

Supplication 53: Supplication of Abasing himself before God¹

Abasement before God

Arabic Text

رَبِّ أَفْحَمَّنِي ذُنُوبِي، وَ انْقَطَعَتْ مَقَالَتِي، فَلَا حُجَّةَ لِي، فَأَنَا الْأَسِيرُ بِبَيْتِي، الْمُرْتَهَنُ بِعَمَلِي، الْمُرْتَدِّدُ فِي
 حَاطِيَّتِي، الْمُتَحَيِّرُ عَنِ قَصْدِي، الْمُنْقَطِعُ بِي . قَدْ أَوْقَعْتُ نَفْسِي مَوْقِفَ الْأَدْلَاءِ الْمُذْنِبِينَ، مَوْقِفَ
 الْأَشْقِيَاءِ الْمُتَجَرِّينَ عَلَيْكَ، الْمُسْتَحْقِينَ بِوَعْدِكَ سُبْحَانَكَ أَيَّ جُرْأَةٍ اجْتَرَأْتُ عَلَيْكَ، وَ أَيَّ تَغْرِيرٍ غَرَّرْتُ
 بِنَفْسِي مَوْلَايَ اِرْحَمْ كَبُوتِي لِجِرِّ وَجْهِي وَ زَلَّةَ قَدَمِي، وَ عُدَّ بِجِلْمِكَ عَلَى جَهْلِي وَ بِإِحْسَانِكَ عَلَى
 إِسَاءَتِي، فَأَنَا الْمُقَرَّبُ بِذَنْبِي، الْمُعْتَرَفُ بِخَطِيئَتِي، وَ هَذِهِ يَدِي وَ نَاصِيَّتِي، أَسْتَكِينُ بِالْقَوْدِ مِنْ نَفْسِي، اِرْحَمْ
 شَيْبَتِي، وَ نَفَادَ أَيَّامِي، وَ افْتِرَابَ أَجَلِي وَ ضَعْفِي وَ مَسْكَنَتِي وَ قَلَّةَ حِيلَتِي . مَوْلَايَ وَ اِرْحَمْنِي إِذَا انْقَطَعَ
 مِنَ الدُّنْيَا أَثْرِي، وَ أَحْيَى مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ ذِكْرِي، وَ كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمَنْسِيينَ كَمَنْ قَدْ نَسِيَ مَوْلَايَ وَ اِرْحَمْنِي
 عِنْدَ تَغْيِيرِ صُورَتِي وَ حَالِي إِذَا بَلَى جِسْمِي، وَ تَفَرَّقَتْ أَعْضَائِي، وَ تَقَطَّعَتْ أَوْصَالِي، يَا غَفْلَتِي عَمَّا يُرَادُ بِي
 . مَوْلَايَ وَ اِرْحَمْنِي فِي حَشْرِي وَ نَشْرِي، وَ اجْعَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ مَعَ أَوْلِيَائِكَ مَوْقِفِي، وَ فِي أَحْبَابِكَ
 مَصْدَرِي، وَ فِي جِوَارِكَ مَسْكَنِي، يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ .

Translation

My Lord, my sins have silenced me, and my words have been cut off. I have no argument for I am the prisoner of my own affliction, the hostage of my own works, the frequenter of my own offenses, the thwarted.

I have brought myself to a halt in the halting place of the abased sinners, the halting place of the wretched and insolent. The place of those who think lightly of Your promises. Glory be to You! What insolence I have insolently shown toward You. What delusion with which I have deluded myself!

My Master have mercy on my falling flat on my face and the slipping of my foot. Grant me my ignorance through Your clemency, and my evildoing through Your beneficence for I admit my sin and I confess my offense. Here are my hands and my forelock! I am resigned to retaliation against my soul.

Have mercy on my white hair, the depletion of my days, the nearing of my term, my frailty, my misery, and the paucity of my stratagems!

My Master have mercy upon me when my trace is cut off from this world, and my mention is effaced among the creatures and I join the forgotten like the forgotten ones!

¹ Muhammad Ali Majd Faqihī, *An Introductory Commentary to al-Sabīfab al-Sajjādiyyah*, Tr. K Bhojani, pp. 145 – 152.

My Master have mercy upon me at the change of my form and state when my body decays, my limbs are scattered, and my joints are dismembered! O my heedlessness toward what was wanted from me!

My Master have mercy upon me at my mustering and uprising, and on that day, appoint my standing place with Your friends, my place of emergence with You beloveds, and make my dwelling in Your neighborhood. O Lord of the world!

Exposition

The original meaning of the word *Js* is softness or to be tamed. It is an adjective that indicates an abasement of a person before something that he has submitted to completely. It is a concept - like love and knowledge - that requires another being to complete its meaning. The term for these kinds of words is *dhāt al-Idāfab*. Thus, for example, if a knowable does not exist, knowledge can never materialize, or if a beloved does not exist, love can never materialize. Abasement is of a similar nature and requires another being for it to materialize. The value of these types of concepts is founded on the value of that existent they are associated with. For example, the value of a love is dependent on the beloved, and the value of a knowledge is dependent on the known. Without determining the value of the existent they are associated with, the value of the concept itself cannot be determined. For example, love cannot be deemed good or evil on its own without taking the beloved into consideration. The concept of abasement is of a similar nature. In the following section we will analyze the value of this concept while taking its associated existent into consideration.

If a person submits, and his submission is to the truth and God, it is one of the most commendable characteristics a human can have. We will refer to this as positive abasement. It is the very state that a person experiences before God that causes him to have presence of heart in his acts of worship, be it thanksgiving, repentance, supplication, or other forms. It renders him sincere. Thus, rather than expressing disapproval, he faces God proffering excuses for himself; and rather than try to oblige God with his acts of worship, he approaches Him with a sense of embarrassment. The result of this form of abasement is honor. This is because it drives a person to obey God and submit to His commands, and obedience to God is the foundation of man's honor in this world and the next.

On the other hand if a person's submission is towards the corporeal realm and its corporeal pleasures, abasement will then be considered one of the ugliest characteristics a man can possibly acquire. We will refer to this as negative abasement. This form of abasement is the cause of the decadence of one's Personality. This is because the cost of submitting to the world, Satan, and the lowly desires of the soul is rebellion against God, which ultimately leads man to his descent.

1. *أَفْحَمْنِي* is from the root *فحم* which means somebody who does not have the ability to reply.

The phrase *فحم الصبي* means: 'the child cried so much that it silenced him,' The word *إفحام* means to silence somebody by means of demonstrating an argument. Here 'it is a reference to sinners and their sins. The sins of the sinner have tendered the sinner unable to speak or

reply. He has no ability to proffer an excuse or argument to defend himself against his own actions.

2. *أَلْمُرْكَنُ بِعَمَلِي* - *the prisoner of my own affliction.*

The word *أَلْمُرْكَنُ* is a passive participle which is derived from the root word *وَكُنَّ* which means prison. The meaning is that a Person is a prisoner of his own deeds. It is a reference to the verse: *Every man is a prisoner to what he has earned.* (Q 52:21). The term *رَهْن* is used in cases of debt. Something called *رَهْن* is taken in lieu of a debt that is owed to the creditor as a security for the debt. The thing that is taken as a security is referred to as *مَرْهُون* or *مَرْتَهَن*.

In the context of this supplication, the deeds of a person are his debt, and his soul is the security taken in lieu of it. The soul will never be freed from being a form of security unless the debt is paid. Thus, if a person performs righteous deeds, he has paid his debt, which are the righteous deeds themselves. This is because God only accepts good deeds, and it is only the righteous deeds that ascend to God.² A person who has failed to carry out any righteous deeds has imprisoned his soul. This phrase of the supplication thus in reality is a form of confessing one's evil deeds.

3. *أَلْمُتَحَيِّرُ عَن قَصْدِي* - *the confused in my intended way.*

The word *قَصْد* means to be straight without any form of indirectness.

4. *أَلْمُنْقَطِعُ* is a passive participle. It is used to refer to somebody who is stranded on a journey, such as a person whose provisions for the journey are exhausted, or one whose ride is damaged. In both cases, such a person is unable to continue his journey.

5. *عَزَّزْتُ بِنَفْسِي* - *deluded myself with.*

It means to put oneself in danger through delusion.

6. *كَبَّوْتِي* - *my falling flat.*

كَبَا لَوْجَهه means falling flat on one's face. In this phrase it holds the meaning of spiritual descent or falling into the place of God's punishment.

7. *خَرَّ الْوَجْهه* means face or the cheek. It is used to indicate a person's state whose face has fallen onto the ground. It is a state accompanied with humiliation, suffering and pain. Therefore, he likened falling into sin to someone who is humiliated and suffers because these are the concomitants of sinning.

² To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct 35:10

8. القود is a form of retaliation which is executed by penalizing the offender with whatever he committed. The Imam عليه السلام has used it in this phrase to mean retaliation in general.

9. كَوَصَال is the plural of وَصَل which is a reference to the joints of the human body.

10. حَشْرِي وَنَشْرِي - *my mustering and uprising*.

The lexical meaning of حشر is to drive out a group from their place or to make them move towards a battlefield or something similar (like the movement towards the resurrection). نَشْر means resurrection after death.

The Teachings of the Supplications

Supplications have tremendous existential effects on humans and offer several teachings to him. Here are some of them:

1. Man should always endeavor to reform his soul, because if one reforms his soul, he will be able to attain the eternal abode of the hereafter.
2. However small a person himself, the greater he becomes. He will only take steps towards purification in as much as he deems himself soiled with sins. This is because the path of reforming the soul is founded on his cognition of his shortcomings. The most important element in one's progression is attention towards his shortcoming to rid them. This view of the self induces movement in this soul in the direction of perfection.
3. One should not deceive his-self and should not be deceived by the world, for the golden opportunities available in life, such as youth, are not lasting.
4. One should constantly be in remembrance of death and the eternal abode. He should move under the shadow of fear and hope in all the states of his life. He should be ever-apprehensive of his own actions and ever-hopeful of God's mercy.
5. One should never under any circumstances despair of God's encompassing mercy.

with your friends, my place of emergence with You beloveds, and make my dwelling in Your neighborhood. O Lord of the world!

Exposition

The original meaning of the words is softness or to be tamed. It is an adjective that indicates abasement of a person before something that he has submitted to completely. It is a concept - like love and knowledge - that requires another being to complete its meaning. The term for these kinds of words is *dhāt al-Idafah*. Thus, for example, if a knowable does not exist, knowledge can never materialize, or if a beloved does not exist, love can never materialize. Abasement is of a similar nature and requires another being for it to materialize. The value of these types of concepts is founded on the value of that existent they are associated with. For example, the value of a love is dependent on the beloved, and the value of a knowledge is dependent on the known. Without determining the value of the existent, they are associated with, the value of the concept itself cannot be determined. For example, love cannot be deemed good or evil on its own without taking the beloved into consideration. The concept of abasement is of a similar nature. In the following section we will analyze the value of this concept while taking its associated existent into consideration.