

One of the Greatest Gifts Allah, The All-Merciful Has Given to Mankind is Prayer

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?">

One of the greatest gifts Allah (the All-Merciful) has given mankind is prayer. Now, there is ritual prayer (salat) that involves specific actions and sayings to be performed, and then there is du'a (call or supplication). The du'a or call to God (the All-Hearing) really has no conditions except true sincerity or purity. Du'a is a direct link or direct call to the Lord of all things. Meaning, the connection is between you and Allah (all glory be to Him). Yes, people may use different means to reach God, but the call or worship is still directed to God.

For example, one may ask Prophet Muhammad, the Imams, or any other Ma'sum (infallible being, peace be upon them all) to pray for him/her or ask from Allah (the All-Powerful) on his/her behalf, but the Ma'sum is just a means of purity, which Allah (the All-Hearing) has provided as a mercy. It is God, and only God that is the Ultimate Provider. We do not worship the Ma'sum, but we may use their purity just as a means when calling God (the All-Merciful). To further elaborate, people go to places of great purity to do du'a. For example, during Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage) or ziyarat (visit), people make du'a at holy places, like near the Ka'bah. One can take advantage of the purity of the place to make a sincere call to the Lord (the Master of all). Of course we do not worship the Ka'bah; we worship the One God. Allah (the All-Wise) states via the Qur'an (2:186), inter alia, "When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearmost. I answer the supplicant's call when he calls Me."

Du'a is very powerful. Besides experiencing many occasions in which God answered my calls for help (such as asking for help in school and work and asking for better health for my loved ones), I also know many people that tell me personal stories in which they make du'a and their wishes are fulfilled. For example, one brother told me that when he was in Hajj, he wanted something during tawaf (circumbulation) and he made du'a for it, and he swears that his du'a was answered right away.

However, the main question is why does Allah (the All-Wise) not answer every du'a of mine? For example, in 2006, my wife and I were determined to go for Hajj. We prayed and made du'a that we both can perform this great obligation and mercy. We paid the money, we packed the bags, and we were ready to get together with the other members of the Hajj group. The night before we were to go to the airport to begin our journey, we received a call from the group. We were told that our 6 visas were not obtained and that, actually, someone stole them. This

was a devastating blow. The group decided to cancel the entire Hajj trip, and we tried our utmost to get on another Hajj group. We prayed and prayed for something to work out, but we were too late and we did not go for Hajj. My wife and I discussed why this did not happen for us. One theory is that maybe we were not ready. You see, Allah (the All-Knowing) sees things that we do not see. He knows what is better for us. The Lord sometimes does not answer our call because maybe we are not ready or what we ask for is not right for us, such as at that moment. There is a hadith (tradition) that states that the fastest or quickest reply from Allah takes forty years. What does this mean?

You see, Allah may not answer you right away because you might need to grow first before you get what you asked for. My wife does say that she feels more mature now and that she may appreciate Hajj more now than before.

Of course, there could be many other reasons why Allah does not answer or delays His answer (e.g., Allah may want to test us, what we ask for may not be good for us, there may be something better, we may not be sincere enough, and/or other reasons - some we can comprehend and some that may be beyond our comprehension). For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that if you want your du'a to be answered, then purify your food and work. You see, there may be a lack of purity and/or sincerity on your part in which Allah (the All-Merciful) may not accept your call until you purify yourself.

In another theory, my wife and I thought that maybe we did something wrong, and that is why we did not go to Hajj. May Allah (the All-Gracious) make us aware of our wrong doings so that we can correct them. There are certain things one can do to increase purity and sincerity in regards to making du'a. (Jalali, page 449). For example, when making du'a raise your hands for supplication, start and end with salawat (invocation of peace upon Prophet Muhammad and his family), say Ya Allah ten times, and your intention should be clear and you should not have hypocrisy in your heart (no matter what you receive).

Also, whatever Allah chooses for you accept it, do not delay prayer (salat), and give charity. Furthermore, there is a beautiful hadith (tradition) from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him and his family) in which someone asked him why his du'a was not answered and Imam Ali said that you know Allah but you do not obey Him, you know the messenger but you do not follow him, you know the Qur'an but you do not follow it, you feel the fire of Hell but you do not prepare to avoid it, you want to enter Paradise but you do not prepare to enter it, you receive favors but you are not thankful. If we are truly sincere (just not with our tongues, but with our whole being), then Allah (the All-Merciful) may answer us.

Du'a is truly a spiritual experience. It is one of the best remedies, and it gives comfort. For

example, if you are stressed and worrying about many things, you can use du'a as a stress reliever. Personally, when I am upset or worried, I like going to a quiet area in my house to make du'a. I open up to the Lord and have an intimate moment. By doing this, I truly feel more relaxed afterwards. Just knowing that God is there listening to me really brings me comfort. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that du'a is the essence of worship. He also said that whoever does not know how to do du'a is a loser. Additionally, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that who does du'a but does not act is fooling himself. So worship Allah by doing du'a, but act accordingly to be worthy of receiving an answer. In connection with the concept of du'a, there is the concept of dhikr (remembrance [of God]). The Qur'an (7:205) states, "And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without being loud, morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless." You see, when you remember Allah (the All-Beneficent) you become calm and relaxed. When one gets nervous, that is when Shaytan (Satan) attacks. Remember Allah to keep control and to be in a comfortable state. Now, what does it mean to remember the Lord? Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that whoever obeys Allah, he is in remembrance of Allah (the All-Generous). Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that I do not say, 'Do not say Subhan'Allah (All-Glory be to God),' but the essence of dhikr is when you have the choice to obey Shaytan, to obey yourself, or to obey the Lord and at that time you choose to remember Allah.

How many times have we sat down with the tasbeih beads (prayer beads or beads used for remembering or glorifying God) and used our tongues to try to remember Allah, and then after we put the beads away we do not follow the commands of God in our daily activities? In addition to reciting tasbeih, May Allah (the All-Powerful) gives us the strength to remember Him properly by obeying His merciful commands and recommendations