometimes brought on by the change of seasons, known as ‘seasonal affective disorder’ (SAD),³²³ which is a mood disorder that is usually seen during the dull winter. Some psychologists who study this phenomenon posit that the root of the problem of melancholy which has been prevalent among the British is caused by their gloomy weather. This is then compounded by other factors like the development of anti-religious thought among them.³²⁴ Hence we realize that the illumination of daylight is a great blessing that helps us remain healthy both in body and mind.

³²² Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 182.

³²³ Jaffer, *Grief and Depression Management in Islam*, p. 15.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 138.

وَأَنْهَزْتَ الْمِيَاهَ مِنَ الصُّمِّ الصَّيَاخِيدِ عَذْبًا وَأُجَاجًا،

You have made waters, sweet and briny, flow forth from hard, solid rocks,

Another blessing of Allah is mentioned in this line of the supplication. He makes water, which is the ultimate elixir of life, flow forth from the rocks in the mountains – rocks that are solid and hard, from which we would not otherwise expect water to flow. The term *ṣumm* refers to something solid, hard, and firm. Some say that a deaf person is referred to as *aṣamm* because one needs to speak loudly and firmly in order to communicate anything to him, or his ears have become ‘solidified’ so they do not perceive sound.³²⁵ *Ṣayākhīd* is the plural of *ṣaykhūd*, which refers to a particularly hard and rigid rock. As noted by their use in the Qur’ān, the words *‘adhb* and *ujāj* describe fresh or sweet, and salty or briny water respectively (Q25:53).

In some manuscripts the word *ahmarta* (poured forth) has been recorded instead of *anharta* (caused to flow). In that case the translation of this line would read: *You have made waters, sweet and briny, pour forth from hard, solid rocks.*³²⁶ The emphasis on the hardness and rigidity of these rocks is in order to show that this is something that no power on earth can accomplish, and it is only the Creator Himself who can do this. Furthermore, both types of water, sweet and briny, have been mentioned since they both have their own benefits and uses. The latter, when used to water

³²⁵ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 195.

³²⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 221.

certain kinds of plants, produces fruits that are sweeter and softer. And in general, all life on this planet is dependant on water for survival, so its provision in such a manner is actually another proof of the existence of a Wise Creator.³²⁷

Since the rocks being described in this line are *al-ṣumm al-ṣayākhīd*, they are not porous and have no canals within them that could easily explain how water flows out of them. Some commentators have argued that the particle *min* gives the impression that the rocks actually transformed into water, just like a sperm transforms into a human being.³²⁸ However, it is more likely that the water originated from another source and was only allowed to pass through the solid rocks through some process that is part of the nature of the elements, according to the system created by Allah.

In answering the grammatical question, ‘Why have the terms *‘adhban wa ujājan* come in their masculine form while the plural word *miyāh* is feminine – should it not read *‘adhibatan wa ujājatan?*’ it has been suggested that the reason for this could be that the water which flows forth from such rocks is partly sweet and partly briny (so it is actually *qisman ‘adhban wa qisman ujāja*). On the other hand, a more likely answer to the question could be that these terms are actually for disambiguation (*tamyīz*), in which case they do not change even if their object is dual or plural.³²⁹

³²⁷ Ibid, p. 222.

³²⁸ Al-Khawājī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 184.

³²⁹ Ibid, p. 185.

وَأَنْزَلَتْ مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا،

and sent down water pouring from the rain-clouds,

This line of the supplication is taken from the verse: *And We sent down from rain clouds water, pouring abundantly* (Q78:14). *Al-mu'şirāt* refers to the rain-clouds that carry water and are subsequently squeezed by the wind thereby leading rain to fall from them. The term *thajjāj* denotes abundance in pouring forth.³³⁰ Some exegetes have interpreted *al-mu'şirāt* to mean the winds that squeeze rain-clouds, thereby producing rain.³³¹ The pouring rain acts as a means by which the dead land comes to life, with all manner of vegetation growing on it. Rain-clouds are mentioned to show that this world has been created with a system of causes and effects. Indeed, narrations tell us that with every drop that falls, an angel accompanies it to ensure that it lands in the exact place where it was meant to, as commanded by Allah.³³²

Allah decides where and when rain will fall, and how much of it will pour forth, based on His wisdom and knowledge of what is good for the creatures. He knows exactly how much water is required by each creature, and when water is beneficial for it. Also, it is a blessing that rain falls from above, so that water can cover all places on earth, high and low. Were it not so, the lofty peaks and hilltops would be deprived of rain water. That is why the vegetation that grows after being watered from sources on land, like rivers and streams, is less copious than that which grows

³³⁰ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Şabāḥ*, p. 83.

³³¹ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Şabāḥ*, p. 196.

³³² Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Şabāḥ*, p. 222.

due to rain water. This is due to the fact that rain reaches everywhere while water taken from other sources usually covers only a limited area.³³³

Another way in which rain water is a blessing is that it falls in regulated amounts, for were it to pour down altogether in one go, it would flow off the surface of the earth quickly and would not seep into the depths thereof, the way it presently does. Furthermore, the deluge brought about by such an instantaneous downpour would be catastrophic for the vegetation and plant life on earth, for as we know, plants die of too much water just as they die when they get no water at all. Such a rainstorm would also destroy many of the structures built by human beings and other creatures, which would again be quite disastrous. Therefore, the way in which rain is made to fall is just as much of a blessing as the rainfall itself.³³⁴

Withholding of rain is one of the ways by which Allah tests His creatures. Human beings have always realized the value of rain and because of that, whenever a period of drought occurred, they were worried about their survival. At these times, the faithful would turn to Allah and seek His blessing of rain through the prayers known as *istisqā'* – prayers seeking rain. As with all other bounties granted by Him, Allah tests human beings through the blessing of rain by withholding it from time to time (Q2:155), and according to certain traditions, He sometimes punishes His servants thereby.

³³³ Ibid, p. 223.

³³⁴ Ibid, p. 224.

وَجَعَلَتِ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرَ لِلْبَرِيَّةِ سِرَاجًا وَهَاجًا،

and have made the sun and moon a shining lamp for the creatures,

This description of the sun and moon as ‘shining lamps’ has been taken from Q78:13. The term *wahhāj* means radiant, glowing, or shining bright. One of these glowing lamps is for the day while the other is for the night. He specified these two among the celestial bodies because of their prominence. The sun is the king of the celestial bodies in terms of its effect and its role in nurturing the creation on earth, and enabling them to grow and flourish. The moon reflects its light and also plays an important role. As such, mentioning these two as part of the great signs of Allah is apt.³³⁵

Some commentators have given an esoteric construal of this line of the supplication, stating that the sun refers to the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and the moon to Imam ‘Alī (a), both of whom were sent to guide the people and illuminate the way for them out of the darkness of ignorance and disbelief.³³⁶ Though most of the creatures need the darkness of night in order to rest after a long day’s work, there are also some who need to go out at night, either to complete what they were unable to do during the daytime or because of the intense heat of the day which prevented them from accomplishing the tasks that they had to, or for any such reason. Thus Allah created the moon so that the nights would have some illumination as well, thereby enabling people to complete their tasks.³³⁷

³³⁵ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 83.

³³⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 225.

³³⁷ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 188.

Interestingly, according to the general rule regarding similes in Arabic, the thing being compared to (*mushabbahun bihi*) should be greater and more expansive than that which is being compared to it (*mushabbah*). Yet here we see that the celestial bodies are being compared to a brightly shining lamp, which of course is far less luminous and radiant. Nevertheless, some commentators say that in this case, since both the sun and moon are being compared to this one thing, it is a comparison that aims at showing luminosity itself, and not the intensity of light. This is further supported by the fact that both celestial bodies are compared to a single lamp (and the word lamp has not come in its dual form).³³⁸

However, there might be another reason for this comparison because we note that in his supplication for Thursdays, Imam ‘Alī (a) is reported to have recited the same line without mention of the moon: “And You have made the sun a shining lamp for the creatures.”³³⁹ Whatever the case may be, the illumination of both the sun and moon are great blessings of Allah without which the world would not survive, and it behoves us to realize this and thank Allah for His blessings. It should also be noted that traditions inform us that the light of the sun, which we deem so bright that we cannot behold it directly and need special filters to be able to gaze upon it, is only a tiny fraction of the brightness of other lights that exist in creation, and that we may get to behold in the Hereafter.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Ibid, p. 189.

³³⁹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 87, p. 207, ḥ. 37.

³⁴⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 98, ḥ. 7.

مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ تُمَارِسَ فِيمَا ابْتَدَأْتَ بِهِ لُغُوبًا وَلَا عِلَاجًا،

without experiencing weariness or hardship in what You originated.

This line of the supplication negates a comparison between the way Allah creates and humans create. Human creations are based on effort, which results in hardship and weariness, whereas that never applies to the Omnipotent Lord. There can really be no comparison whatsoever, since human beings need to use their limbs and toil, while at the same time relying on materials that are already available, in order to make something. Furthermore, they require tools and other elements like fire, air, water, etc. On the other hand, Allah requires nothing and has to exert no effort, He only says to a thing ‘Be’, and it is (Q16:40).

As an example of this reality, in his *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn speaks of the baker who makes bread. In order to bake the bread, he requires a number of items. He needs the oven, firewood, and flour; and for the acquisition of each of these, a number of people are involved and needed. Aside from this, he needs many other things – and he notes that these reach up to five hundred in number. Hence we see that in order to make something as simple as bread, the human being needs so much. That is why human creations can never be compared to the creation of Allah, which is something that is accomplished without need for anything else, and without effort.³⁴¹

The word *tumāris* comes from *mumārasah* meaning to exert or exercise, and it can also connote experience. The term *lughūb*

³⁴¹ Khūṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 197.

means exhaustion, weariness, and fatigue, while *‘ilāj*, which is translated here as ‘hardship’, literally refers to temporization and compromise that results from a difficult situation that cannot otherwise be overcome.³⁴² Since Allah is All-powerful, He neither gets weary nor does he face such hardship while He creates, and there are no obstacles for Him whatsoever in creation. The Qur’ān tells us: *And indeed We created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days, and We were not touched by any fatigue* (Q50:38).

In some manuscripts, the word *ibtada‘ta* (with *‘ayn*) appears instead of *ibtada’ta* (with *hamza*), which does not change the overall meaning, since the former means invention and innovation, while the latter means origination and creation. *Ibtidā‘* specifically means inventing something new and creating it, without it being like anything else that already exists, and without using a template or a likeness upon which to base what is being created. There are some clues that may lead us to conclude that this alternative reading (*ibtada‘ta* instead of *ibtada’ta*) is more likely to be correct. For instance, in one of his orations, Imam ‘Alī (a) said, “He innovated what He created without a prior pattern, without [experiencing] fatigue or exertion. Every maker makes a thing from something [else], but Allah made and created everything without anything.”³⁴³ However, if we take the present reading to be correct, then the meaning of *ibtada’ta* (with *hamza*) would refer to the first and initial origination of creation.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 84.

³⁴³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 135, ḥ. 1.

³⁴⁴ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 191.

فَيَا مَنْ تَوَحَّدَ بِالْعَزِّ وَالْبَقَاءِ،

So O He who is alone in [eternal] might and subsistence,

Allah alone is almighty and eternal. In this He is unique and there is no other who possesses these qualities. We find a relationship between these two attributes in that only one who is all powerful and omnipotent can subsist forever and remain eternally. Were a more powerful entity to exist, it could overcome and subdue everything else. Therefore, the fact that Allah is eternal, and has neither a beginning nor an end, itself shows that He is Omnipotent and Almighty. It is He Who decides which creature lives and which creature dies, and nothing and no one can overrule His decision or prevent Him from doing what He wills.

Note that the 'fa' at the beginning of this line signifies continuity and conclusion, thereby giving the meaning: since Allah is the All-powerful Creator, Who made the rain, the sun, the moon, etc. (as mentioned in the previous lines of this supplication), we realize that He alone is the Almighty and Ever-subsisting, and it behoves us to seek whatever we need only from Him.³⁴⁵ It should be understood that this universe is bound and restricted by time, which moves along and gradually causes those bound by it to arrive at their fixed terms, at which moment they perish. Allah, on the other hand, created time and is not bound by it. That is why everything in this universe is sure to perish, but He will always remain. It is as the Qur'ān beautifully states: *Everyone on it [eventually] passes away, but there [forever] remains the Face of your*

³⁴⁵ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 201.

Lord, Possessed of Majesty and Bounty (Q55:26-27).

In philosophy, the Creator is considered ‘necessarily existent’ (*wājib al-wujūd*) whereas everything else in creation is only ‘possibly existent’ (*mumkin al-wujūd*). This means that He has to exist for all time, and beyond time, and His non-existence is impossible. That is the meaning of *al-baqāʾ* in this line of the supplication. His might is such that He is able to enact His will upon all as He wishes, without any hinderance or impediment that can act as an obstacle for Him, and without any fear or need for assistance. Hence, this line and the one that follows it are together considered by some commentators to constitute a warning to those who would seek to defy Him or disobey Him.³⁴⁶

Because He is ever-living, all that is ‘with’ Him also becomes eternal. The Qurʾān tells us: *That which is with you gets depleted, but what is with Allah lasts...* (Q16:96). While exegetes give different explanations for this verse, most say that it refers to the good deeds that human beings perform for the sake of Allah – the rewards for it last, while the material benefits acquired for other reasons get depleted over time.³⁴⁷ Therefore, if one wants to have lasting rewards for his deeds, then he should perform them for the sake of the Everlasting Lord, and should attach himself to Allah, always seeking His pleasure. Perhaps that is why the saintly individuals sought a place ‘with’ Allah, as we see in the prayer of Āsiyah bint Muzāḥim: *My Lord, build for me a house near You (ʿindaka) in Paradise* (Q66:11).

³⁴⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 226.

³⁴⁷ Al-Khawājūʾī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 195.

وَقَهَرَ عِبَادَهُ بِالْمَوْتِ وَالْفَنَاءِ،

and prevails over His servants with death and annihilation,

Some commentators say that the difference between death and annihilation mentioned here is that death applies to living beings, whose souls are separated from their bodies, whereas annihilation applies to material bodies bereft of souls. The reason they give for this interpretation is the famous tradition that states, “You have been created to remain, not for annihilation.” Hence, they conclude that it is the bodies that perish, not the souls.³⁴⁸ In some versions, instead of the phrase ‘prevails over His servants’ (*qahara ‘ibādahu*), the word *‘alima* is found, in which case the meaning of the line would be: He knows of the death and annihilation [of each of His creatures]. This could be a reference to how Allah knows about when and where each of His creatures will die or perish before their time ends.³⁴⁹

There is a discussion among scholars and theologians regarding whether a complete annihilation takes place or not. Some argue that the original constituents of living bodies are not annihilated as they will be used to recreate the dead when they are resurrected. They use the story of Ibrāhīm (a) and the birds mentioned in the Qur’ān as evidence that there is no complete annihilation as such. However, other verses and a number of *aḥādīth* give the distinct impression that there will indeed be a complete annihilation that transpires when the horn is blown

³⁴⁸ Khūṣṣī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 201.

³⁴⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 226.

prior to the Day of Resurrection. Some traditions explicitly state that this annihilation will encompass every living creature, including souls and angels. Then Allah will resurrect all beings, bringing them into existence again as He did in the first genesis.³⁵⁰

Based on this, we note that human beings will face both death and annihilation. And the period between *mawt* and *fanā'* is what is referred to as the intermediary realm of *barzakh*. It is in this middle realm that the soul remains alive, even after the body has died.³⁵¹ Other commentators have tried to offer a different meaning for annihilation (*fanā'*) by stating that it refers to the transfer of the soul from one realm to another. This is because such a transfer is tantamount to being 'annihilated' in the former realm.³⁵²

The term *qahara* here means that the creation do not have a choice, and no matter how much they may seek to escape it, they will be overtaken by death and annihilation when Allah wills. Also, in this line of the supplication, the word *'ibādahu* refers to all of the creation, not just human beings. Since the verb used is in the past tense, it shows that this is something which is bound to happen and will definitely transpire.³⁵³ The ways in which Allah makes His creatures die are different, and they follow the system He has put in place of cause and effect. As such, a person may die of a malady or an accident, or any other cause. Yet it is still Allah

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 227.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 85.

³⁵³ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 197.

who ultimately caused him to die, even though it was through these secondary causes.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 198.

صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الْأَتْقِيَاءِ،

bless Muḥammad and his family, the Godwary.

It is the etiquette (*adab*) of supplication to begin with praising Allah and then to send salutations and blessings upon the Noble Messenger and his pure progeny. This line of the supplication is necessary, and it is only after the *ṣalawāt* that we can proceed with asking for our needs. While these lofty personages were sinless and infallible, and do not include the wives of the Prophet as some wrongly surmise,³⁵⁵ asking Allah to send His blessings upon them and shower them with His mercy is done because this is something that Allah has Himself commanded (Q33:56), and because we are ever indebted to the Noble Messenger and the Imams from his progeny for guiding us to the right path.

Some scholars say that the Prophet was named Muḥammad through an inspiration from Allah, since he was to be one who would be praised by many among the creation.³⁵⁶ The attribute *al-atqiyā'* means those possessed of *taqwā*, or Godwariness. The Ahl al-Bayt were the epitomes of Godwariness, which is a quality they have themselves reportedly described as: not being seen by Allah where He has forbidden you from, and not being absent where He has commanded you to be. Perhaps it is for this reason that we are told if all the good of this world and the Hereafter were to be brought together under one word, that word would be *taqwā*. One

³⁵⁵ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 228.

³⁵⁶ Al-Khawājū'ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 200.

commentator lists twelve consequences of *taqwā*, among its numerous other benefits. These are:

- 1) It is a praiseworthy trait (Q3:186).
- 2) It protects an individual (Q3:120).
- 3) Allah assists the Godwary (Q16:128).
- 4) Through *taqwā* one is saved from hardship (Q65:2-3).
- 5) One's actions are reformed through it (Q33:70-71).
- 6) By it one's sins are forgiven (Q33:71).
- 7) Allah loves those who possess *taqwā* (Q3:76).
- 8) Deeds are accepted with *taqwā* (Q5:27).
- 9) It increases one's status and nobility (Q49:13).
- 10) Glad tidings are given to the Godwary upon death (Q10:63-64).
- 11) The *muttaqīn* are saved from hellfire (Q19:72).
- 12) Godwariness leads one to eternal bliss in Paradise (Q3:133).

Hence we see that there are at least twelve positive outcomes of Godwariness mentioned in the Glorious Qur^ʿān.³⁵⁷

Godwariness has different levels, and according to some commentators, there are three levels of *taqwā*: the first level entails keeping away from what has been forbidden (*muḥarramāt*) and what has been disapproved (*makrūhāt*). The second level is where one even keeps away from what is permissible, except to the extent that is necessary. The third and highest level of *taqwā* is where one avoids anything other than Allah, or anything that makes one heedless of Allah, albeit for a brief moment. It is this

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 201.

third level of *taqwā* that the Noble Messenger and his Ahl al-Bayt possessed.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 86.

وَاسْمَعِ نِدَائِي، وَاسْتَجِبْ دُعَائِي،

Hear my call, and answer my supplication,

Allah is always present and hears everything, since He is *al-Samīʿ*, so what we are saying in this line of the supplication is not literal in the sense of asking Allah to hear our call and listen to us. Rather, it is in the sense of asking Him to hear our supplication and grant us what we seek from Him. This is made clear by the second part, where we say ‘*and answer my supplication*’, which is an emphasis on our request for Him to hear our call.³⁵⁹ Furthermore, the term *samāʿ* in Arabic also means accepting and responding, not just hearing. A person who listens and does what he is requested to do is known as *sāmiʿ*. The Qurʾān also states: *Be mindful of Allah and hear...* (Q5:108). Therefore, this is the meaning that is intended by these words of the supplication.

Allah is never preoccupied by any one thing such as to neglect another (*lā yashghaluhu shaʾnun ʿan shaʾn*), and He hears both secrets and whispered conversations, so He even knows what is in the hearts and minds of every individual. Hence, whether one calls out loudly or whispers slowly, Allah will always hear him. In fact, some scholars tell us that the Divine attribute of being All-hearing is not linked to the existence of creatures such that it only came about after they were created. Rather, it is one of the essential attributed of the Divine, and has always existed (*qadīm*). Of course, this is completely different from the quality of hearing that is present in human beings and other creatures, which is

³⁵⁹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 228.

dependent on the existence of that which can be heard.³⁶⁰

When we ask Allah to respond to our supplication and grant us what we seek, we must realize that there are certain conditions that need to be fulfilled at our end in order for our supplication to be answered. These include: sincerity of intention, presence of heart (while supplicating), humility, reverence, truth, insistence, having a positive opinion of Allah, inclining one's heart towards Him, and using the proper means of approaching Him, such as by sending blessings and salutations upon the Noble Prophet and his pure progeny. Furthermore, a believer must never lose hope and abandon supplication, and he should be sure that his supplication will be answered. If the answer is delayed or postponed, then it is for his own benefit. And in case it is not in his interest, Allah will grant him something better in this world and the next. Indeed, this was explained beautifully by Amīr al-Mu'minīn in his final will and advice to Imam al-Ḥasan (a).³⁶¹

A common question pertaining to supplication is: what is the benefit in it? If something has been decreed by Allah, then it is bound to happen, and if not then no amount of supplication would make it happen! The answer to this question is that if Allah decrees something will not transpire unless one supplicates for it, then it will only happen through supplication. And when one does not supplicate for it, that is evidence of it not being divinely decreed for him in the first place.³⁶² Yes, there is a more nuanced discussion on this matter, but that is beyond the scope of this book.

³⁶⁰ Al-Khawājū'i, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 203.

³⁶¹ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, p. 399, letter 31.

³⁶² Al-Khawājū'i, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 204.

وَحَقِّقْ بِفَضْلِكَ أَمَلِي وَرَجَائِي،

and let my aspiration and hope materialize through Your grace.

Here, we ask Allah to actualize what we hope and aspire for by answering our prayer and granting our wishes. It has been suggested that the difference between aspiration (*amal*)³⁶³ and hope (*rajāʿ*) is that the first pertains to this world while the second relates to the Hereafter, in which case we are asking for the fulfilment of both our worldly aspirations and our hopes for the Hereafter.³⁶⁴ An alternative meaning of this line could also be: make it true and certain, not something doubtful. This second possible meaning entails having confidence in the hopes and aspirations one holds, and not being of two minds regarding them.³⁶⁵

We ask this of Allah by His grace (*faḍl*). The literal meaning of the word *faḍl* is something extra that remains and is not needed. It then came to signify increase and abundance. When attributed to Allah, it denotes His initiatory bounty which He bestows generously to the creatures without their having done anything to deserve it. Indeed, if a servant were to know of all His blessings and bounties which He bestowed to him, from the time he was conceived and lived in his mother's womb, and what He continues

³⁶³ Note that here we have translated *amal* as aspiration to distinguish it from *rajāʿ*, whereas previously we translated *munā* as aspiration. That is simply because the subtle differences between these synonyms do not have any exact representations in English.

³⁶⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 229.

³⁶⁵ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 205.

to bestow upon him at every moment, he would unhesitatingly place all his hope in Him. He would be confident that Allah will fulfill his needs and wishes, and that would motivate him to supplicate to Him.

The bounty and grace (*faḍl*) of Allah is not limited to bestowing material blessings to the creatures. Rather, through His grace the people are also protected from whatever seeks to harm them. The Qurʾān states: *And were it not for Allah's grace (faḍl) upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few* (Q4:83). Therefore, even protection from the wiles of Satan is given to humankind out of the grace of Allah. Furthermore, asking Allah to grant our needs out of His grace is something we have been instructed to do in the Qurʾān: *And ask Allah out of His grace (min faḍlihi)* (Q4:32).³⁶⁶

Human beings have hopes and aspirations, and it is these hopes that keep people motivated and enthusiastic in their lives. Loss of hope leaves a person depressed and unable to work for anything, since he or she sees nothing positive in the future. However, it is important to distinguish between beneficial and futile hopes, for indeed “hopes never end.”³⁶⁷ So while it is true that “aspirations are incentives for men,”³⁶⁸ one must be careful because we have been advised by Amīr al-Muʾminīn, “Be wary of the deceit of hopes, for many a person has hoped for a day that never came, and built a house that he never occupied, and amassed wealth that he never used. And it may be that he amassed

³⁶⁶ Some exegetes have interpreted this phrase as: ask Allah for His grace.

³⁶⁷ Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, ḥ. 641.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, ḥ. 643

it unlawfully by depriving others of their rights, thereby acquiring what is forbidden and carrying the burden of sin.”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Ibid, h. 620.

يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ دُعِيَ لِكَشْفِ الضَّرِّ وَالْمَأْمُولِ فِي كُلِّ عُسْرٍ وَيُسْرٍ،

O the best of those who are called to remove affliction, and the object of hope in every hardship and ease!

This line of the supplication has to be read and interpreted carefully. Some commentators say that the term ‘object of hope’ (*al-maʾmūl*) is linked to the phrase ‘to remove’ (*li-kashf*) by conjunction (*‘atf*), and not to the term ‘affliction’ (*al-ḍurr*). That is because *kashf* is used to signify the removal of things like worry, anxiety, stress, and affliction, and it is not used for hopes and aspirations. One might also say that there is an elided word and it is actually ‘*li-ṭalab al-māʾmūl*’ that is meant, in which case that would be linked to ‘*li-kashf al-ḍurr*’.³⁷⁰ Keeping this in mind, it is important to know where to pause while reciting this line of the supplication. There are some reciters who wrongly pause after the word *al-maʾmūl*, thereby giving the incorrect impression that it is linked to the term *al-ḍurr*. Rather, if one has to pause, he should do so after the word *al-ḍurr* in order to convey the correct meaning.

The term *khayr* here is a superlative noun (*ism tafḍīl*), meaning ‘the best’. Of course, in reality there is none other than Allah who can remove affliction or fulfill the hopes of the people. That is because they have been described as *having no power to benefit or harm themselves* (Q25:3). The word *‘usr* refers to every difficult matter that is hard to attain while *yusr* is the opposite of that and

³⁷⁰ Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 202.

refers to easily attainable things.³⁷¹

Both ease and hardship have been mentioned here because it behoves a believer to seek everything from Allah, be it difficult or easy, big or small, important or insignificant, since that is what complete dependence and reliance (*tawakkul*) on Allah means. A well-known tradition states that Allah once told Mūsā (a), “O Mūsā, ask me for anything that you need, be it the grass for your sheep or the salt for your food.”³⁷² Indeed, among the etiquettes of supplication is that one should rely only on Allah and should have no hope in the people. It is narrated that Allah said to ʿĪsā (a), “O ʿĪsā, ask Me and do not ask anyone other than Me. Then your supplication will be good and so will My response.”³⁷³

The fact that ease and hardship have both been mentioned here is also an allusion to the instruction to supplicate to Allah at all times, and not only during hardships and afflictions. The Qurʾān describes most of the people as having this blameworthy trait: *When affliction befalls a person, he supplicates to Us, lying on his side, sitting, or standing; but when We remove his affliction, he carries on as if he had never supplicated Us concerning the affliction that had befallen him* (Q10:12). And some even go a step further by actually reverting to their disbelief and polytheism after their supplications are answered: *Then when He removes the affliction from you, a group among you starts ascribing partners with their Lord* (Q16:54). Therefore, it is quite natural for human beings to turn to Allah and supplicate to Him when they face afflictions and hardships, but during times

³⁷¹ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 86-87.

³⁷² Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *ʿUddat al-Dāʿī*, p. 134.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

of ease most of them forget Allah. This is why we are told to pray to him in both ease and hardship.

بِكَ أَنْزَلْتُ حَاجَتِي فَلَا تَرُدَّنِي مِنْ سَنِي مَوَاهِبِكَ خَائِبًا

*I have come to You with my need, so do not turn me away from
[receiving] Your lofty gifts, disappointed!*

By stating the obvious and saying that you have come to Allah with your need, what you are actually emphasizing is that you have not turned to anyone other than Him. Rather, it is only to Him alone that you present your needs. That is because the way in which the first phrase is structured, with *bika* preceding *anzaltu*, gives the meaning of *ḥaṣr* or restriction – the request is restricted to Allah, and nobody else has been approached with it. For those whose primary objective in supplication is to seek their needs from Allah, this line of the supplication is where they ask Him to grant their request and fulfill what they wish, without disappointing them. But for those, like the Infallibles, whose main objective is to praise Allah through supplicating to Him, they ask not to be turned away from His remembrance as that would be their greatest disappointment.³⁷⁴

It is clear why we ask Allah and no one else; because it is only Allah who is able to fulfill our needs and wishes. He is the Omnipotent Lord whose treasures are never depleted, and His mercy and kindness encompass all the creatures. A sensible person only asks one who has the capacity to respond and give him what he needs. Asking other than Allah is like a needy person asking another needy person. The power of Allah to grant whatever He wills is unlimited, and when He does grant something, there is

³⁷⁴ Qūchānī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 88.

no entity that can prevent or hinder it from its recipient. As the Qurʾān clearly states: *Whatever Allah opens for humankind of [His] mercy, none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds, none can release it thereafter; and He is the Mighty, the Wise* (Q35:2).

The human qualities that prevent one from giving generously, such as miserliness, fear of loss or poverty, selfishness, etc. do not apply to the Almighty since nothing can harm Him and neither does giving reduce His treasures nor does with-holding bring Him any gain. Hence, it behoves one to seek his needs from Allah alone, especially if his desires are noble and good, because in the end all success in the attainment of what is good comes from Allah. Indeed, in a number of traditions we find that Allah has severely rebuked those who go to other creatures to seek their needs, and place hope in their generosity, rather than turning to Him.³⁷⁵

If someone were to argue: but this world is a realm of cause and effect, so how can one be blamed for asking another person? The answer would be: he becomes blameworthy because his heart inclines to the one whom he asks and he relies on that person. However, if he does so without any such reliance, then he is not blameworthy. Nevertheless, it is better to ask only Allah. Then, if He wills that one's needs get fulfilled at the hands of another, He will make that person a means (*wasīlah*) of fulfilling the need, whether he likes it or not.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ See for example: Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol, 2, p. 66, ḥ. 7.

³⁷⁶ Al-Khawājūṣī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 208.

يَا كَرِيمُ يَا كَرِيمُ يَا كَرِيمُ،

O Munificent One! O Munificent One! O Munificent One!

One who asks Allah with a heart filled with sincerity and humility will never be turned away disappointed, because Allah is kind and munificent. A tradition from Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a) states, “No servant opens his hands beseeching Allah, the Almighty, but that Allah feels embarrassed to turn him away empty handed, without placing therein of His grace and mercy whatever He wills. So when any of you supplicates his Lord, let him not put down his hands until he has wiped his head and face therewith.”³⁷⁷ From this narration, we see how Allah never likes to turn away any of His servants empty-handed. Thus is the bountiful munificence of Allah.

Scholars say that when a *dhikr* has been stipulated to be repeated a specific number of times, then one should neither exceed nor fall short of what has been stipulated. There is surely some reason for the specified number of times we are instructed to repeat a *dhikr*. Some commentators have likened it to being given a map to a treasure and then being told to walk ten steps from a certain spot, for example. It is only when one walks exactly ten steps that he would arrive at the treasure, but if he goes beyond that or falls short of that, he will not come to the treasure he seeks.³⁷⁸

The term *karīm* generally has two meanings: noble and

³⁷⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 325, ḥ. 953.

³⁷⁸ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 210.

munificent. Whenever the term is used to describe Allah, or as one of His beautiful Divine Names, it signifies munificence, bounty, and kindness.³⁷⁹ Indeed, the generosity and benevolence of Allah knows no bounds, since His treasures are unlimited, so there is no meaning in withholding anything. That is why in the supplication we recite in the month of Ramaḍān, we say, “His bountiful grants [to His creatures] increase Him in nothing but generosity and munificence.”³⁸⁰ This means the more He gives, the more bountiful He becomes!

Repeating the phrase ‘O Munificent One’ (*yā karīm*) is done for emphasis, and in order to beseech Him so that He responds to the supplication.³⁸¹ Some commentators have also suggested that the three instances each refer to a different meaning. They say the first instance of *yā karīm* refers to the munificence (or nobleness) of the Divine Essence (*al-dhāt*). The second refers to the attribute of munificence (from His *ṣifāt*), and the third refers to the action of showing munificence (from His *aʿāl*). Alternatively, the first refers to munificence by granting guidance, the second is munificence in pardoning sins, and the third is munificence in bestowing blessings. Yet another possibility is that the first instance refers to His munificence in this world, the second is His munificence in the intermediate realm of *barzakh*, and the third refers to His munificence in the Hereafter.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Ibn Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 4, p. 166.

³⁸⁰ Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, vol. 3, p. 109, ḥ. 38.

³⁸¹ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 230.

³⁸² Khūʿī, *Sharḥ-e Duʿāye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 203.

بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ،

By Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful!

All that we have supplicated above and asked Allah for has been through His mercy, because we are surely not deserving or worthy of it ourselves. It is stated twice in the Glorious Qurʾān that Allah has ordained mercy for Himself (Q6:12 & 6:54), meaning that He has made it incumbent upon Himself to be merciful, for indeed He alone could have done so. The letter ‘bā’ at the beginning of this line has been interpreted as a ‘causal’ *bā*’ (*al-sababiyyah*), meaning: because of Your mercy, or by means of Your mercy, grant this supplication, O Most Merciful of those who show mercy.³⁸³

The supplication is ended with a final plea for acceptance by Allah through His encompassing mercy, and this is seen in many of the supplications that we have been taught. The mercy of Allah is different from the mercy of creatures, because when a human being, or any other creature for that matter, shows mercy, it is for some gain that is acquired therefrom, be it worldly gain, or for the Hereafter, or simply to feel good after having shown kindness and compassion. Allah does not show mercy for any of these reasons since He lacks nothing so as to seek it. Therefore, the mercy of Allah is the purest form of mercy.

It should also be noted that the pain and suffering which is witnessed in this world in no way negates His encompassing mercy. That is because every event that transpires is part of His

³⁸³ Al-Khawājūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 211.

plan, which is for the betterment and benefit of the creatures, even though they are unaware of its purpose. Indeed, we have been told time and again how Allah has greater mercy and compassion for His creatures than a mother has for her child. It has been narrated that when Allah created Ādam and blew His spirit into him, Ādam sat up and sneezed, so Allah said to him, “Allah’s mercy be upon you O Ādam!” Therefore, the first time Allah addressed the human being, it was with mercy.³⁸⁴

Indeed, even the greatest blessing of Allah sent to mankind was sent as a mercy. Allah addresses the Noble Prophet in the Qurʾān: *And we did not send you but as a mercy to mankind* (Q21:107). Since the word *rahmah* is synonymous with Divine blessing, the Qurʾān has also been called *rahmah*, and rain that falls from the sky, leading to revival of the earth and growth of vegetation, has likewise been called *rahmah*. Similarly, one who has a soft heart and feels empathy for others is called *rahīm*, because of the mercy shown by him due to his empathy. Of course, the same word is used for the Almighty, but the meaning is very different when it is applied to Him, since it is part of His Essence, not due to any external cause as it is for the creatures.³⁸⁵

Ending the supplication in this way is done because no creature is ever deprived of the mercy of Allah. Both believers and disbelievers are granted mercy, and both the virtuous and wicked benefit therefrom. Hence, even if we fall short in our obedience, or have committed sins which we are embarrassed of, we ask that He overlook that and answer our supplication out of His mercy.

³⁸⁴ Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *Uddat al-Dāʿī*, p. 145.

³⁸⁵ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 213.

وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰى خَيْرِ خَلْقِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَّآلِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

And may Allah bless the best of His creatures, Muḥammad, and his family all together.

This marks the end of the supplication in some manuscripts, and that is why certain commentaries end with this line of the *du‘ā’* and do not mention the following section that is to be recited in *sujūd*. There are also those who state that this marks the end of the *du‘ā’* as it was taught by Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (a), and the subsequent section was actually recited by Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (a) after completing his supplication.³⁸⁶ In some versions, this line has the added word *sayyidinā* – meaning ‘our master’ – before the name of the Noble Messenger (ṣ). Indeed, as the best of Allah’s creatures and His final Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) is our master and the master of all of creation.³⁸⁷

Lexicographers have discussed the various possible meanings and connotations of the term *sayyid*. Al-Zajjāj said that it is a term used for one who excels above all the people of his community in virtue and merit. Others say that it refers to a master whose obedience is mandatory on everyone else. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah once told ‘Ā’ishah that Imam ‘Alī (a) is the *sayyid* of the Arabs, so she asked him, “What do you mean by *sayyid*?” He replied, “Obedience to him is mandatory just as obedience to me is mandatory.”³⁸⁸ Hence we see that the meaning of *sayyid* is one who must be obeyed.

³⁸⁶ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 231.

³⁸⁷ Al-Khawājū‘ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 213.

³⁸⁸ Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *‘Uddat al-Dā‘ī*, p. 325.

Whenever we send blessings and salutations upon the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), we must also include his pure progeny as well. These were members of his household who were purified by Allah, as stated in the Glorious Qurʾān (Q33:33). Such a purification entails being removed from the filth of sin, hence they are infallible and sinless. Of course, this prayer and salutation does not include every individual from the Prophet’s progeny, or anyone who was related to him. Rather, it applies to specific individuals who are worthy of being referred to as the progeny of the Prophet (ﷺ). Otherwise they would not be considered as his progeny even if they were his descendants, just like the son of Nūḥ was not considered from his *ahl* because of his misdeeds (Q11:46).

Therefore, when we say ‘all together’ (*ajmaʿīn*), we mean all members of his virtuous progeny. And it does not include his wives, though many of them were indeed virtuous women. That is because traditions which have been narrated by many sources, in both Shīʿī and Sunnī works, clarify who is meant by the term *Ahl al-Bayt* in the verse of purification, and it does not include any of the ‘mothers of believers’.³⁸⁹ Indeed, in one of his debates with the Syrians, it is reported that ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a) asked them, “Do you not know of our special right as mentioned in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, which applies only to us and no one else?” “No,” they replied. Then he said, “Have you not recited the verse: *Allah only desires to keep all uncleanness away from you, the Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you [with] a thorough purification?*”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Al-Khawājūʿī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, p. 217.

³⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj ‘alā Ahl al-Lijāj*, vol. 2, p. 307.

Then go into Sajdah and recite:

إِلٰهِي قَلْبِي مَحْجُوبٌ، وَنَفْسِي مَعْيُوبٌ،

My Lord, my heart is covered, my soul is deficient,

The term *mahjūb* means covered or veiled. The supplicant is saying that his heart is veiled by the covering of sins or ignorance, thereby leaving it in darkness. This is a veil and covering that prevents one from exhibiting moral traits and lofty virtues.³⁹¹ Deficiency of the soul also results from the evil deeds and sins that one has committed, which leads his soul to become blemished.³⁹² The term *ma'ayūb* refers to something defective, flawed, or having a fault (‘ayb). The soul of an individual retains its initial soundness and purity until the person commits a sin, at which point it becomes blemished. Then, continual sinning increases its flaws until such a time when it becomes covered in blemishes.

The beauty of reciting these words after the supplication, in the state of *sujūd*, is that if done with presence of mind, it fills the supplicant with an overwhelming sense of neediness and humility before Allah. One thus admits his own weaknesses, and how his heart has been sullied by his own misdeeds, and his soul has become flawed because of his acts of disobedience to his Creator. He realizes that it is only Allah who can save him from his predicament and relieve him from the burdens of sin that are weighing him down.

³⁹¹ Khū'ī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 204.

³⁹² Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du'āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 231.

وَعَقْلِي مَغْلُوبٌ، وَهَوَائِي غَالِبٌ،

my intellect is defeated, my caprice prevails,

In some versions, the phrase *‘aqlī maḡhlūb* precedes the phrase *nafsī ma‘yūb*. However, given the subsequent statement (*hawā’ī ḡhālib*),³⁹³ this arrangement looks more appropriate. In any case, it does not change the meaning of what is being said. The meaning of the intellect being defeated is either that it has been confounded and is in a state of perplexity,³⁹⁴ or that it has been overcome by the urges of the inciting soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), and one’s desires and caprice have prevailed over it. Indeed, were human beings to make all their decisions purely on the basis of reason and rational understanding, they would make far fewer errors and mistakes in their lives. Unfortunately, however, most people allow their intellects to be overcome by their desires, and that is what then leads to their own downfall.

Numerous examples in history show that the tyrants, oppressors, and perpetrators of great evil in the world all had one thing in common – they followed their base desires instead of their common sense and intellect. When they were called upon to listen to advice, and when they were admonished even by the greatest of men, they refused to listen and it was as though their minds had been switched off. They became like ravenous beasts and did not pay heed to reason. This is the state of those who allow their intellects to be overcome by their base desires.

³⁹³ Khū’ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 204.

³⁹⁴ Shūshtarī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, p. 231.

وَطَاعَتِي قَلِيلٌ، وَمَعْصِيَّتِي كَثِيرٌ، وَلِسَانِي مُقَرَّرٌ بِالذُّنُوبِ،

*my obedience is little, my disobedience is much, and my tongue
acknowledges [my] sins.*

No matter how many virtuous actions we perform, our good deeds are few when compared to the innumerable blessings of Allah. We read in the supplication of the month of Rajab, “O He who gives plenty in exchange for little!” Indeed, we have been warned in the traditions never to think of our good deeds as being much, and never to think of our sins as being little. The first part of the line above is a reflection of this. On the other hand, we should also not undervalue any act of obedience. Imam ‘Alī (a) is reported to have said, “Do good deeds and never consider any of it as trivial because what is small of it is big, and what is little of it is much.”³⁹⁵

In his advice to Abū Dharr, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “Do not look at the smallness of your sin, but look at [the greatness of] Whom you have disobeyed!”³⁹⁶ Hence, we should consider any and every act of disobedience and sin as grave, and should never trivialize it. In order to make amends, we need to seek forgiveness for our sins, and the first step in doing so is to acknowledge that we have erred. Without acknowledgement (*iqrār*) and acceptance of our mistake, and understanding the gravity of what we have done, there is no way we can be sincere in our repentance and we would most likely repeat that sin or action again.

³⁹⁵ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, saying 422.

³⁹⁶ Al-Ṭabarsī, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, p. 460.

فَكَيْفَ حِيلَتِي يَا سَتَّارَ الْعُيُوبِ، وَيَا عَلَّامَ الْغُيُوبِ، وَيَا كَاشِفَ
الْكُرُوبِ،

*So what recourse do I have? O Concealer of faults! O Knower of all that is
Unseen! O Remover of troubles!*

There is no way of escaping the consequences of our sins and misdeeds. We can never come up with any stratagem or trick by which to escape them. Even if in this world people do not know of those sins which we commit in private, because Allah is the Concealer of faults (*sattār al-‘uyūb*) and He hides our flaws from other people, the outcome of our misdeeds will catch up with us one day, here or in the Hereafter. When we say that Allah is the Knower of the Unseen, we should note that the Unseen (*ghayb*) is of three types, and Allah knows all of them. First is that which cannot be seen by the eyes; second is that which is hidden within the mind and heart; and third is that which has not yet transpired or come into existence.³⁹⁷

As this world is a place of trials, no human being is immune from hardship and difficulties at some time or another in his life. When these difficulties beset an individual, the only recourse he has is with Allah, since it is He who removes troubles. The Qur’ān tells us beautifully that Allah *answers the one in distress when he calls upon Him, and relieves [his] suffering* (Q27:62). That is why all the creatures turn to Him in times of distress, even those who otherwise disbelieve.

³⁹⁷ Khū’ī, *Sharḥ-e Du‘āye Ṣabāḥ*, pp. 204-205.

إِغْفِرْ ذُنُوبِي كُلَّهَا بِحُرْمَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ،

Forgive my sins, all of them, by the sanctity of Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad!

Here, after previously having acknowledged and admitted our sins, we are asking for all our sins to be forgiven – not just some of them. We seek a clean slate, a new beginning. This is a big request, considering how many sins we have committed. That is why we ask by the sanctity of the Messenger of Allah and his progeny, since they are the closest of all the creation to Allah. And we are aware that Allah has promised that He would forgive all sins if His servants turn to Him penitently, with sincerity and humility. He says: *O My servants who exceeded the limits against their own souls [by sinning]! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Verily Allah forgives the sins – all of them; indeed He is the Oft-Forgiving the Merciful* (Q39:53).

It is apt that as we start a new day by reciting this supplication, we do so having been forgiven of all our previous sins and making a resolution that we will not repeat the misdeeds on this day, or on any other day in the future. And by seeking a means (*wasīlah*) to Allah as we present our request, we are following His command as mentioned in the Qurʾān: *O you who believe! Be mindful of Allah and seek means of nearness to Him...* (Q5:35). Asking through the Prophet and his progeny is a sure way of getting our supplication accepted, even when we are undeserving and unworthy due to our numerous sins and transgressions.

يَا غَفَّارُ يَا غَفَّارُ يَا غَفَّارُ، بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

O Oft-forgiver! O Oft-forgiver! O Oft-forgiver! By Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful.

Repetition of the beautiful name of Allah ‘Oft-forgiver’ is done for emphasis, and to highlight the heartfelt nature of our plea. We know that our backs are burdened by many sins, and of these are some sins which would not ordinarily be excused. But Allah is the Oft-forgiver, meaning that it is His wont and practice (*sunnah*) to forgive His servants when they turn to Him in repentance. Indeed He is the Most Merciful of all who show mercy.

With this we come to the end of our supplication, and as we raise our heads from *sujūd*, and proceed to our other early morning activities, let us resolve to try our very best to make the present day better than yesterday, with improvements in our character and deeds, as well as our worship and spirituality. For indeed, the traditions tell us that whoever has two consecutive days which are the same (meaning that there is no improvement today in him compared to yesterday), then he has been deceived and has lost a valuable opportunity, and whoever is such that the second of his two days is worse than the first, then he is cursed (*mal‘ūn*).³⁹⁸ Hence, as we embark on this new day, let us make a determined decision to ensure that we try to improve ourselves and make it better than yesterday, God willing.

³⁹⁸ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 668, h. 4.

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