

## Explanation of Du‘ā 45 from *Sahifa Sajjadiyya*

### Imām al-Sajjād’s Supplication Bidding Farewell to the Blessed Month of Ramadan<sup>1</sup>

Without a doubt, this supplication is one of the masterpieces of the *Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjadiyyah*. It is a supplication bidding adieu to the blessed month of fasting and self-reformation, a month that is beloved by the friends of Allah. As such, the supplication is read with the sorrow and sadness, just as one would grieve when saying goodbye to an intimate companion or a near relative leaving for a year-long journey. The sadness felt while reciting this supplication is coupled by the fact that we may never get to see this month again unless Allah gives us life. Indeed, we know of many believers who were with us in the preceding years but are no longer among us, and death is an inescapable reality to be tasted by all.<sup>2</sup>

The valediction of the month of Ramadan is something that has been recommended by the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) himself. On the last Friday of the holy month, he is reported to have told one of his companions: “This is the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, so bid farewell to it.”<sup>3</sup> This supplication is to be recited on the last night of the blessed month, and if one is unsure whether the month will be 29 or 30 days, then it should be recited on both the preceding nights. In his *al-Iḥtijāj*, al-Ṭabrisī<sup>4</sup> quotes from a letter (*tawqī‘*) of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam (a), responding to a query about when one should recite this supplication, in which the Imām (a) reiterates that it should be on the preceding night, not on the last day.<sup>5</sup>

In comparison to the other supplications in the *Ṣaḥīfah*, this supplication is a little lengthy and at first glance, there does not seem to be any particular structure to it.<sup>6</sup> Upon further inspection, however, one comes to realize that certain themes do stand out in this *du‘ā*. The entire supplication can be divided into five distinct themes, namely:

- a) Praise and glorification of Allah
- b) The importance and greatness of the blessed month of Ramadan
- c) Repentance and seeking forgiveness
- d) Bidding farewell to the month of Ramadan
- e) Salutations and blessings upon the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his progeny (a)

<sup>1</sup> By Shaykh Tahir Ridha Jaffer, Qum. Rajab 1438.

<sup>2</sup> That “every soul shall taste death” is emphasized thrice in the Glorious Qur’ān: Q3:185, Q21:35 & Q29:58.

<sup>3</sup> al-Ṣadūq, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Bābawayh, *Faḍā’il al-Ashhur al-Thalathah*, Maktabat Dāwarī (1396 A.H.), p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Also read as al-Ṭabarsī or al-Ṭibrisī.

<sup>5</sup> al-Ṭabrisī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī, *al-Iḥtijāj ‘alā Ahl al-Lijāj*, Nashr al-Murtaḍā (1403 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 483; also quoted in al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī, *Biḥār al-Anwār al-Jāmi‘ li Durar Akhbār al-A’immat al-Aṭḥār*, Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī (1403 A.H.), vol. 94, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> This view has also been expressed by the respected teacher Shaykh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī in his series on the commentary of this supplication (see: <http://mesbahyazdi.ir/node/5606>).

Before examining each of these five themes in detail, it is worth noting that the Imām (a) quotes eight different verses of the Glorious Qur’ān in this supplication. While it is true that most of the supplications from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) are based on Qur’ānic verses and precepts, it is not as common to see actual verses quoted within the supplications. It could be surmised that this is due to the strong connection between the Glorious Qur’ān and the month of Ramadan.

### **(A) Praise and Glorification of Allah**

The etiquette of supplication dictates that we begin by praising and glorifying Allah. We must also express our gratitude to Him for the blessings and boons He has bestowed upon us. Numerous traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) emphasize these two actions as the fundamental constituents of any supplication wherein a servant seeks something from his Lord. In fact, al-Kulaynī has dedicated an entire section on “praise before supplication” (*al-thana’ qabl al-du‘ā*) in his seminal ḥadīth corpus, *al-Kāfi*.<sup>7</sup> We thus see this as something common to most, if not all, supplications taught to us by the Prophet (ṣ) and the infallible Imāms (a).

In this supplication, the Imām begins by praising Allah for His kindness towards His servants, for He seeks no recompense from them yet bestows endless bounties upon them. He rewards them for praising and thanking Him when it is really He who has inspired them to do so. He is praiseworthy for opening the door of mercy to His servants by granting them the means to approach Him in the blessed month of Ramadan so that they may attain His love through repentance, for surely He loves the penitent and those who seek to purify themselves.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it is He who guided us to the right path yet He still rewards us for following it. His guidance and beneficence stem from His pure compassion and kindness, and our gratitude and praise is due to Him, as long as there are ways to praise Him and “as long as there are words of praise” that may be uttered.

### **(B) The Importance and Greatness of the Blessed Month of Ramadan**

The importance of the holy month of Ramadan has been reiterated in many verses, orations, traditions, and supplications. From Qur’ānic verses that speak of revelation on the Night of Qadr in this blessed month, to the famous prophetic oration of al-Sha‘bāniyyah, the numerous traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) and the Ahl al-Bayt about the merits of this month, as well as the supplications that describe the excellence of the month of Ramadan, nothing of the greatness of this month has been left to the imagination. In the same vein, this supplication further emphasizes the virtues of this month in order to remind us of the blessing that we are parting with.

<sup>7</sup> al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb, *al-Kāfi*, Dār al-Ḥadīth (1429 A.H.), vol. 4, pp. 334-339.

<sup>8</sup> Mughniyah, Muḥammad Jawād, *Fī Zilāl al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjadiyyah*, Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī (1428 A.H.), p. 520.

In this supplication, Imām al-Sajjād describes the month of Ramadan as one that has been singled out by the Almighty and distinguished from all the other months as a time when “faith is multiplied” and “prayer is encouraged,” among other qualities. By granting us this month, Allah has bestowed a special favor upon us, of which the wretched unbelievers are ignorant.<sup>9</sup> It is the month wherein the “light” and the Glorious Qur’ān was sent down. It came with the opportunity for abundant “profit” and reward for the faithful, and its departure is a cause of great sorrow. Thus, we depart from it with heavy hearts and a feeling of gloom and melancholy.

### **(C) Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness**

Repentance follows confession and regret – only when one has remorse for his misdeed can he truly be penitent and gain forgiveness from Allah. Some traditions tell us that just as praising Allah and thanking Him are requirements when supplicating, so too is seeking forgiveness and admitting one’s guilt for his iniquities.<sup>10</sup> In this supplication, Imām al-Sajjād (a) devotes a number of passages to the matter of repentance for sins. He says that remorse is “firmly knitted in our hearts” and pardon is “sincerely uttered by our tongues” as we confess and repent for our wrongs. We also ask forgiveness for our shortcomings and negligence in this blessed month. We regret not making use of it as well as we could have and not benefitting from it as we ought to.

Worse still are the sins we committed in this very month – the month wherein we are meant to remain pure from all wrongdoing. So we repent for the sins, misdeeds and offences, small and large, done purposely or out of forgetfulness and negligence. Thus the Imām teaches us how we should ask for forgiveness: by first praying for blessings to be showered upon the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and his progeny, and then asking Allah to “cover us” with His covering, thereby hiding our misdeeds from others, and “pardon us” with His forgiveness, thereby effacing the sins from our book of deeds. With the passing of this month, we pray to Allah to “make us pass forth from our offenses” and with its departure, to “make us depart from our evil deeds,” so that we may return to Him on the Day of Fiṭr with joy and happiness.

### **(D) Bidding Farewell to the Month of Ramadan**

The obvious question that immediately comes to mind here is, “why should we be addressing a month as if it were a living and intelligent entity?” In offering an answer to this very question, Syed Ibn Ṭāwūs says that it has been the common practice of people throughout the ages, and especially during the days of the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) and the Imāms (a), to speak to “non-living” and even abstract entities simply as a means of expression (*lisān al-ḥāl*), not necessarily in order to communicate with those entities. We find similar references in the Qur’ān itself, where we

<sup>9</sup> al-Jazā’irī, Sayyid Ni‘matullāh, *Nūr al-Anwār fī Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Dār al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ (1420 A.H.), p. 315.

<sup>10</sup> *al-Kāfī*, vol. 4, p. 335, h. 3.

read, for example: *The day when We shall say to Hell, "Are you full?" It will reply, "Is there any more?"* (Q50:30).<sup>11</sup> Of course, there are other scholars who proffer a more esoteric answer to this question, insisting that each thing in existence has a level of intelligence and understanding particular to its position in creation and even those entities that are seemingly abstract, have realities that incorporate such intellect.<sup>12</sup>

Imām al-Sajjād (a) addresses the month of Ramadan directly twenty times in this supplication, offering salutations (using the phrase “*al-salāmu ‘alayka*”) as he bids it farewell. It is quite interesting to see how he describes the month as he addresses it. He calls it the festival (‘*eid*) of Allah’s friends, thereby highlighting the difference between the saints and the lay Muslims. While the latter consider the end of fasting to be a festival of celebration, the saints consider the blessed month itself as a festival. The Imām further calls the month a companion whose parting brings him great pain and sorrow. He then goes on to address the month, calling it an intimate friend, a neighbor, a helper and one who is sought after. In addition, Imām al-Sajjād (a) talks to the month of its beauty and how much benefit it brought to the faithful.

### **(E) Salutations and Blessings Upon the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his Progeny (a)**

No supplication would be complete without sending blessings and salutations upon the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his pure progeny. Like all the other supplications of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, this supplication has within it the *ṣalawāt* – and to precise, in four instances the Imām sends blessings upon his grandfather Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the holy household. This is in line with the general requirement of reciting the *ṣalawāt* when one supplicates, and traditions tell us that it is the only way to get supplications to ascend.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the Prophet himself is said to have instructed believers to send salutations upon him in the beginning, the middle and the end of their supplications.<sup>14</sup>

In the traditions, the *ṣalawāt* usually takes a variety of forms and in this supplication, there is a lengthy benediction in which the Imām asks Allah to send blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and his pure progeny just as the archangels, the other Prophets and the righteous believers have been blessed, and even greater than that. He then goes on to mention the advantages of sending these blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) as he says, “a blessing whose benediction will reach us, whose benefit will attain to us, and through which our supplication may be granted!” This shows that whenever we send blessings upon the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his family, we ourselves gain blessings and benefit, and our supplications are answered by Allah.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ṭāwūs, ‘Alī ibn Mūsā, *al-Iqbāl bil-A‘māl al-Ḥasanah*, Maktabat al-‘Ilām al-Islāmī (1418 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 419.

<sup>12</sup> al-Shīrāzī, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Ḥusaynī, *Lawāmi‘ al-Anwār al-‘Arshiyyah fī Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjadiyyah*, Markaz al-Buḥūth al-Kambyūtariyyah al-Tābi‘ li Ḥawzat Iṣfahān al-‘Ilmiyyah, vol. 5, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> *al-Kāfi*, vol. 4, p. 348, h. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350, h. 5.