

## Supplication (ad-Du'aa')

أَمَّنْ تَجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

***"Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil?"<sup>1</sup>***

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Supplication to Allah is ordered by Him, and He promises response:

أَدْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

***"Call upon Me; I will respond to you."<sup>2</sup>***

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ

***"And when My servants ask you, concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me."<sup>3</sup>***

*Du'aa'* is encouraged not only in formal prayer (*ṣalāh*) but at any other time one is inclined to it. It is an important form of worship and is evidence of one's belief in the power and ability of the Almighty. It is an open line of communication between the servant and his Lord; and by its constant practice, awareness of Him is sustained and one joins the ranks of:

وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ

***"...the men and women who remember Allah often."<sup>4</sup>***

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Whoever would be pleased to have Allah respond to him during hardship and disaster should make much *du'aa'* in times of ease."<sup>5</sup> He also said, "Supplication is [true] worship."<sup>6</sup>

How many servants miss out on great opportunities for benefit in this world and the next by their ignorance of this subject. Indeed, every tool, every treatment, every means to an end has a proper use. When used in the correct manner, the desired result will be obtained by Allah's permission, but improper use will accordingly lead to failure. In following the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his instructions, we can make the best use of *du'aa'*.

Facing the *qiblah* when possible, beginning with praise of Allah, raising the hands to the shoulder level and stretching them out when there is urgency are all part of the *sunnah*

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<sup>1</sup>Sūrah an-Naml, 27:62.

<sup>2</sup>Sūrah Ghāfir, 40:60.

<sup>3</sup>Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:186.

<sup>4</sup>Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:35.

<sup>5</sup>At-Tirmidhī – ḥasan.

<sup>6</sup>Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī and others – ṣaḥeeḥ.

of *du'aa'*. One should try to take advantage of the times and conditions when response is most likely.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the best manner of making *du'aa'* is for the servant to concentrate with all of his heart, show humility to Allah and pray in a lowered voice, as Allah orders:

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ.

***"Call upon your Lord in humility and privately; indeed, He does not like transgressors."***<sup>8</sup>

Aggression in *du'aa'* was explained by scholars as shouting or showing off one's skill in the use of words.<sup>9</sup> Upon hearing people raising their voices in *du'aa'*, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "O people, return to yourselves. You do not call upon someone who is deaf or absent but rather, One who is Hearing and Seeing. The One you call upon is nearer to one of you than the neck of the beast he rides."<sup>10</sup>

Be certain that Allah responds willingly, and ask Him accordingly, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Let not one of you say, 'O Allah, forgive me, if You will' because there is no unwillingness."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, he instructed, "When you ask Allah, ask Him being certain of response."<sup>12</sup> He also informed us that there are three supplications which are not refused: that of the parent (for his child), that of the traveler, and that of the oppressed (against his oppressor).<sup>13</sup> Another ḥadīth affirms that the *du'aa'* of a person for his brother Muslim who is absent from him is also answered.<sup>14</sup> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) directed that when supplicating for another, one should begin with himself,<sup>15</sup> saying, for example, "O Allah, guide me and guide him," or "O Allah, forgive me and forgive him."

There are certain things to be avoided in relation to *du'aa'* as they prevent response from Allah *ta'ālā*. *Du'aa'* must not be made for anything sinful or for cutting off relations. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "No Muslim prays to Allah with a *du'aa'* free from sin and from that which cuts ties between relatives without Allah giving him one of three things: the answer to his prayer during his lifetime, the accumulation of its reward for him until the next life, or the prevention of some evil from striking him which is equal to it [i.e., his effort in *du'aa'*]."<sup>16</sup> Allah *subḥānahu wa ta'ālā* is well aware of which one of the three responses is most beneficial to the servant. One should not demand an immediate response, as he who says, "I prayed but was not answered" and then gives up.<sup>17</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) also forbade

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<sup>7</sup>These include during *Ramadhān*, the day of 'Arafah, Fridays, the last portion of the night, between the *adhān* and *iqāmah*, during *sujūd* in prayer, immediately after obligatory prayers, and at times of urgency.

<sup>8</sup>*Sūrah al-A'rāf*, 7:55.

<sup>9</sup>Group supplication led by one person while others repeat after him is an innovation and was not practiced by the Prophet (ﷺ) or his companions. Individual *du'aa'* is preferable, or one may join the *du'aa'* of another by saying "āmeen" at the end.

<sup>10</sup>*Al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*.

<sup>11</sup>*Al-Bukhārī* and *Abū Dāwūd*.

<sup>12</sup>*Aḥmad*, *Muslim* and *al-Bukhārī*.

<sup>13</sup>*Abū Dāwūd* and *at-Tirmidhī* – ḥasan.

<sup>14</sup>*Muslim*.

<sup>15</sup>*At-Tirmidhī* – ṣaḥeeḥ.

<sup>16</sup>*Aḥmad* – ḥasan.

<sup>17</sup>*Al-Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, *at-Tirmidhī* and *Abū Dāwūd*.

making *du'aa'* against oneself, one's family, property or servants.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the supplicant must not be a consumer of *ḥarām* (that which is unlawful). The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) mentioned a man on a long journey – all dirty and dusty – raising his hands to the heaven, saying, "O Lord, O Lord" while his food was from *ḥarām*, his clothing from *ḥarām*, and his having been sustained by *ḥarām*. He (ﷺ) concluded, "How then could he have been answered?"<sup>19</sup>

A consideration of *du'aa'* inevitably leads to the question of fate (*qadar*) and the relationship between the two. Among the best discussions of this subject is one presented by Imām Ibn al-Qayyim in *Al-Jawāb ul-Kāfi*.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah was asked, "What do the scholars say about a man who has been tried with affliction – knowing that if it continues it will ruin him in this life and in the next – and has tried everything in his ability to get rid of it, but it only increases in severity? What is the method of warding it off? May Allah have mercy upon him who helps an afflicted one; and Allah is in assistance of the servant as long as the servant is in assistance of his brother..."

The shaykh answered:<sup>20</sup> *Al-ḥamdu-lillāh*. It has been confirmed in *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhārī* that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Allah has sent down no disease for which He has not sent down a cure." And it is documented in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim* that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "For every disease there is a medicine; and when the medicine contacts the disease, it cures with the permission of Allah." This includes the diseases of the heart and soul, as well as the body, and their treatments. The Prophet (ﷺ) considered ignorance a disease and consulting the learned as its treatment. And Allah informs us that the Qur'ān is a cure:

قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءً

**"Say, 'It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure.'"**<sup>21</sup>

وَنُزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**"And We send down of the Qur'ān that which is healing and mercy for the believers."**<sup>22</sup>

In fact, the Qur'ān is a cure for hearts from the diseases of ignorance and doubt.

And such also is *du'aa'*, for it is one of the most powerful causes of warding off anything disliked or of obtaining that which is desired. It is possible, however, that the desired effect might not follow, due either to a weakness in the *du'aa'* itself – such as one not liked by Allah because it contains aggression – or to half-heartedness in the supplicant. The failure could be due as well to a factor which prevents response such as the supplicant's consumption of *ḥarām* or the control of his heart by earthly lusts or distractions.

<sup>18</sup>Muslim.

<sup>19</sup>Muslim and al-Bukhārī.

<sup>20</sup>What remains of this chapter is a summary of Ibn al-Qayyim's words.

<sup>21</sup>Sūrah Fuṣṣilat, 41:44.

<sup>22</sup>Sūrah al-Isrā', 17:82.

Indeed, *du'aa'* is one of the most beneficial medicines. It is the enemy of disaster – defending against it and fighting it, preventing its descent and pushing it back, and weakening it if it should descend. It is the weapon of the believer.

When *du'aa'* meets disaster, there are three possibilities:

1. The *du'aa'* is stronger than the disaster and thus drives it away.
2. The *du'aa'* is weaker than the disaster, so the disaster overcomes and the servant is struck (although it may be lessened in degree by even a weak *du'aa'*).
3. The *du'aa'* and the disaster oppose each other, and each one prevents the other from victory. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Nothing repels fate except du'aa'.*"<sup>23</sup> And among the best of treatments is persistence in *du'aa'*. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Do not weaken in du'aa', for no one will be destroyed as long as he is making du'aa'.*"<sup>24</sup>

Among the weaknesses which prevent the effect of *du'aa'* is haste or impatience. According to the Prophet (ﷺ), "Any one of you will be answered as long as he is not hasty, saying, 'I made *du'aa'*, but it was not answered.'"<sup>25</sup> When the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The servant continues to be answered as long as he does not ask for something sinful or for that which cuts ties between relatives, and as long as he is not impatient," he was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what is impatience?" He replied, "Impatience is when one says, 'I prayed and prayed, but I do not see that I am being answered,' and so becoming tired, he abandons *du'aa'*."<sup>26</sup> So the servant should not give up *du'aa'* prematurely, thinking the answer to be slow in coming; for then he becomes like one who plants a seed or a twig and begins to care for it and water it, but when he finds it to be slow in growing, leaves it and neglects it.

Therefore, if *du'aa'* is combined with presence of heart and complete concentration on what is desired, and it corresponds with one of the times when response is expected, and it is accompanied by fear of Allah, humbleness and humility to Him, in earnest and in gentleness, and then the supplicant faces the *qiblah*, and is in a state of purity (*ṭahārah*), and then raises his hands to Allah, beginning with praise of Him and blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ), and asks forgiveness and repents, then supplicates, begging Allah and persisting in his request in fear and hope, using the best names of Allah and words recited by the Prophet – all this after having offered some charity (*ṣadaqah*) – such a *du'aa'* could hardly be refused at all; and this is the kind most pleasing to Allah.

Often it becomes known that people have used a certain *du'aa'* and were answered. But it must also be realized that accompanying that *du'aa'* was urgent need and sincere turning to Allah. Or perhaps there was some good that one had done previously, or the *du'aa'* was made at one of the hours of response, or there was some other reason for which it was answered. Therefore, one might think that the secret was in the wording of the *du'aa'* and subsequently use it without the other factors being present. Such is the case in which a man uses a good medicine at the proper time and in the proper way and

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<sup>23</sup> At-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim – ḥasan.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Ḥākim, who graded it ṣaḥeeḥ.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>26</sup> Muslim.

thus benefits from it. Others might think that simply using that medicine is sufficient to cure under any circumstance, but they are mistaken. Similarly, if a supplication happens to be near a grave, an ignorant person might assume that the secret is in the grave, unaware that it is actually in the supplicant's urgency and sincerity when turning to Allah. But when *du'aa'* is made in a mosque (*masjid*), it is better and more pleasing to Allah.

Prayer is like a sword; and the effectiveness of a sword is in its use by the swordsman. So, when the sword is perfect, without fault, when the swordsman's arm is strong and skillful, and when no preventing factor is present, then the enemy is defeated. But if one of these three conditions is weak, then the effect is weakened accordingly. Thus if one's *du'aa'* is not a proper one or one's heart is not combined with his tongue therein or a prohibiting factor (such as disobedience) is present, then the effect will not be obtained.

There is a well-known argument that states: "If the effect of *du'aa'* has been decreed, then it must happen whether the servant asks for it or not; and if it was not decreed, then it will not happen in any case." A certain group, believing this opinion to be correct, stopped making *du'aa'*, saying that there is no use in it; but they, in their excessive ignorance and deviation, contradict themselves. For if this school of thought was to be followed, it would necessitate the annulment of all causes. Thus, if relief from hunger and thirst was decreed for one, it would happen whether or not he ate or drank; and if a child was decreed for one, there would be no need for him to approach his wife; and so on. Would any sane person say such a thing? Even dumb animals instinctively apply themselves to the causes of their life and subsistence, so they are certainly smarter than those who make such unsubstantiated assertions.

Some, pretending intellect, have said, "Keeping busy with *du'aa'* is a form of worship rewarded by Allah, but it has nothing to do with what is gained." So, to such people, the worldly result is the same whether one prays for something or remains silent. And others even more "intellectual" have said, "*Du'aa'* is not a cause but simply a sign that the servant's request is being granted." This is like saying that a black cloud is a sign of rain but does not bring rain – the two only being present simultaneously!

The truth is actually in a third explanation – whatever is decreed is decreed by reason of causes. Nothing is decreed without a cause, and *du'aa'* is among the principal causes. So, whenever a servant applies the cause, then that which is decreed happens; and whenever he does not apply the cause, then it does not happen. Just as relief from hunger and thirst is decreed by reason of eating and drinking, and the birth of a child by reason of marital relations, and the growth of plants by sowing seeds, and the death of an animal by slaughter, and the entrance into Paradise by deeds, and into Hellfire by deeds... This is the true answer.

*Du'aa'* [combined with other efforts] is among the strongest of causes, and nothing is more beneficial or more far-reaching in obtaining the need. Just as the Prophet's companions (may Allah be pleased with them) were the most knowledgeable of the community in respect to the religion, so were they more steadfast than others in applying this cause with its conditions and proper manners. 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb used it against his enemies, and he was the greatest of soldiers. He used to tell his companions, "You will not be helped by [great] numbers, but you will be helped from Heaven."

We have been led by the mind and the instinct and then by history to recognize that righteousness is among the greatest causes for obtaining good upon this earth, and its opposite is among the greatest causes for obtaining evil. Allah *ta'ālā* has made the reward or punishment of the Hereafter depend upon deeds which are conditions, the effect depending upon the cause. In over 1,000 places throughout the Qur'ān an event or result is tied to its cause in descriptions of both this life and the next.

Anyone who understands this fact will benefit greatly. He will not sit passively waiting for fate to overtake him. One with understanding will answer fate with fate and will oppose fate with fate. For indeed, hunger is fate and thirst is fate and cold is fate and fear is fate; yet all creatures exert themselves to change that fate. And that is what Allah has willed.

In order for one to take full advantage of this knowledge, two things are necessary:

1. The servant must learn the causes of good and evil, developing such an understanding from all that he observes around him, from what he has experienced, from what others have experienced, and from what he has heard about other peoples, both ancient and modern. For this purpose, nothing is better than the study of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, since they picture good and evil and their causes to the reader almost as though he were an eyewitness. Then a look into history will provide the details within the general outlines given by Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ).
2. The servant must beware of himself being a preventing factor, blocking the desired result. Knowing that disobedience and ignorance are definite causes of harm to him in this life and the next, he should seek to remedy this in himself, not only to escape penalty in the Hereafter but also to obtain the maximum result when he turns to Allah in *du'aa'* throughout his life on earth.