

## Explanation of Du‘ā 43 from *Sahifa Sajjadiyya*

### Summary of Du ‘ā When looking at Hilāl<sup>1</sup>

In His Name and with His Blessings on the Prophet on the Holy Household

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهِلَّةِ ۖ قَدْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيثٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَرُجُحٌ

*They question you concerning the new moons. Say, ‘They are timekeeping signs for the people and [for the sake of hajj.]’ (Al-Baqarah 2:189)*

Night is a time of peace, rest, solace and serenity for the human soul and one of the perpetual fixtures reminding it of the night’s presence is the moon. From its phases and monthly stages, the crescent is most splendid in beauty and of great significance in Islamic culture. Indeed scholars of language agree on the fact that the very first night when the moon becomes visible to the eye after its birth is considered a hilāl<sup>2</sup>, the crescent – known to be a time keeper – the usher of the new Islamic month and the bearer of glad-tidings for seasoned seekers of spirituality through worship – be it the month of Ramadhan, Hajj, Rajab or even Muharram.

In this unique supplication of the *Sahifa*, Imām Alī Zaynul ‘Abidīn (a) seeks proximity to the Almighty through this unique creation. It begins with a direct address to the crescent alongside an enumeration of its intrinsic qualities especially its role as a sign of Allah (swt), motivating the supplicator to reflect on this obedient servant of the Almighty. In another section the Imam (a) seeks to connect with the Lord of the Heavens and the earth through the blessings in the month that the crescent inaugurates. He asks for success in achieving all types of goodness that a wayfarer may need to attain proximity of the Beloved.

The Crescent – is it alive or not, that is the question?

*O obedient creature,<sup>3</sup>*

*speedy and untiring,*

*frequenter of the mansions of determination,*

*moving about in the sphere of governance!*

In his unique style as also noted in his other supplications, the Imam (a) begins by addressing the crescent as a creature that is obedient, on track, regular and speedy. The Imam (a) also highlights its resignation to the will of the Almighty. It inspires a sense of wonder at the fact that the Imam would address an apparently non-living being which carries no proven faculty of sensation. But in fact as pointed out by numerous verses of the Holy Quran<sup>4</sup> all that exists is alive, and is in a state of glorification through being connected to the Eternal God.

<sup>1</sup> By Shaykh Muhammad Asad Dharsi, Vancouver, Canada. 20<sup>th</sup> Rajab 1438 | 17<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Shirāzī, Al-Sayyid Ali Khān, *Riyād al-Salikin*, Muassasah al-Nashr al-Islamī, v.5, p. 505

<sup>3</sup> Translation of the supplication taken from [www.al-islam.org](http://www.al-islam.org)

<sup>4</sup> Sūras al-Hadīd, al-Hashr, as-Saff, al-Jumu‘ah verse no.1

As humans, we seek to be like the crescent – obedient to the Will of the Almighty and His Governance, being organized through phased plans and stable stations in life, speedy in performing acts of virtue and simultaneously being untiring in our efforts.

### **Role of the moon: faith-enhancing sign of His Kingdom**

*I have faith in Him who lights up darknesses through thee,  
illuminates jet-black shadows by thee,  
appointed thee one of the signs of His kingdom  
and one of the marks of His authority,  
and humbled thee through increase and decrease,  
rising and setting, illumination and eclipse.  
In all of this thou art obedient to Him,  
prompt toward His will.*

One of the ways of proving the existence of the Almighty, connecting with Him and reflecting on His Attributes, is through nature. As humans we rely on our senses to anchor ourselves and maneuver within the physical realm yet a believer's sharp insight allows him to use the same material world to connect with the spiritual world.

The Holy Imam (a) exemplifies in his beautiful words the articulation of such an insight when connecting with the spiritual realm using the crescent moon. Testifying to his faith in the Almighty who is the Ultimate Light, the crescent is a mere reflection of His Attributes that illuminates the physical realm as well as being a clear sign of His Power and Authority. In all of this, the crescent reminds us to be a humble servant of the Almighty. Whether we undergo an increase or decrease in life's bounties, experience a rising or setting of our apparent fortunes, we remain and must remain an obedient servant of the Lord.

### **Awareness of the Almighty - from realization to glorification**

*Glory be to Him!  
How wonderful is what He has arranged in thy situation!  
How subtle what He has made for thy task!  
He has made thee the key to a new month  
for a new situation.*

In attaining Divine *ma'rifah* (recognition), one of the first stages for the wayfarer is acquiring the awareness of the Almighty. In this stage, one needs to – through examining, pondering and deep reflection – come to the realization that there surely exists a Being who is the Ultimate Source and Destination of the creation.

The deeper the realization sets in, the stronger the faith becomes. One of the signs of faith settling into the heart is the sense of awe and grandeur a believer feels in their existence. The Adornment of the worshippers (a) demonstrates how a perfect servant glorifies the Lord for His Intricate Design and Planning, so subtle that the unlocking of a new month occurs using the key of a new crescent moon. To be crescent-like in culture we need to strive

– subtly - to unlock problems and ease difficulties for the rest of creation besides solving our own issues.

### **Seeking the Best – asking for an ideal ‘crescent’: a holistically beneficial month**

*So I ask God, my Lord and thy Lord,  
my Creator and thy Creator,  
my Determiner and thy Determiner,  
my Form-giver and thy Form-giver,  
that He bless Muhammad and his Household  
and appoint thee a crescent of blessings not effaced by days  
and of purity not defiled by sins;  
a crescent of security from blights and of safety from evil deeds;  
a crescent of auspiciousness containing no misfortune,  
of prosperity accompanied by no adversity, of ease not mixed with difficulty,  
of good unstained by evil;  
a crescent of security and faith,  
favor and good-doing, safety and submission!*

One of ways to live a Tawhīdī (God-centered) lifestyle is to live with an awareness of the One (swt). When this state is attained, all of humanity nay all of creation appears connected and bonded together due to their connectedness to the Almighty. The true Mu'min always seeks to pursue the points of unity in whatever group he is a part of, rather than cause diversion, discord, division and separation.

In this section of the supplication, Imam al-Sajjād (a) addresses the commonalities between us and the crescent by centering the pivot of unity on the Unique (swt) – as the Lord, Creator, Determiner and Form-giver, topping it with the spirit of Tawassul – the salutations on the Holy Prophet (s) and His Progeny – which forms the basis of acceptance of the supplication. Interestingly, here the tone of addressing the supplication to the Almighty is in the third person, where the Imam (a) beseeches a month opened by a crescent possessing four types of goodness for us:

Perpetual *barakah* (blessings) and spiritual *tabārah* (purity) removed from sins  
Physical and emotional *amn* (security) and *salāmah* (safety) from evil deeds  
Positive outlook – Sa'd (auspiciousness), *yumn* (prosperity), *yusr* (ease) and *ḵhayr* (goodness)  
Spiritual safety and enrichment – *amn* (security), *īmān* (faith), *ni'mah* (bounty), *ihsān* (good-doing), *salāmah* (safety) and Islam (submission).

The diversity of needs and wants of the human is extensive. A needy person is always seeking fulfillment – deep, one-time, quenching – while the material world is quite the opposite. The faculties of the human need a spiritual source of fulfillment, even for his material needs. Thus the Imam (a) underscores the need to seek the fulfillment of the most basic to the most advanced of needs. All are possible in the light of *amn*, *īmān*, *ihsān* and Islam.

The crescent brings about a sense of renewed enthusiasm and hope for a believer, a sort of renewal of the soul. As we ask for the soul to nurture and grow, we pray that this supplication renews in us a sense of humility and sincerity every month.

### **Seeking Success – asking for the ideal ‘state’: “guarding from disobedience” and “perfecting obedience”**

*O God,  
 bless Muhammad and his Household,  
 place us among the most satisfied of those over whom the crescent has risen,  
 the purest of those who have looked upon it,  
 the most fortunate of those who have worshipped Thee under it;  
 give us the success during [the new month] to repent,  
 preserve us within it from misdeeds,  
 guard us therein from pursuing disobedience to Thee,  
 allot to us within it thanksgiving for Thy favor,  
 clothe us during it in the shields of well-being,  
 and complete for us Thy kindness  
 by perfecting therein obedience to Thee!  
 Surely Thou art All-kind, Praiseworthy.  
 And bless Muhammad and his Household, the good, the pure.*

In this final segment of the Du‘ā, the Holy Imam (a)’s address is directly to the Almighty wherein he seeks the best of states and qualities for the human soul. Having previously sought the groundwork for spiritual upliftment, the human soul needs to perform well to soar, setting an overall goal of purification from disobedience and success in obedience to the Lord.

Through invoking the special blessings on the Messenger of Mercy, the Imam (a) beseeches the all-Merciful to protect from disobedience through asking for states that go in tandem such as:

- Seeking Divine pleasure
- Seeking spiritual purity
- Seeking good fortune in His worship
- Seeking success in repentance
- Seeking preservation from misdeeds and slips

The purification of the soul through avoiding sins, repentance and worship paves the way for spiritual upliftment. Indeed there is no greater way to attain His Pleasure except through His Obedience which, as the Imam (a) alludes to goes hand-in-hand with:

- Attaining the state of Thanksgiving for His Favors
- Being enveloped in well-being
- Invoking Divine kindness in being provided success in obedience

We pray to the Almighty by the sake of Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn (a) to grant us the Tawfīq to recite, reflect and seek lessons from this invaluable supplication and grant us spiritual renewal with every crescent sighted in our lives.