

Explanation of Du‘ā 25 from the *Sabīfa*¹

Passage 1:

اللَّهُمَّ وَمَنْ عَلَيَّ بَبَقَاءِ وُلْدِي وَبِإِصْلَاحِهِمْ لِي وَبِإِمْتَاعِي بِهِمْ

1. O Allah, be kind to me through the survival of my children, setting them right for me, and allowing me to enjoy them!

Munna ‘alayya = also means: conferring favor upon me. Allah says in Q 3:164:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ

Indeed Allah conferred a benefit (*Shakir*)/ shown grace (*Pickthall*)/ confer a great favor (*Yusufali*) on the believers when He sent to them a messenger from among themselves

Muhani translates (بَبَقَاءِ وُلْدِي) as: ‘by sparing my issue from death’. Up to recent past, children mortality rate was very high. One of the good books to read about an ‘ālim who lost his sons one after the other, such that wrote a book *Comforter of the Heart* to comprehend the loss. Within a short sentence, the imam has used the first person pronoun 3 x. It shows the love and concern a father has for his children

Passage 2:

إِلَهِي ائْمُدُّ لِي فِي أَعْمَارِهِمْ، وَزِدْ لِي فِي آجَالِهِمْ، وَرَبِّ لِي صَغِيرُهُمْ، وَقَوِّ لِي ضَعِيفَهُمْ، وَأَصِحِّ لِي أَبْدَانَهُمْ وَأَدْيَانَهُمْ وَأَخْلَاقَهُمْ، وَعَافِهِمْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَفِي جَوَارِحِهِمْ وَفِي كُلِّ مَا عُنِيتُ بِهِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ، وَأَدْرِزْ لِي وَعَلَى يَدِي أَرْزَاقَهُمْ

2. My God, make long their lives for me, increase their terms, bring up the smallest for me, strengthen the weakest for me, rectify for me: their bodies, their religious dedication, and their moral traits; make them well in: their souls, their limbs, and everything that concerns me of their affair; and pour out for me and upon my hand their provisions!

- The Imam has again employed first person pronoun frequently – 6 x.
- Grant them long lives could be an explanation of ‘survival or sparing’ of children in p.1
- ‘Increase their terms’ continues to expound on ‘survival of children.’
- *Rabbilī* refers to upbringing of children, as in Q 17:24 – (كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا)
- Weak and feeble children are not be desired; rather they should be strong & robust.
- Imam uses *asibha* (rectify and heal) when praying for children’s bodies, religion & morals. The way we are concerned about the good health of their bodies, we should equally if not more, be working to enhance their spirituality and characteristics.
- Imam al-Husayn (a) testified to great *akblāq* of his Ali Akbar on ‘Āshūrā Day.
- Again the Imam uses the word ‘*āfihim* (make them well and safe) when praying for their soul, body, and all those things that is of concern to a father.
- Earning for children is one of the challenges, so Imam prays for the flow of sustenance.

¹ Explanatory notes prepared by H. Kassamali for ALI 317 October 2015

Hadīths: قَالَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ عَ مُجَالَسَةَ الصَّالِحِينَ دَاعِيَةً إِلَى الصَّلَاحِ.

The company of the righteous people is an invitation to goodness (al-Kāfi 1:20)

When Imam al-Sajjad was asked? How did you begin your day? He said that he *begins his day with 8 types of demands: (i) Allah, the Exalted, demands from me the performance of obligatory acts; (ii) the Prophet (s) [demands] following on the Sunnah and the family [demands]; (iii) the family [demands] daily provision. . .* (Jāmi'ul Akhbār, p. 90)

قِيلَ لِعَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ كَيْفَ أَصْبَحْتَ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ أَصْبَحْتُ مَطْلُوبًا بِأَمَانٍ [بِثَمَانٍ] اللَّهُ تَعَالَى يَطْلُبُنِي بِالْفَرَائِضِ وَالنَّبِيِّ صِ بِالسُّنَّةِ وَالْعِيَالِ بِالْقُوتِ وَالنَّفْسِ بِالشَّهْوَةِ وَالشَّيْطَانَ بِالْمَعْصِيَةِ وَالْحَافِظَانَ بِصِدْقِ الْعَمَلِ وَمَلِكِ الْمَوْتِ بِالرُّوحِ وَالْقَبْرُ بِالْجَسَدِ فَأَنَا بَيْنَ هَذِهِ الْخِصَالِ مَطْلُوبٌ
(جامع الأخبار (للشعيري)، ص: 90)

. الإمام عليٌّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ لَمْ يُجْهِدْ نَفْسَهُ فِي صِغَرِهِ لَمْ يَنْبُلْ فِي كِبَرِهِ.

Imam Ali (a): *He who does not exert himself in his childhood will not be high-minded when he grows up.*
[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 8272]

الإمام عليٌّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ سَأَلَ فِي صِغَرِهِ أَجَابَ فِي كِبَرِهِ

Imam Ali (a): *He who asks questions as a child is able to answer them himself as an adult.*
[Ibid. no. 8273]

الإمام عليٌّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ لَمْ يَتَعَلَّمْ فِي الصِّغَرِ لَمْ يَتَقَدَّمْ فِي الْكِبَرِ

Imam Ali (a): *He who does not learn as a child does not progress as an adult.*
[Ibid. no. 8937]

Passage 3

وَاجْعَلُهُمْ أَبْرَارًا أَتَقِيَاءَ بُصْرَاءَ سَامِعِينَ مُطِيعِينَ لَكَ، وَلِأَوْلِيَاءِكَ مُحِبِّينَ مُنَاصِحِينَ، وَكَجَمِيعِ
أَعْدَائِكَ مُعَانِدِينَ وَبَغْضِيْنَ، آمِينَ

3. Make them: pious, fearing, insightful, hearing, and obedient toward You; loving and well-disposed toward Your friends; and stubbornly resistant and full of hate toward all Your enemies! Amen!

Qualities that parents should work to instill in their children:

1. Pious and virtuous (birr, pl. abrār).

Allah refers to the righteous (abrār) a number of times in the Quran.

Prayer of Ulul Albāb 3: 191 – 194. Part of this prayer is: *and cause us to die with the righteous*

The Righteous will be drinking from a cup whose mixture would be kāfūr (Q 76:5)
 In verse 82:13 & 83:22 Allah assures the Righteous thus: - *Surely the righteous will be in bliss*
 In 83:18 it says: Indeed the record of the Righteous is in ‘Ilīyyīn.

There are numerous Hadiths on Abrār, but we will only include one here:

2. God-fearing and Godwary (*muttaqīn* or *atqiyā*). The holy Quran is replete with verses on the significance and necessity of having the quality of taqwā. See for e.g. verses 2:103, 194, 196, 223 & 231.

Amīrul Mu’minīn (a): *Fear Allah in secret, and He will withhold what might harm you.* He has also said: *Whoever fears Allah . . . is feared by everything.*

3. Insightful. See Q 12:108 where Allah asks the Holy Prophet to: *Say, “this is my way, I invite to Allah with insight (basīrah), I and those who follow me.”*
4. Listening (to the admonitions and good words). Refer to Q 39:18 – *Those who listen to the speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding.* Ann Landers was asked by *Psychology Today*, what was the secret of your success. She said, she was a good listener.
5. Obedient to Allah. Amīrul Mu’minīn (a): *Surely Allah, may He be glorified, has appointed rewards for being obedient to Him.*
6. Loving and well-disposed to the friends of Allah. Instill the love of the Holy Prophet (s), his Ahlul Bayt (a) and their friends in the heart of your children. One way is to read to them select stories from the lives of these people. Refer to, amongst other, *Anecdotes for Reflection*, Parts 1 to 4. Also refer to Moral Stories at <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/default.asp>. You may need to check the veracity of some stories with scholars and ensure to narrate only those stories which are appropriate to the comprehension levels of your children.
7. Disliking and dissociating with all the enemies of Allah. Gather info on the atrocities and wrong committed by the enemies of Islam and the Ahlul Bayt (a). Do you find people in our times who adore these enemies or who have the same belief and characteristics? Our children should not associate with such people.

Passage 4:

اللَّهُمَّ اشْدُدْ بِهِمْ عَضُدِي، وَأَقِمْ بِهِمْ أَوْدِي، وَكَثِّرْ بِهِمْ عَدَدِي، وَزَيِّنْ بِهِمْ مَحْضَرِي، وَأَخِي
 بِهِمْ ذِكْرِي، وَاكْفِنِي بِهِمْ فِي غَيْبَتِي، وَأَعِنِّي بِهِمْ عَلَى حَاجَتِي، وَاجْعَلْهُمْ لِي مُحِبِّينَ،
 وَعَلَيَّ حَدِيثِينَ مُقْبِلِينَ مُسْتَقِيمِينَ لِي، مُطِيعِينَ، غَيْرَ عَاصِينَ وَلَا عَاقِبِينَ وَلَا مُخَالَفِينَ وَلَا
 خَاطِبِينَ

4. O Allah, through them: strengthen my arm, straighten my burdened back, multiply my number, adorn my presence, keep alive my mention, suffice me when I am away, help me in my needs, and make them: loving toward me, affectionate, approaching, upright, obedient; never: disobedient, disrespectful, opposed, or offenders!

Commentary:

- The Imam again employs the first person pronoun about 10 times
- Function of children, especially boys, is that they are helpful in all physical tasks
- All sons & daughters serve as part of family members. Sh. Al-Mufīd in *Kitāb al-Irshād* names sons & daughters amongst the children of Imams
- The presence of children in gatherings should be a cause of *ẓīmat* (adornment and beauty) for their parents. The audience should immediately notice that the children come from a well-raised Muslim and Mu'min family. Children's morals & speech point to their parents – not their family name. For e.g. Imam al-Taḳī al-Jawād (a) at the age of 9 responded with confidence & dignity questions by Ma'mūn, such that the later said, "Truly, you are the worthy son of Imam Ali Ridha."
- In your absence, especially after your death, your children's good deeds and morals should enliven your name and remembrance. Observe at the children of some great scholars.
- Often fathers have to go away for business trips and in olden days for wars. The children should fill-in to run family & business affairs on their behalf sufficiently.
- Once the children grow up and begin to earn, they are supposed to fulfill the needs of their parents. Allah says: *They ask you, [O Our Messenger], what they should spend. Say, 'whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents, relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler (Q 2:215).* Imam Ja'far as-Sādiq (a) said that you should: "*Fulfill their requirements . . . even if they in reality are not in need of your assistance.*" (S. S. A. Rizvi, *Family Life in Islam*).
- Good akhlāq includes children loving their parents, being affectionate to them, approachable by them, respectable and obedient to the parents. Parents should never fear their children, whatever their age or position is in the society.
- The children should never be disobedient, disrespectful, opposing or offending to their parents. Is there an exception to this rule? The Holy Quran clarifies this when it says: *But if they endeavor to make you associate [a partner] with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness (31:15).*

Hadiths by Amīrul Mu'minīn Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a):

- A child that has to be retrained is like an extra finger: if you let it be, then you dislike it; and if you cut it off, then it is painful.
- If you scold a child, then leave him room to turn away from his wrong action, so that you do not leave him with obstinacy as his only way out.
- The first things that children should learn about are the things that they will need to know when they become men.
- Surely the heart of a child is like fallow ground: whatever is planted in it is accepted by it.
- It should be your aim to display more kindness towards your child than the kindness that he displays towards you.

(The Sayings & Wisdom of Imam 'Ali, Sh. F. Haeri (comp), p. 110-11)

Passage 5:

وَأَعْنِي عَلَى تَرْبِيَتِهِمْ وَتَأْدِيبِهِمْ، وَبِرِّهِمْ، وَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ مَعَهُمْ أَوْلَادًا ذُكُورًا، وَاجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرًا لِي، وَاجْعَلْهُمْ لِي عَوْنًا عَلَى مَا سَأَلْتُكَ

Help me in their upbringing, their education, and my devotion toward them; Give me among them from Yourself male children; make that a good for me; and make them a help for me in that which I ask from You!

Muhani's translation: *And help me in training them, educating them and in doing good to them . . . and let them be my helpers*

Commentary:

- Imam asks for Allah's help in the *tarbiyat* (upbringing & training) of children
- What is meant by Allah's help? The verb *a'innī* is from the root word *'awn*. Similarly the word *nastī'in* in suratul Fātiha is also from same root. In the surah we pledge to Allah: *To You alone we worship and to You alone we call upon for help*. Allah will only help us to raise children who are virtuous and hard working. Our focus will be to have such children.
- The imam uses the word *ta'dībīhim* – whose root word is *adab*. This word has various meanings: being meticulous and graceful; having praiseworthy behavior and conduct; having knowledge and a positive force to refrain from evil deeds (*Sunan an-Nabi*, p. x).
- Hadiths on adab: *Excellent adab is the ornament of the intellect* (Holy Prophet); *The adab are like new attires* (Imam Ali); and *One who has no intellect has no adab* (Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba) (Ibid, p. xi)
- There are numerous Hadiths that require children to do *birrul wālidayn*, i.e. doing good to their parents. Here the Imam is asking Allah's help that he is able to do good to his children. Perhaps this can help children develop affection for others, especially their own parent.
- The phrase (وَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ) is part of the supplication of Nabī Zakariyyā found in the Quran at 3:38 and 19:5.
- Imam al-Sajjād is praying that amongst the children that Allah may grant him, there should also be male children. This does not at all mean that Imam preferred male over female or he had an aversion against female children. Disliking having daughters was the practice of the people of the Time of Ignorance (*ayyām al-jahiliyya*). Islam came to correct this practice and the Quran condemns it in verses 16:58 – 59. So it is impossible that the Holy Imam would abhor having daughters. Most probably the Imam is praying for male children is because the Imam, like any father, hoped for help and assistance from his children. This is indicated at the end of the passage when the Imam prays: *and make them a help for me in that what I ask from You*. In another Hadith, the Imam had said: *It is from the prosperity for a men to have children from whom he can seek help* (*Mizānul Hikmah*, H. 22312).
- There are numerous Hadiths on merits of having girls. The Holy Prophet (s) said: *Girls are the compassionate, the ones who have been provided for, and the ones who are blessed*. (Ibid, H. 22353)
- After praying that Allah grants him sons, the Imam prays: *make that a good for me*. Children are supposed to be source of joy, help and goodness.
- The following Hadith indicates that the progeny (dhurriyah) continues through sons and not daughter; the Holy Prophet (s) being an exception.

مُعْجَمَ الطَّبْرَانِيِّ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ الْمُؤَدِّينَ وَتَارِيخِ الْخَطِيبِ بِأَسَانِيدِهِمْ إِلَى جَابِرِ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ص إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَعَلَ ذُرِّيَّةَ كُلِّ نَبِيِّ مِنْ صُلْبِهِ خَاصَّةً وَجَعَلَ ذُرِّيَّتِي مِنْ صُلْبِي وَمِنْ صُلْبِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ إِنَّ كُلَّ بَنِي بِنْتٍ

يُنْسَبُونَ إِلَى أَبِيهِمْ إِلَّا أَوْلَادُ فَاطِمَةَ فَإِنِّي أَنَا أَبُوهُمْ - (مناقب آل أبي طالب عليهم السلام لابن شهر آشوب)، ج2، ص: 387، بحار الأنوار (ط - بيروت)، ج43، ص: 284)

وقال انّ كلّ بني بنت ينسبون الى أبيهم إلا أولاد فاطمة فإني انا أبوهم وقد مضى في سوري التّساء والانعام ما يدلّ على أنّهما ابنا رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وآله (تفسير الصافي، ج4، ص: 193، بحار الأنوار (ط - بيروت)، ج16، ص: 307)

Passage 6:

وَأَعِزَّنِي وَذُرِّيَّتِي مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

Give me and my progeny refuge from the accursed Satan . . .

- The Imam seeks refuge in Allah for himself and his progeny from the accursed shaytān. Allah says in the Quran that like wealth, children are also a trial (Q 8:28). In another place Allah warns the believers that their wealth and children should not divert them from the remembrance of Allah (Q 63:9). So shaytān can use the love and preoccupation with children as mean to divert believers from the love of Allah.

Passage 12:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِنَا جَمِيعَ ذَلِكَ بِتَوْفِيقِكَ وَرَحْمَتِكَ، وَأَعِزَّنَا مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ، وَأَعْطِ جَمِيعَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ مِثْلَ الَّذِي سَأَلْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي وَلِوَلَدِي فِي عَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا وَآجِلِ الْآخِرَةِ، إِنَّكَ قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ عَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ رءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

O Allah: give me all of that through Your bestowal of success and Your mercy, grant us refuge from the chastisement of the burning, and give to all the Muslims, male and female, and all the faithful, male and female, the like of what I have asked for myself and my children, in the immediate of this world and the deferred of the next! Verily You are the Near, the Responder, the All-bearing, the All-knowing, the Pardoner, the Forgiving, the Clement, the Merciful!

- At the end, the Imam prays that all that he has asked for, be given to him with Divine tawfiq (success) and Divine mercy.
- He also pray for the protection from the burning fire of Hell
- He prays for all Muslims – male & female, and all believers – male & female, similar to what he prayed for himself and his progeny. This shows true concern for the welfare of others.
- He also prays for the success in both the worlds, for Muslims & Believers. Compare this with the differences that is seen amongst the Muslims today that they are ready to destroy, kill and massacre fellow Muslims.
- The Imam invokes eight great qualities of the Divine, to ensure that the Almighty will accept his prayers. May we be blessed to follow on the noble path that was practiced by the Imam!

Passage 13: **وَأْتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً، وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ**

And give to us in this world good, and in the next world good, and protect us from the chastisement of the Fire! (Q 2: 202)

- Imam al-Sajjād (a) ends the Du‘ā by quoting the Quranic verse which we recite regularly in prayers. It is a general prayer wherein we ask Allah for the good in both the world and for the protection against the Fire of Hell.
- Aghā Pūyā & Mir Ahmed Ali comment on the verse: The true seekers, with inner certainty, glorify Allah and invoke Him to grant them good in this world, and good in the hereafter. Islam guides man to achieve success in both the worlds. This prayer, for both the lives taught to the Muslims by the Quran, indicates that Islam wants man to adopt the middle course between materialism and asceticism.

Passages 6 – 11: cover the role of shaytān in misleading the human being. His schemes and untiring efforts in misleading men has been covered in some details. InshāAllah, this will be covered in future classes.