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Introduction

It is with great pleasure to present you the teacher's manual for AI ASR Ramadhan session of 2010. The overarching theme for this year is **striving (trying hard, making strenuous effort towards any goal)**. Striving in our lives leads us towards perfection, towards excellence and towards being very close to Allah (SWT). This theme draws from examples of various Prophets of Allah (SWT) and reflects on how they communicated with Allah (SWT) while confiding their situation and seeking His help to be successful.

The verses selected in these lessons portray Prophets' Duas with Allah (SWT). In simple terms, *Dua* can be defined as having conversation with Allah (SWT) and takes different forms. It could just be a thought; it could be a verbal statement or a continuous calling. Prophets used various ways to talk to Allah (SWT). They shared their joys, their struggles and their pains. At times they were sad, at times happy and at times they just needed Allah (SWT)'s approval in what they were doing. They constantly kept in touch with Allah (SWT). Prophets were examples of guidance sent to us. By reflecting on how they struggled and conversed with Allah (SWT), we can use these verses to remind us of the great ways of these Prophets and apply it in our lives within our own unique circumstances.

The teacher's role in this process is indeed special and contributes a great part to the success of this program. Teaching for the sake of Allah (SWT) is indeed a privilege especially when a teacher manages to get even one child to recognize the value of conversing with Allah (SWT), it becomes a wonderful achievement. It is common knowledge that teachers have great impact on children's thoughts and lives. Therefore, as educators if we are able to make students understand the goal of striving by **using the verses** which the Prophets did (as a means), in understanding the value of **remembering Allah (SWT) in good and bad times**, while helping students **reflect on these verses** and getting them to explore ways which they could **apply it in their lives**, the objective will be achieved. Being able to inculcate this habit within ourselves and our students has great benefit as:

1. It responds to Allah (SWT)'s message when he states in the Qur'an: *"Ud uni astajib lakum....Call on to me and I will respond to you' Sura Ghafir 40:60*
2. It builds a 'connection with the supreme creator' – a closeness that is sufficient to solve all our needs.

To further explore the relevance of *Dua* and offer some background of understanding the value of conversation with Allah (SWT), I have included an opening chapter on *Dua* which highlights a few salient aspects of *Dua*. The format of each lesson offers the context in which the *Dua* was used by the Prophets, some aspect of the Prophets background, and highlights of the Prophets' strive and lessons drawn from this. It ends with suggestions for application and questions to engage students in a meaningful discussion. However, this activity should not limit you in using your imagination and

creativity to develop further exercises in a way that is most effective on your part. A **recommended exercise** (apart from the questions) is to get students to write about one time in their lives they could recite the Dua. This would make it more meaningful for them as they ponder over its applications and begin to understand the verses and know how to apply them in their lives. The ball therefore rests in your court. Your efforts will go a long way in helping your students succeed in this life and in the hereafter. May Allah (SWT) accept your strive towards His path, ameen.

Special gratitude goes to Mawlana Muhammad Rizvi for doing a final check and approval of the contents of this manual, Taherabai Kassamali for selecting the verses editing the contents and providing constant advice, Sabirabai Kermalli for the continuous support in this process and offering feedback on the contents and all those who assisted in accomplishing the project.

If in compiling this manual, there are any mistakes, they are entirely mine. I pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) to forgive me and accept this humble task and admit me amongst His righteous ones.

Rabbannagh firli wa taqabbal minni, wa adkhilni fi ibaadikas saaliheen

Ameen, ya Rabbal aalameen

Shahnaaz Alidina

Dua: A Tool of Humility

Praise be to Allah (SWT) who hears all voices, loud and silent ones and does not confuse or mix up the caller amidst millions of callers. Praise be to Him whose doors are never closed, whose availability is ever accessible and who listens despite our misgivings and disobedience to Him. Praise be to Him who does not discriminate the callers and readily responds to those who seek Him.

The Holy Qur'an has numerous examples of Duas of Prophets and ordinary believers (e.g. Prophet Musa's mother, Bibi Maryam etc). Dua has also been the tool of communication of our Aimmas. The popular ones being Sahifa Alawiya of Imam Ali (AS) and Sahifa Sajjadiya of Imam Zainul Abedin (AS). Dua has the power to remove our troubles and satisfy our needs. If our needs align with Allah (SWT)'s laws then He certainly responds to us.

Dua forms a basic part of spiritual life and means to call out to, or to supplicate to. One normally calls to one who has the power to respond, and none other than our creator has the capacity to fulfill this task. Calling to our creator shows our humbleness and recognition that we are in need of His blessings and need Him to fulfill our needs. However, it is also necessary to understand the process of acceptance. In explanation to this, I offer brief pointers to areas that we need to take into consideration. The synopsis of this presentation is in no way the full account of Dua, as that in itself is a volume of its own, but a mere drop of the vast ocean that is out there. It is hoped that these pointers will help clarify basic understanding of Dua.

- **Allah (SWT) does not break His promise:** Othman ibne Saeed asks Imam Jaffer Sadiq (AS) why some Duas are not accepted when the verse of Holy Qur'an states "call me and I will answer you". Imam responds: *"Do you think God breaks His promise?"* Othman replies; "No". Imam then explains, *"whoever obeys Allah (SWT)'s orders and offers his Dua properly, his Dua will be answered"*. Allah (SWT) has given us permission to call upon him and He says He will surely answer (2:186). Having this firm belief that Allah (SWT) is always true to His words and that our Duas will be answered is the key aspect here. Yes, the answer may not be spontaneous and could be delayed, but knowing that it will be answered confirms our faith in Him.
- **Sometimes Duas are delayed;** The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: *"God answers our Duas most of the times. However sometimes Duas are delayed so as to give both a greater reward and further blessing"*. Sometimes the delay in our Dua is due to the high position of the person. Allah (SWT) likes to hear the voice of his servant. Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari relates from the Holy Prophet (SAW) as: *"If a person who is favored by Allah (SWT) supplicates, Allah (SWT) says to Angel Jibreel: grant his request but delay it, for I like to hear his voice more and more.."* Knowing that Allah (SWT) is always listening and being persistent in our Duas and waiting for our answer without losing hope, is the best thing we can do.

- **Being persistent:** Imam Ali (AS) said: *“Dua is a shield of a believer. If you keep on knocking on the door of Divine Mercy, it will be opened to you”*. We should not give up when our Duas are not accepted immediately. It could be we are the favored ones of Allah (SWT), so we need to keep on praying and eventually our needs will be responded to.
- **Using the right time and right place:** Time and place is of essence to our Duas being accepted. Friday night and day is exceptional to Duas being accepted. The dark hours of the night are special too. The Holy months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadhan are a season for Duas being accepted. Similarly the place like the land of Arafat, the two great mosques (in Makkah and Madina), Shrines of our Imams and any mosque has great impact on Duas being accepted quickly. The last ten nights of Ramadhan when we open the Holy Qur’an and using it as a means to get our Duas accepted are among the many examples we know. So trying to use these best times and places will help us in achieving our Duas.
- **Using a Wasila:** Just like getting an approval from the principal we go through our teachers, using the channel of our beloved Prophet (SAW) and his ahlul bayt is one way of getting our Duas listened to quickly as Allah (SWT) finds it difficult to reject any wishes from his beloved people. Addressing our wishes through the Imam of our time, Imam Mahdi (AJF) is one of the best channels.
- **Keeping our Duas secret:** There are many Hadith in this connection. In Sura A’raf verse 55 Allah (SWT) says: *“Call on your Lord humbly and secretly”*. A Dua that is kept secret is better than 70 Duas made public according to Imam Reza (AS). So having a secret conversation with Allah (SWT) makes us realize that we can have a special relationship with Him.
- **Saying Ameen:** One who says “ameen” shares the Dua. It is reported from Ali Ibne Aqabah on the authority of Imam Jaffer Sadiq (AS) who said: *“Whenever my father was sad about something, he would gather women and children for reciting Dua and they would say: **ameen**”*. This practice is very useful as it promotes unity when we pray for each other and instills love and concern for one another. We normally pray for the sick together in mosque when we recite ‘*amman yujibu...*’ It is good to end with saying ameen when we finish reciting the Dua. In the same way we could pray Duas together in our homes.

It is hoped that these few pointers will help teachers approach the verses of Duas in a different light as they prepare to begin their sessions with the students. Reference for these pointers were taken from *Odattol Dae* [The asset of Suppliant]: How to be a servant of Allah (SWT) and to Praise Him

Ahsant
Shahnaaz Alidina

Dua for Acceptance – Dua of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS)

Short verse

رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Our Lord, accept from us. Surely You are the all-Hearing, the all-Knowing (2:127)

Long Verse

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ
مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

When Ibrahim raised the foundations of the House with Ismael [saying] Our Lord, accept from us Surely You are the all-Hearing, the all-Knowing (2:127)

Context of the Dua

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS) while building the house of Allah (SWT), the Holy Ka'aba, prayed to Allah (SWT) for successful completion of their project. Let's look at this situation: we have two of the best of Allah (SWT)'s creation (Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS) making the most Holy structure on the face of the Earth (the Ka'aba) in the most sanctified place on Earth (Makkah)... What is the thought that is going through their minds? Acceptance of their act! The Prophets and Imams are so aware of their actions and wanting to please Allah (SWT) all the time that they seek for their actions to be accepted by Allah (SWT) and to be close to Allah (SWT)'s pleasure.

Background of Prophet

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was tested by Allah (SWT) throughout his life. Prophet Ismael (AS) was tried by Allah (SWT) since he was a little baby. The Ka'aba has been constructed and reconstructed by Prophets Adam, Ibrahim, Ismael and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). No other house has had this honor.

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS) kept on calling people to worship Allah (SWT). At that time there was no place built for the worship of Allah (SWT). Prophet Ibrahim (AS) wished there could be such a place where people would be in peace, and concentrate solely for the worship of Allah (SWT). His wish was answered when Allah (SWT) ordered him to build the Sacred House, the Ka'aba. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) said to Prophet Ismael (AS): "O Ismael, Allah has given me an order, will you help me execute it?" "Yes I will" Prophet Ismael (AS) replied. "Allah has ordered me to build a house here." He said, pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it. They went towards the place and started building the foundations of the Ka'aba. Prophet Ismael

(AS) brought the stones and Prophet Ibrahim (AS) built the walls, and when the walls became high, Prophet Ismael (AS) brought a large stone and put it in front of his father who stood over it and carried on building, while Prophet Ismael (AS) was handing him the stones. Both of them went on building and going around the Ka'aba, saying: "O our Lord accept this service from us." When they finished the building, Angel Jibreel descended from heaven and showed Prophet Ibrahim (AS) the rituals of Hajj. Then Prophet Ibrahim (AS) stepped on the stone and called on people: "O people obey your Lord." This large stone which Prophet Ibrahim (AS) stepped on is still there to this day near the Ka'aba. The stone has the impressions of Prophet Ibrahim's feet. It is called Makam Ibrahim.

The Other Names of the Ka'aba

1. **Bait ul Ateeq** - according to one narration means, the earliest and ancient. According to the second it means independent and liberating. Both meanings could be taken.
2. **Bait ul Haram** - the honorable house.

Scholars and historians say that the Ka'aba has been reconstructed between 5 to 12 times. The very first construction of the Ka'aba was done by Prophet Adam (AS). Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an that this was the first house that was built for humanity to worship Allah (SWT). After this, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS) rebuilt the Ka'aba on its original foundation.

Striving

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) for a long time invited people to Islam but they did not have a place to worship. When Allah (SWT) responded to his need and asked him to build a house for worship, he was excited but knew it was a difficult task. With his son they worked tirelessly and made the Ka'aba. He was happy to complete the task but still asked Allah (SWT) to approve his work so that he would be totally satisfied.

Lesson learnt

How often do we ask Allah (SWT) to accept our acts of worship? None of us can ever reach the level of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) or Prophet Ismael (AS). None of us can ever stand the trials they went through. None of us can ever do a project like that of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS). Yet, these two Prophets of Allah (SWT) were beseeching Him to accept their acts of worship... What can we learn from this example? They are concerned whether their actions will be accepted by Allah (SWT)...and they are praying to Allah (SWT) WHILE making the Ka'aba, to accept their efforts! They came out of these tests with the stamp of approval from Allah (SWT) regarding their sincerity.

Applications in our daily life

Also recite this verse at the end of any good deed; for example when you have read whole or part of the Holy Qur'an, or helping your mum with house chores, or helping a friend in understanding his/her work or after praying the Sunnat or Wajib Salaat, or any good deed we do. It shows that our ibadat (actions) is only for the sake of Allah (SWT) and we seek His acceptance for our deeds. Recitation of this verse is also recommended for seeking fulfillment of any legitimate desire.

Questions

1. Who was the first one to build the Ka'aba? And who rebuilt it again later?
2. What is Makam Ibrahim?
3. Give two other names of the Ka'aba and what do they mean?
4. What happened after Prophet Ibrahim (AS) finished building the Ka'aba?

Dua for Guidance –Dua of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS)

Short Verse

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ

Our Lord make us submissive to You and make from our progeny a nation submissive to You (2:128)

Long Verse

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا
مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

Our Lord make us submissive to You and make from our progeny a nation submissive to You, and show us our rites[of worship] and turn to us, Surely You are the oft-returning, the Merciful (2:128)

Context of the Dua

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismael (AS) after building the house of Allah (SWT), the Holy Ka'aba, raised their hands and prayed to the Almighty to help them submit (surrender to) Allah (SWT)'s will and also make their progeny (their family after them), to be submissive. Being submissive is being able to follow Allah (SWT)'s command and we can only submit if He guides us. Therefore, we are asking for Allah (SWT)'s guidance when we ask Him to make us submit.

Background of reconstructing the Ka'aba

After coming to Hejaz (Makkah), Prophet Ibrahim (AS) said to his son: "I have been commanded by Allah (SWT) to re-build a house in this desert." Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was referring to the Ka'aba, the house which had been built by Prophet Adam (AS) and now he was going to reconstruct it. Hearing this, Prophet Ismael (AS) informed his father of his readiness to accompany him in Allah (SWT)'s name.

After they completed the house, Angel Jibreel, Allah (SWT)'s favorite angel, who was all the time guiding Prophet Ibrahim (AS) brought the black stone (Hajr-ul-Aswad), from the heavenly garden and inserted it in its proper place. Then Prophet Ibrahim (AS) started praying to Allah (SWT): "My Allah make this land a safe peaceful place and feed its residents with different fruit and edible things." Prophet Ibrahim (AS) further prayed: *Our Lord! And make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee, and show us our way of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful... (2:128).*

The above mentioned verse throws light on the fact that there had always been some men and women in the progeny of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), who were "true Muslims." He

further prayed: *Our Lord! And raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise (2:129).* Almighty Allah (SWT) granted Prophet Ibrahim (AS)'s prayer and raised our Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from amongst them.

Following this, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was appointed to invite people to perform the ritual of encompassing the house of Ka'aba. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) announced what Allah (SWT) had commanded him to all the people, and after that pilgrimage became one of the obligatory rituals for all Muslims. Thus, the Ka'aba was the first house to be built for people according to Allah (SWT)'s order, a place for worshipping. In it, there are clear Signs; such as the standing place of Ibrahim (Makame Ibrahim) and whoever enters it, is safe. Bibi Hajar, Prophet Ismael (AS)'s mother, came and gave cloth as a gift to cover the Ka'aba. In that year no one performed the Hajj pilgrimage except Prophet Ibrahim (AS), Prophet Ismael (AS) and Bibi Hajar. They took water from the Zamzam well and washed their bodies, wore white clothes and went around the Ka'aba seven times. They performed their prayers and asked Allah (SWT) to accept their deeds. Then they went to cross the valley of al-Safa and al-Marwa Mountain. Allah (SWT) wanted these events to stay alive in the memory of people. He wanted them to remember that Allah (SWT), the Glorified, had power over all things.

Striving

This prayer shows how difficult it is to be a true Muslim. Even a distinguished Prophet of Allah (SWT) like Prophet Ibrahim (AS) makes a request to Allah (SWT) to let him remain a Muslim. He was constantly striving to submit to Allah (SWT) and surrendered to the will of Allah (SWT) becoming a true Muslim.

Lesson learnt

Allah (SWT) loves those who submit to His commands and in return grants his believer what he asks for. In this case, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his son had completed building the Ka'aba and asked Allah (SWT) for continued guidance so that they become among those who submit and also asked the same for their family. We learn from this to ask for Allah (SWT)'s guidance for us and our families. It teaches us that even with Duas, we should not be selfish to just pray for ourselves but include others first especially our family, relatives, friends, neighbors and our brothers and sisters in faith.

Applications in our daily life

Recite this verse often to seek Allah (SWT)'s guidance in being able to submit to His will. This will help keep Shaytan away from our intentions and help us serve Allah (SWT)'s will. We all need Allah (SWT) to guide us to do the right things. Although sometimes we know what is right, we do not readily submit or follow Allah (SWT)'s commands. To submit to Allah (SWT) is to accept Allah (SWT)'s command so for example being good to your parents, grandparents, teachers etc is in a way of submitting to Allah (SWT)'s command. This Dua is also good to recite after performing any act for Allah (SWT) like salaah, or when breaking your fast or after reading the Holy Qur'an among others. At such times Duas are accepted readily as one has just been engaged in Allah (SWT)'s worship.

Questions

1. Why do we need to ask Allah (SWT) for guidance?
2. When we pray to Allah (SWT), whom should we also include in our prayers?
3. When is the best time to pray for our wishes according to this story?
4. Who gave the first cloth to cover the Ka'aba?

Dua in Sadness – Dua of Prophet Yaqub (AS)

Short Verse

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ

He said I only complain of my pain and grief to Allah (12:86)

Long Verse

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

He said I only complain of my pain and grief to Allah and I know from Allah what you do not know (12:86)

Context of the Dua

When Prophet Yaqub (AS)'s children took their brother Prophet Yusuf (AS) and threw him in the well, the separation made Prophet Yaqub (AS) very sad. He cried for years of this separation till he lost his eyesight. His sons kept asking him how long would he keep crying over Prophet Yusuf (AS) and he told them that he only complained of his separation to Allah (SWT) and no one else. This verse reflects his response.

Background of Prophet Yaqub

Prophet Yaqub (AS) (Jacob) was also known as Israil. He was the son of Prophet Ishaq (AS), the son of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). He had 12 sons and one daughter. Prophet Yaqub (AS) had 10 sons from his first wife and two sons and a daughter from his second wife. The two sons of his second wife were called Prophet Yusuf (AS) (Joseph) and Benyamin (Benjamin).

One day Prophet Yusuf (AS) went to his father and said that he had had a strange dream. In the dream, Prophet Yusuf (AS) had seen the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowing down to him! Prophet Yaqub (AS) felt that the dream had a message; he recognized that the dream was a message from Allah (SWT) indicating that Prophet Yusuf (AS) was going to have a great future. He told Prophet Yusuf (AS) not to tell his brothers about the dream and became very protective about Prophet Yusuf (AS).

Prophet Yaqub (AS)'s children could see that Prophet Yusuf (AS) was their father's favorite son. This made them very jealous. They became so jealous that they decided to get rid of him. Whenever they took their goats out for grazing they would ask their father if they could take Prophet Yusuf (AS) with them; they said they would teach him to be a good shepherd. Prophet Yaqub (AS) would not let Prophet Yusuf (AS) go because he thought the brothers were planning to do something bad. One day they pestered their father to let them take Prophet Yusuf (AS) with them. Reluctantly, Prophet Yaqub (AS) agreed, but he made them promise to look after him. They were so

bad they knew they would break their promise. As soon as they were far enough from home, they asked Prophet Yusuf (AS) to take off his shirt. They killed a sheep and put blood all over Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s shirt; then they threw Prophet Yusuf (AS) into a well. They went home and showed the shirt to Prophet Yaqub (AS) pretending to be very upset; they told their father that Prophet Yusuf (AS) had got left behind and a wolf had eaten him!

Prophet Yaqub (AS) was very upset. He did not believe their story but remained patient, putting his trust in Allah (SWT) that one day Allah (SWT) would bring Prophet Yusuf (AS) back to him. Prophet Yusuf (AS) spent the night in the well. The next morning, a caravan of merchants passing by the well stopped to get water. Prophet Yusuf (AS) sat in the bucket as they pulled it up. The merchants were surprised to see a young boy in it. They decided to take Prophet Yusuf (AS) with them to Egypt and to sell him as a slave. When they arrived in Egypt, one of the noble families bought Prophet Yusuf (AS). The man who bought him told his wife that they should take care of him, as he was a good-looking child and they had no children of their own. Prophet Yusuf (AS) became one of the family.

Prophet Yaqub (AS) cried a lot in grief whenever he remembered his son and always turned to Allah (SWT) in prayers and prayed to Allah (SWT) to reunite him back with his son. In his crying he lost his eyesight but he never gave up hope. There came a time when there was famine and all countries around Egypt suffered from hunger and lack of food. During the famine, Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s brothers came to Egypt in search of food. Prophet Yusuf (AS) was in charge of the granary and when he saw his brothers he recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He got them to bring his father to Egypt and when they all got reunited, in appreciation to Allah (SWT) they went into prostration.

Sajda – falling down in prostration. The father, the brothers and the mother (not his own but step) fell down in prostration before Prophet Yusuf (AS). There are two types of sajdas – one is that which is for Allah (SWT) in total submission to His will, and the other is done in reverence to pay homage to a divinely chosen representative of Allah (SWT). The sajda by the father and the brothers was the interpretation of Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s dream. In keeping with his character as a prophet of Allah (SWT), Prophet Yusuf (AS) in all humility, attributes everything good and worthy not to himself but to the grace of Allah (SWT). The divine grace is always based on knowledge and wisdom.

Striving

Prophet Yaqub (AS) knew that his other children were driven with jealousy towards Prophet Yusuf (AS) and he knew that they were out to harm him. But he tried his best to protect Prophet Yusuf (AS) until his sons convinced him to let him go. The instance he was separated from Prophet Yusuf (AS) it pained him that he cried for years. But he knew that one day he would meet his beloved son and kept praying to Allah (SWT) to

reunite him. He did not give up although his sons were fed up of his crying. Allah (SWT) finally after many years answered his prayers and reunited him with Prophet Yusuf (AS).

Lesson learnt

When we are sad we must always remember to turn to Allah (SWT) for He is always there for us. He constantly listens to our cries and He is there to lend a helping hand and assist us during our pain and grief. Just like He responded to Prophet Yaqub (AS)'s cries and united him back with Prophet Yusuf (AS) after so many years, He will respond to us when we call out to Him. We should not lose hope even if it takes as many years as it did take for Prophet Yaqub (AS) to be re- united with Prophet Yusuf (AS), he did not lose hope in his Lord. We need to remember that we can never be alone in pain and grief if we have Allah (SWT). If we connect to Him we will always feel we have someone we can turn to.

Applications in our daily life

There maybe times in our lives when we get hurt or others hurt us, and we feel like crying. It is okay to cry, as crying helps to relieve our grief. Do not keep it inside you or vent it on others. Tell Allah (SWT) that you are sad before you go to tell anyone. Talk to Allah (SWT) all the time, make Him your secret friend. We all come across any difficulties in our lives, say someone in our family is sick or we lose a dear member of our family or we get separated from our dear and near ones and we feel sad and alone. We all need a hug and a helping hand at such times, and we must remember that Allah (SWT) is there for us anytime, any place. Recite this Dua to call upon Allah (SWT)'s help. We could also mention to Allah (SWT): 'just as you helped Prophet Yaqub (AS) when he was sad, help me in my situation....' It helps to know that at such time we remember great People who may have felt the same.

Questions

1. Why do you think that Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s brothers were jealous of him? What did they do to him?
2. Who saved Prophet Yusuf (AS) from the well, and what did they do with him?
3. Why did the brothers and his father do Sajda in front of Prophet Yusuf (AS)?
4. Can you recall a time when you were sad or felt the need to pray for something special? How did you get over your sadness?
5. Imagine the feelings of Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s father when he got the news of Prophet Yusuf (AS) being alive. How do you think he reacted when he met him finally?

Dua for Goodness – Dua of Prophet Yusuf (AS)

Short Verse

أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَالْحَقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter, make me die as a Muslim and join me with the righteous (12:101)

Long Verse

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا
وَالْحَقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

My Lord, You gave me a share in the Kingdom and taught me the interpretation of dreams, Originator of the Heavens and the Earth, You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter, make me die as a Muslim and join me with the righteous (12:101)

Context of the Dua

This is the prayer of Prophet Yusuf (AS) which he recited when Allah (SWT) gave him the Kingdom, taught him wisdom, saved him from the harm of his brothers, set him free from the prison; and brought his parents to meet him. We must also recite this Dua if we get what we want, particularly after attaining success in any work, and after coming out safe from difficulties.

Background of Prophet

Years after the incident when the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (AS) had deceptively taken him outside the city, beaten him and flung him into the well thereby forcing their father into perpetual weeping and anguish over his loss, the brothers heard that Prophet Yusuf (AS) had become the king of Egypt (Misr). The brothers and their father went to meet him.

The very first sentence which Prophet Yusuf (AS) uttered upon seeing them was: *And He was indeed kind to me when He took me out of the prison. (12:100)*

Apparently, it was out of courtesy that Prophet Yusuf (AS) desisted from mentioning the troubles he had experienced. Not only was he flung into the well and sold into slavery, he also went thru trials of being accused falsely by a wicked woman with ill intentions, which landed him into prison. During his time in the prison, Prophet Yusuf (AS) was able to tell everyone what their dreams meant and his explanation of the dream always came true. This gift of interpretation that Allah (SWT) bestowed upon him led to his freedom. The king of the time was having the same strange dream every night that

none of his wise men could explain. However, one of his chefs, who had been in prison with Prophet Yusuf (AS), remembered how the Prophet was gifted and suggested him to his master. Prophet Yusuf (AS) was able to interpret the king's dream of an upcoming famine and drought that would last 7 years and would destroy all crops and animals in the land. He advised the king to take precautions prior to, so that the lives of the people would be saved. The king believed he was sincere and pardoned him. Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s innocence was proven and he was released from the prison. The king made him his chief minister of the kingdom's crops.

Prophet Yusuf (AS) did not wish to revive bitter memories and unpleasant incidents that he had to endure due to the acts of his brothers. He chose to spare them from feeling ashamed and from embarrassment.

He then added, "It was Shaytan who incited my brothers to commit those inappropriate deeds towards me, hurling me into the well and separating me from my father; however, the Glorious God exhibited kindness towards me in that he made those very acts a means for granting eminence and reverence to our family!"

Attributing the unjust acts of his brothers to Shaytan and regarding him as the prime culprit for the crimes of his brothers, was another example of Prophet Yusuf (AS)'s magnanimity. He thus shielded them from embarrassment and left them with an opportunity to apologize for their deeds.

He said:

"There shall be no reproof against you, (from) this day. You can rest assured with respect to me, for I have forgiven you and chosen to disregard all that has happened previously, and on behalf of God too, I can give you this good news and seek from Him that Allah (SWT) may forgive you and He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful (12:92)

"Surely he who guards (against evil) and is patient (is rewarded) for surely Allah (SWT) does not waste the reward of those who do good."

Lesson learnt

Prophet Yusuf (AS) forgave his brothers in spite of what they did to him and he was good to them when they apologized what they did to him. He did not forget that it was Allah (SWT) who taught him all that he knew and gave him his success. He always kept Allah (SWT) as his guardian and prayed for his safety of his faith so that he would die as a Muslim. We too need to forgive our brothers when they make mistakes as we are human and all of us tend to make mistakes, and allow for Allah (SWT)'s mercy to help us reconcile with one another. We should always pray for the safety of our eeman (faith) till we die so that Shaytan does not have a part in belief and lead us into the wrong. Shaytan is always trying to make mischief within believers and we should hold onto Allah (SWT)'s rope for His support to fight against Shaytan for Allah (SWT) is the most powerful.

Applications in our daily life

If anyone does us wrong we should stop ourselves reacting back with wrong, and try to pray for them so that they realize their mistake. We should be happy to forgive each others mistake and forget each others mistakes quickly and not hold it in our hearts. If we see brothers or friends are not talking to each other, we should try to reconcile them. We should pray to Allah (SWT) to grant us good in this world and pray that He protects our faith so we die as good Muslims.

Questions

1. Why do you think Prophet Yusuf (AS) did not mention the difficulties he went through to his brothers when he met them?
2. What did Prophet Yusuf (AS) say when he first met his father and brothers?
3. How did Prophet Yusuf (AS) manage to survive the loneliness when he was separated from his family?

Dua for Forgiveness – Dua of Prophet Ibrahim (AS)

Short/Long verse

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the day when the accounting is held (14:41)

Context of the Dua

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) recited this Dua to seek forgiveness of Allah (SWT) for him, for his parents and for those who believe in the One and Only Allah (SWT), because His mercy alone will keep all believers away from the fire of Hell on the Day of Judgment.

Background of Prophet

A high ranking Prophet Ibrahim (AS), also known as Khaleelullaah (close friend of Allah (SWT)), has included his parents in his Dua. The sunnah (way of life) of the infallible Prophets is guidance for us. It is obligatory to love our parents and respect them because through them we are brought into this world. Allah (SWT), who provides sustenance to all, has selected parents to give livelihood to all that which have been created by Him. So next to the almighty Allah (SWT) we owe everything in our life to our parents. They take care of us from the day we are born. They bring us up with love and care. It is a well known fact that Allah (SWT), in His infinite mercy, has created love of mother, to keep alive the circle of continuous life on this earth, and because of this it is said that paradise lies under the feet of the mother.

Love of parents for their children is the divine wisdom through which mankind and other living beings have been surviving for millions of years on this planet. In no way we can repay our parents for what they do for us, except by following the command of Allah (SWT) who asks us, in the Holy Qur'an, to lower unto them our wings of submission through compassion and recite this Dua.

In reply to a question, as to what is the position if someone's parents, one or both, have died immediately after giving birth without ever nourishing the child, Imam Jaffer Sadiq (AS) said that subsistence of a child in the womb is enough to make the child feel obligated to his or her parents, and pray regularly to seek Allah (SWT)'s blessings for them.

It is the command of Allah (SWT) that after Him we need to obey our parents, to love them and care for them in their old age, as directed in verse 23 of Bani Israil by not to saying (even) "uff" to them, or chide (scold) them, but to say gentle words and be good

to them. Salaat, sawm, Duas and all other good deeds of disobedient children go waste because Allah (SWT) does not bestow blessings and does not have mercy on those who disobey their parents.

Striving

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) continued to pray for his parents throughout his life. He recognized the value of their efforts and constantly asked for their forgiveness. It is not that he thought they had committed sins but as a dutiful son, his appreciation towards his parents was always to pray for their forgiveness and for the forgiveness of all believers. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) included all believers too, which teaches us that we too should constantly pray for our parents and for our believing brothers and sisters.

Lesson learnt

We all tend to make mistakes and should ask Allah (SWT) for forgiveness. This Dua teaches us to ask for our own forgiveness and also pray for the forgiveness of our parents and all believers. Sometimes people lose their parents when they are very young and do not get to see their parents. Examples are Prophet Ibrahim (AS), Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and Bibi Fatemah (AS) all lost one of their parents when they were very young. Yet, in spite of not seeing his father Prophet Ibrahim (AS) prayed for him which shows us how he valued and gave importance to his parents.

Applications in our daily life

This is one of the best Dua of forgiveness which we can pray for our parents at all times, whether they are alive or dead. We should always try to recite this Dua in qunoot or even after our prayers. We should try to recite this at least once a day in any of our salaats. On their birthday you can recite it as a gift for them. Just as we ask Allah (SWT) to forgive us we too need to forgive our brothers/sisters when they make mistakes as we are all human and all of us tend to make mistakes. We should also ask our parents, our friends and believers to forgive us if we have done anything wrong to them.

Questions

1. Why should you be thankful to your parents and pray for them?
2. What favours do your parents do for you?
3. How can you repay your parents favours?
4. Besides his parents, who else did Prophet Ibrahim (AS) pray for?
5. When can you use this Dua?

Dua for Parents - Dua of Prophet Ibrahim (AS)

Short Dua

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا

And say my Lord have mercy on them just as they raised me when I was small (17:24)

Long Dua

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا
رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا

And lower for them the wing of humility form mercy and say my Lord have mercy on them just as they raised me when I was small (17:24)

Context of the Dua

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) asks Allah (SWT) to favor his parents with divine grace and forgiveness and keep them safe from sinfulness; therefore there is no doubt that his parents were true believers. It is the best of Duas which we can pray for our parents at all times, whether they are alive or dead.

Background of Prophet

King Namrud ruled the city of Babylon; he was a proud man and forced the people to believe in him as their God. He imprisoned and killed people and took whatever he wanted of their crops. Since the people were idolaters, who were worshipping wood and stone, they accepted this additional chain of slavery around their necks because they were afraid of his power. After some time, Almighty God decided to send Prophet Ibrahim (AS) to these people so they may be guided.

A short while before Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was born; Namrud was told by his high rank astrologers that a child would soon be born in this country that would stand against him and advice people to stop worshipping idols. Instead, he would invite people to a new religion. Namrud who was terribly horrified, commanded his agents to somehow prevent his birth. To prevent such danger arising in his kingdom, Namrud ordered all male babies born in that year be killed. He also instructed that contact between men and women should be avoided, and if pregnant women bore boys, the boys should be killed. But in spite of the extreme alertness of Namrud's cruel agents, through God's will the embryo of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) developed in the womb of his mother. She showed no signs of pregnancy when she carried him, so she knew that her baby was special. Prophet Ibrahim (AS)'s mother who was very much afraid of Namrud's agents left the city before giving birth to her child. She hid herself in a cave in the desert. This was the cave in which Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was born in the city of Kawthariya, near Ur and Babylon. She then covered the child with a cloth, closed the mouth of the cave

with stones and returned home without the child. She told nobody of what had happened. The child was all alone in the cave with no one to care for him. When he would become hungry, he would suckle his own fingers. Almighty God caused milk to flow from his fingers and thus provided him with a source of food. The child grew up under God's protection. From time to time, his mother would come secretly to the cave to watch him.

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) gradually grew up in this cave and when he was thirteen (13), he secretly came back to the city with his mother. His father, Taraq, had already died, so he was adopted by Azar, his uncle (his father's brother). Azar was a famous sculptor who used to make idols out of stone. His sons used to sell these idols to the people. As he grew older, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) remembered his parents' great sacrifice for him and always prayed to Allah (SWT) for them.

Striving

Prophet Ibrahim (AS)'s mother was afraid that the King would harm her baby so she struggled to hide and protect him. She kept him as a secret and protected his life. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) never forgot her struggle as he remembered throughout his life and prayed to Allah (SWT) for forgiveness of both his parents.

Lesson learnt

We must mention again besides our own obligation, it is the command of Allah (SWT) to give highest form of respect to our parents, to talk to them politely, even to sit with them and to talk to them is ibadat, to carry out their orders, to love them and to take care of them in their old age, and above all to pray for obtaining mercy of Allah (SWT) for them. Our parents sacrifice a lot for us as they bring us up. Our mothers especially give up many nights of their sleep to feed us and look after us. We can never be able to repay them for their favors. Instead the best thing we can do for them is pray to Allah (SWT) to have mercy on them and to forgive their sins and bless them always.

Applications in our daily life

When we think of our parents, we should feel great about them. Our parents are a great gift from Allah (SWT) and sometimes we do not realize this because we are not matured enough to know their value. Allah (SWT) reminds us in the Holy Qur'an in several places, the importance of the status of parents. He tells us to show mercy, to be humble to them, to be kind, not to talk in loud voice to them, not to scold them when they grow old etc. We should honor them on special days, like on women's day (Bibi Fatimah's birthday), Eid days, etc by doing something special for them. Either help them in cooking a meal or giving them a special gift or also by praying a 2 rakat salaah and giving that as a spiritual gift to them. We should always be thankful to our parents by

saying it often to them. This Dua can be recited as a qunoot in the salaah for Walydayn or just in the qunoot of any salaah.

Questions

1. When Prophet Ibrahim (AS) grew up at the young age of thirteen and came to live with the people, who became his fatherly figure that looked after him?
2. What do you think Prophet Ibrahim (AS) did while he was in the cave for 13 yrs? (keeping in mind he was a prophet of Allah (SWT))
3. If you were in Prophet Ibrahim (AS)'s place what would you do if your mother came to visit you and left you all by yourself?
4. Where would you use this Dua to pray for your parents? (Ans: in qunoot of salaah, or just as a Dua anytime you feel like).
5. Compose a small prayer for your parents in which you ask Allah (SWT) for anything for them.

Dua for Guidance – Dua of Ashab ul Kahf

Short Dua

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا

Our Lord grant us mercy from You and give us guidance in our affairs (18:10)

Long Dua

إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا

When the youth sought refuge in the cave and said, our Lord grant us mercy from You and give us guidance in our affairs (18:10)

Context of the Dua

This Dua was recited by the people of the cave known as the Ashab ul Kahf seeking Allah (SWT)'s mercy and wanting to be guided in making the right decisions. It can be recited to overcome the enemies; and to achieve success in whatever work we are doing.

Background

This story is about a group of young people who took shelter in a cave to hide away from a ruler who denied God and practiced oppression and injustice upon the believers. After attacking Rome around 250 AD, Diqyanus (Decius) the Roman Emperor sat on the royal throne and took the reins of Government. People accepted to place him in a God-like position and submitted as slaves to his power. At that time, six or seven wise and competent young men decided to leave their country and start a simple life in the desert. They believed in only one God, as the true followers of Prophet Isa (AS). They wanted to dedicate their lives to Allah (SWT) and worship Him.

After traveling for several miles on their horses they reached a mountainous area. They got off their horses and continued on foot. On their way, they saw a shepherd who asked them, "Who are you and where are you going?" They answered, "We are six ministers of the king who have given up Diqyanus' rule and are going to pray and praise God in a far deserted place, for praising Diqyanus has caused us to suffer from a guilty conscience and put us in a spiritual torment."

The shepherd said: If you agree, let me accompany you on this trip, as I have the same opinion as yours. The young men accepted his request, but were not in favor of taking the shepherd's dog with them. However the dog, Qatmir, started following them and their efforts for preventing the dog from following them was of no use. Finally, they found no other way rather than taking Qatmir with them.

With the guidance of the shepherd, the young men climbed up a mountain and from the other side reached a green and flourishing foothill. They continued walking until they reached a cave in a mountain. They entered it and were surprised to see a spring of water and some fruit trees there. They ate some fruit, drank water and sat to spend the night after saying their prayers. The shepherd's dog, too, placed its head on its hand and slept by the cave opening.

When the king found out about their escape, he sent his troops after them and found the young men sleeping in the cave. The King ordered his men to "block the entrance of the cave and let their God save them." Almighty God kept them safe asleep for three hundred and nine (309) years. Finally, after three hundred and nine years they woke up through God's will and started asking one another how long they had been sleeping.

Some of them said they had slept for one whole day and some believed they had slept for half a day, but what astonished them most was the destruction withering of the trees as well as their great hunger. One of them went to the town to buy some food. He could hardly find the way to town. It was now the time of the reign of a kind Christian king called Theodosius 1, who ruled from 408 – 450 A.D. When he got there, he went to a baker's, picked up some pieces of bread and gave his money to the shop owner. The baker got the money and after taking a look at it carefully said, "You young man! Have you found a treasure somewhere around?" The young man answered, "Why! This is the money I've received in exchange for the dates I sold the day before yesterday." The baker did not believe his words and took him to the king. In the king's presence, the young man narrated whatever had happened to him and his friends. The king answered, "We shall come with you to see your house. This is the only way we can make sure of the truthfulness of your words." Then they all set out for the cave and when they got there, the young man said, "Let me go inside the cave alone and tell them about the story so that they won't get frightened. Then you can enter the cave." The young man went in and told his friends about what had happened in the town, but they did not believe him either and thought they were caught in a trap. So they started praying and asking God to return them to their previous position. God responded to their prayers and made them fall asleep once again. When the king and his agents approached the cave they found the men and their dog asleep. The sight made the king believe the story and he decided to build a mosque at the spot in respect of the miracle that had occurred.

Striving

The youth of the cave were very strong in their faith so as to leave their town and go into the desert just to be able to worship Allah (SWT). Their action shows that when one fears the danger of keeping their faith then they should keep trying and if they fail then if they need to leave the place and move somewhere else, they should do so. Although they could not travel very far their intention was for Allah (SWT) and Allah (SWT) saved them by putting them to sleep. Having faith that Allah (SWT) will save us if we believe in Him makes us strong to stand up for our belief.

Lesson learnt

This Dua shows us to seek Allah (SWT)'s guidance in difficulties and to have full confidence in His help. It invites us to remain on the Right Path, by putting our trust in Allah (SWT) to obtain His help and mercy. When we choose the right path of Allah (SWT) then even the strongest enemy will have no power over us. We will have to bear patiently all the difficulties which we will face if we oppose the enemies of Allah (SWT), just like the Ashab ul Kahf but at the end we will be successful.

Applications in our daily life

When we are faced with our enemies, or sometimes our friends or people ask us to do something wrong which is against Allah (SWT)'s laws, then we have to take a stand and refuse to engage in such activities. If it means we have to leave that place or the friends circle and be left alone, we should be strong enough to stand for the truth and the right path. If we take that stand it will not be easy but Allah (SWT) is there to help us. We should recite this verse to get Allah (SWT)'s guidance in what we are doing and seek His help.

Questions

1. How many companions of the cave were they in total?
2. How did the dog come to be with the companions?
3. How long did Allah (SWT) put them to sleep?
4. Why did they decide to go away to the desert and stay in the cave?
5. Have you ever had to leave and go away because you wanted to do what is right and the others were not of the same opinion?

Dua of Hope – Dua of Prophet Zakariya (AS)

Short Dua

وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا

And I have never been disappointed in my prayer to You my Lord (19:4)

Long Dua

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ
بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا

He said my Lord my bones have become weak and my hair has become white and I have never been disappointed in my prayer to You my Lord (19:4)

Context of the Dua

This Dua was recited by Prophet Zakariya (AS) to beseech Allah (SWT) to give him a son that would inherit him. He proclaims his faith and hope in Allah (SWT) and states that he has never been disappointed in Allah (SWT)'s response.

Background of Prophet

Prophet Zakariya (AS) was sent to the people of Bani Israil. He was a descendant of Prophet Yaqub (AS). He was well liked and respected by his people because of his cheerful manner. He was in charge of the mosque of Baytul Muqaddas in Jerusalem, and preached the religion of Allah (SWT) from there. He guided the people according to the rules laid down in the Tawrat of Prophet Musa (AS), who had been the last Rasool (a Prophet who has been given a Book) before him.

Prophet Zakariya (AS) had also been entrusted to look after Bibi Maryam (AS), the mother of Prophet Isa (AS). He had provided her with a special chamber in Baytul Muqaddas. Although Bibi Maryam (AS) remained in the chamber, busy worshipping Allah (SWT), Prophet Zakariya (AS) found that she always had fresh fruit in her room. Because he knew that she had no contact with any person and none was allowed to enter that room, he wondered where the food came from. Bibi Maryam (AS) informed him that Allah (SWT) sent her the fruits every morning and evening, and it was a sign of His Grace. Prophet Zakariya (AS) realized that he was the guardian of a very special lady whom Allah (SWT) had specially chosen for a great honor.

Prophet Zakariya (AS) had reached the age of 90 years and despite his cheerful and relaxed nature, he was sad that he had no son to succeed him. After hearing Bibi Maryam (AS) he pondered on the limitless blessings that Allah (SWT) bestows on His servants and wondered if he could be blessed with a son despite his old age. The same

night he went to pray under the Arch of Sanctuary in Baytul Muqaddas, which was the special place of prayer to Allah (SWT).

Striving

Prophet Zakariya (AS) longed for a son and prayed for one but his Dua was not answered immediately. He was patient and waited for a long time for this wish to be fulfilled. When he was old and grey, and felt sad that he didn't have a child yet he was constant in his prayers and did not despair. Seeing the heavenly food brought for Bibi Maryam (AS), he was once again inspired to pray to Allah (SWT) for his wishes. He chose a special place and prayed and Allah (SWT) fulfilled his wishes.

Lesson learnt

We should never despair (lose hope) in Allah (SWT)'s mercy and grace. Allah (SWT) answered Prophet Zakariya (AS)'s Dua when he was so old, this should be an example for us to draw upon. Nothing is impossible with Allah (SWT).

Do not lose hope in Allah (SWT)'s mercy and blessings and do not give up even when Duas take a long time to be answered. Have faith in Allah (SWT) and believe that in His power anything is possible, and never give up hope. Just as Prophet Zakariya (AS) had hope at an old age, when people do not normally get children, we should always believe that with Allah (SWT)'s power, He says: 'Be and it is'. He never disappoints anyone who believes in Him. If we have a positive image of our creator we will never be disappointed in Him.

Applications in our daily life

Allah (SWT) always listens to every one's Duas. For all our needs (hajaat) we should turn to Allah (SWT) and pray sincerely for His help. He is the only one who can fulfill all our needs. There are times when our Duas are not answered immediately and we lose hope. In our lives we wish for so many things and sometimes our wishes cannot be fulfilled. There may be many reasons for that. For example on a given day a farmer may pray for rain and a child who is having a birthday party may pray for dry warm sunshine weather. Yet having both may not be feasible, but it is possible. So sometimes our wishes are answered straight away sometimes not. Sometimes when we pray for something maybe it is not good for us and we do not know or the time is not appropriate. If we develop this habit of turning to Allah (SWT) for our needs then we will draw closer to Him and recognize His might and power. We can ask for anything from Allah (SWT) and if it is good for us and the time is right, He will grant it to us.

Questions

1. How old was Prophet Zakariya (AS) when Allah (SWT) blessed him with a son?
2. Why was it important for Prophet Zakariya (AS) to have a son?
3. Do you know of a case where anyone (including yourself) prayed for a wish and it was fulfilled immediately? Do you know of anyone who prayed and their wishes were not answered? What should you do if Duas are not answered straight away?

Dua for Public Speaking – Dua of Prophet Musa (AS)

Short Dua

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي

He said my Lord expand for me my chest and make easy for me my work (20: 25-26)

Long Dua

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَ اهْلُكْ عُقَدَةً مِنْ
لِسَانِي
يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

He said my Lord expand for me my chest and make easy for me my work, and remove the knots from my tongue so they understand my words (20:25-28).

Context of the Dua

This Dua was recited by Prophet Musa (AS) when he was commanded by Allah (SWT) to go to Pharaoh and show him the power of Allah (SWT) by the help of the two miracles given to him. Although Prophet Musa (AS) was going to Pharaoh under the instruction of Allah (SWT), equipped with two divine miracles, still he invoked Allah (SWT) to set his mind at ease and to make his task easy. We must always seek Allah (SWT)'s help to get success in our work, whatever the nature of it may be, so far as it is not prohibited.

Background of the Prophet

Prophet Musa (AS) was born at the time of Firawn. Firawn was a king who hated the Bani Israil, who were the tribe of Prophet Musa (AS). A short while before Prophet Musa (AS) was born, Firawn was told that a boy from the Bani Israil would soon be born and at whose hands Firawn's kingdom would be destroyed. On hearing this, the cruel king ordered that every male child born to the Bani Israil should be killed. When Prophet Musa (AS) was born, his mother put him in a water proof box and placed the box on the River Nile. She then sent her daughter to follow the little "boat" and see where it went.

The box floated towards the palace of Firawn, where his men fished it out and brought the baby to him. He wanted to kill it immediately, suspecting that it might be a child of the Bani Israil, but his wife Aasiya, who was a pious woman, stopped him. They did not have children of their own, so she asked him to adopt the child. Firawn agreed to his wife's request and then called some women to breast feed the crying child. However, the baby refused milk from all the women who came to feed him, except his mother. So

Allah (SWT) reunited mother and child in the very palace of Firawn.

As years passed, Prophet Musa (AS) grew up strong and healthy. He then left Egypt and went to Madyan where he married Safura daughter of Prophet Shuaib (AS). After staying in Madyan for a while, he left to return to Egypt. On their way to Egypt in the severe winter night Prophet Musa (AS) and his wife who had lost their way, saw a fire in the distance. Prophet Musa (AS) told his wife to stay where she was and he went to the fire, thinking he would bring some of it back.

When he reached the fire he saw that the flames were coming from a green tree but there was no one present. While Prophet Musa (AS) looked around in surprise, he suddenly heard a voice saying, "O Musa, I am your Lord!" The voice then asked him to throw his staff onto the ground. At once it changed into a serpent, scaring him. He was then commanded to lift the snake without fear and as he did so, it changed back into a stick. Next he was told to put his hand under his armpit. When he drew it out again, his hand glowed with a bright light, like the sun. The Divine voice said to him, "O Musa! These are the two great Signs of your Lord. Go back to Firawn and his people and invite them towards your Lord!" Prophet Musa (AS) then recited the above Dua and asked Allah (SWT) to make his duty easy and help him be successful in his task and requested that his brother Prophet Harun (AS) who was more eloquent than him to accompany him. Allah (SWT) said: *"We will strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both an authority so that they shall not reach you....(28:35)"*

Prophet Musa (AS) returned to Egypt and with his brother Prophet Harun (AS), went to the court of Firawn. He told Firawn that he was a Messenger of Allah (SWT) and that he had brought clear proofs that he was speaking the truth. He threw his staff on the ground and it changed into a snake. The miracle frightened Firawn and he turned to his ministers for advice. They told him that Prophet Musa (AS) was just a good magician and that their own magicians could easily perform such tricks. Firawn called all the great magicians to his court. They threw pieces of rope on the ground and these cords began to wriggle like snakes. But when Prophet Musa (AS) cast his staff down his serpent ate all the pieces of rope. The magicians immediately realized that this was no magic but a miracle, and threw themselves in prostration saying, "We believe in the faith of Musa".

This made Firawn very angry and he warned them that if they did not take back their words, they would be tortured. They did not change their minds and so he cut off their feet and hands and then killed them. Allah (SWT) told Prophet Musa (AS) to warn Firawn that He would punish him and his people if they continued in their ways. But Firawn was too proud to listen to the warning.

Soon the country was hit by famine. Swarms of locusts ate away the crops. The river Nile flooded its banks causing great destruction. The people were afflicted with lice and tumors. When all of this happened the people rushed to Prophet Musa (AS) asking him

to pray for their relief and promised to follow his religion. But when they were cured and the situation improved, they returned to their idol worship.

Prophet Musa (AS) gathered the people of Bani Israil and left for Palestine. Firawn learnt of their escape and followed them with a huge army. When the Bani Israil reached the Red Sea they saw Firawn approaching and were sure they were going to be killed. However, Prophet Musa (AS) struck the waters of the sea with his staff and the waters parted, making a dry path. The people rushed through and crossed safely. When Firawn saw the path he entered the sea at the head of his army. But while he was in the middle of the sea the waters suddenly closed around him and his men and they all drowned.

Striving in this cause

Prophet Musa (AS) was told by Allah (SWT) to go and invite the most powerful and cruel king to worship One God and declare that he was the messenger of God. Prophet Musa (AS) was very nervous to face such a powerful man, but he prepared himself with the help of Allah (SWT), to face the King and bear whatever consequences followed. Although he knew how cruel Firawn was, it did not stop him from going in front of him because he knew that was Allah (SWT)'s command and he believed that Allah (SWT) would help him. Reciting this Dua makes us feel more confident as we know that Allah (SWT) is there to support us in our work.

Lesson learnt

When Allah (SWT) commanded Prophet Musa (AS) to go invite Firawn to the right path, Prophet Musa (AS) needed some support to do this mission and asks Allah (SWT) to strengthen his speech and make people understand what he is saying. He asks for Allah (SWT) to expand his chest, to make him big hearted, have positive feelings in front of his enemy and to let his brother Prophet Harun (AS) to accompany him. Allah (SWT) granted Prophet Musa (AS) his wish and gave them strength in their work. Allah (SWT) is always there to help us in any way; we just need to remember to call to Him at all times.

Applications in our daily life

There may be times when we want to speak in front of others but do not have enough courage. We get nervous and sometimes frightened too. This Dua is very helpful to overcome those frights as it makes us seek Allah (SWT)'s help to be successful in what we want to do. Sometimes we may want to say something to a friend but are afraid we may hurt them or say the wrong thing which may cause misunderstandings. This Dua is powerful in helping us being fluent and not make any blunders. Sometimes we may recite this Dua and are still not comfortable to standing in front of others, we should not stop trying. We should continue to practice and practice. We can do this in front of the

mirror, in front of our family members, or even in front of one or two friends. Every time we try, and begin by reciting this Dua and believe that we can do it with Allah (SWT)'s help, we will see the amazing difference.

Questions

1. Why did Prophet Musa (AS) recite this Dua?
2. How did Allah (SWT) help Prophet Musa (AS) to make his mission easy?
3. What miracles did Allah (SWT) provide Prophet Musa (AS) so that he could go in front of Firawn with them?

Dua for Help – Dua of Prophet Ayyub (AS)

Short Dua/Long Dua

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

When Ayyub called out to his Lord [saying] surely distress has touched me and You are the most Merciful (21:83)

Context of the Dua

This Dua was recited by Prophet Ayyub (AS). Allah (SWT) put him to severe trials by taking away wealth, health and children. Although poor health, disease and poverty made him weak, he never complained or showed despair. His patience and endurance became a byword for coming generations till now. Recite this Dua to cure sickness and diseases and to remove poverty.

Background of the Prophet

Prophet Ayyub (AS)'s mother is said to be a descendant of Prophet Lut (AS) and his father is said to be descendant of Esau (Al Eis). His wife was Raheema the grand daughter of Prophet Yusuf (AS). Almighty Allah (SWT) gave him many blessings. He was a wealthy man with large flocks of sheep and a lot of land. He had many children and was well respected by his people. Prophet Ayyub (AS) was very generous: he took care of orphans and fed the poor. He was mindful of everyone's needs especially his relatives, whom he always treated kindly. Prophet Ayyub (AS) was always grateful to Almighty Allah (SWT) for all his bounties.

Prophet Ayyub (AS) is well-known for his patience which is referred to as 'Sabr-e-Ayyub'. Allah (SWT) had bestowed upon him a variety of bounties and he used to thank Almighty Allah (SWT) for the bounties. Because of his thanksgiving Allah (SWT) has called him an 'Excellent Servant'. Shaytan became very envious of him. He (Shaytan) submitting to his Lord said: "O' my Lord! Ayyub thanks You because You have blessed him with abundance of bounties. Give me authority over the wealth and children, and then see that he will forget You (by not thanking)." He was tested with the loss of every thing he possessed. In spite of the loss of all his wealth, health and children to a miserable extent he did not falter in his patience. He became a pattern of humility, patience and reliance on the Will of the Lord. At every kind of loss, he thanked Almighty Allah (SWT) and remained patient. Lastly he was tried with the sickness of his body.

His disease lasted for a long time until his visitors felt disgusted with him. His friends kept away from him, and people abstained from visiting him. No one felt sympathy for him, except his wife. She took good care of him, knowing his former charity and pity for her. When Shaytan failed in every effort to make Prophet Ayyub (AS) impatient he thought of approaching his wife and tried to misguide her in leading Prophet Ayyub (AS)

astray. He appeared to her as a beautiful young man riding a horse and said: "I am the monarch of the earth and since your husband worshipped not me but Almighty Allah, the king of the Heavens, I caused the loss of your children and wealth. And if you prostrate before me once, I shall grant your husband his lost health and restore all his lost wealth to him." The Godly lady said that she would consult her husband and act as he would bid her to do. Shaytan said: "If this be not possible, I would be content if you make your husband avoid mentioning 'BISMILLAH' (In the name of Almighty Allah) before he starts taking his food and make him avoid mentioning 'AL-HAMDO LILLAH' (all praise is for Almighty Allah) when he finishes his food." When she reported the matter to her husband, Prophet Ayyub (AS) got angry and said: "You have been listening to Shaytan all the day. If Almighty Allah (SWT) grants me health, I will strike a hundred (100) sticks on you." The poor lady departed sorrowful and when Prophet Ayyub (AS) was left alone and could not himself stand up to offer his prayers, it is said that it was then that he submitted to Almighty Allah (SWT) saying: *'Indeed affliction has affected me'*. Almighty Allah (SWT) records his prayer thus:
And (remember) Ayyub, when he cried to his Lord (saying); "Verily distress has touched me and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful ones." (21:83)

In response to his cry Almighty Allah (SWT) said to him: *"Stamp with your feet: this (spring) is (for you) to wash with (it is) cool and a (refreshing) drink." (38:42)* Prophet Ayyub (AS) was commanded by Almighty Allah (SWT) to strike at the rock and out of it gushed forth two springs, one of hot water for him to wash his body of all his physical ailments, and the other of cold water for him to drink and refresh his soul. He was cured and his health was restored in full. The water of the fountain flowed and irrigated the burnt fields filled with ashes, so it made them green. The Holy Water flowed into the land. It irrigated the graves of Prophet Ayyub (AS) children who died before. Prophet Ayyub (AS) children were raised from the dead. Everything returned to how they were seven years ago when Job was sound, rather more. Almighty Allah (SWT) wanted people to know that he had the ability to make them sick and heal them, make them poor and give them wealth.

Prophet Ayyub (AS) had taken an oath that he would punish his wife with a hundred sticks (for listening to Shaytan). To be true to his commitment in Almighty Allah's Holy name, Prophet Ayyub (AS) was commanded by Allah (SWT) to strike her with a bundle of hundred sticks just to fulfill the oath. *And take in your hand a green branch and beat her with it and do not break your oath; surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely he was frequent in returning (to God). (38:44)*. Prophet Ayyub (AS) died at the age of two hundred and twenty six (226) years.

Striving in this cause

We should not lose hope in Allah (SWT)'s mercy, just remember Prophet Ayyub (AS) was tested for 7yrs, but he did not lose hope and continued thanking Allah (SWT). He endured his difficulties with patience despite losing everything, without complaining to

Allah (SWT) even once. In the end he got everything back, his health, wealth and his children. The results of his patience were so fruitful that it shows how Allah (SWT) multiplies our good when we bear difficulties with thankfulness.

Lesson learnt

Prophet Ayyub (AS) suffered many hardships without complaints, and submitted himself to the will of Almighty. But he was human after all and was troubled by his sickness. It was too much for him and he prayed to Allah (SWT) expressing his thoughts. He believed that Allah (SWT) being the most merciful was the only one who could remove his difficulties from him. Allah (SWT) loved his Dua and listened to his pain and cured him. Allah (SWT) was impressed by Prophet Ayyub (AS)'s patience through his suffering as he did not complain at all, and Allah (SWT) loves the patient ones and rewards these people with plenty.

Applications in our daily life

When we are going through bad times it is okay to be distressed and tell Allah (SWT) about it, we do not need to hide or pretend that we are not affected. As human beings we have emotions and we get affected by it. We can share our pain with Allah (SWT) and confide our feelings as He is always there to listen to us. He is the only one who doesn't sleep and is available to listen to us 24/7 for us. Allah (SWT) has blessed us with so many bounties which we do not realize such as our ability to see, walk, talk etc. Allah (SWT) will test us to see how strong our faith is. Sometimes the test may be with difficulties such as sickness, loss of near ones, difficult life, or sometimes by giving us wealth. If at such times we can remember to pray to Allah (SWT) just like Prophet Ayyub (AS) and continue being thankful, we will get His help and gain closeness to Allah (SWT).

Questions

1. What was Prophet Ayyub (AS) known for?
2. Who wanted to test Prophet Ayyub (AS) on his patience and thankfulness, and for how long did this test last?
3. How did Allah (SWT) cure Prophet Ayyub (AS)'s diseases?
4. How did Allah (SWT) reward Prophet Ayyub (AS) for his patience?

Ayatul Kareema – Dua of Prophet Yunus (AS)

Short Dua

أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

There is no god but You, Glory be to You surely I was unjust [to myself] (21:87)

Long Dua

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And Yunus when he left in anger, he thought We would not put him in hardship, and he called out in the darkness, there is no god but You, Glory be to You surely I was unjust [to myself] (21:87)

Context of the Dua

This verse is known as “Ayatul Kareema”, the “Glorious Verse”. This Dua was recited by Prophet Yunus (AS) when he found himself in the dark belly of the big fish, which swallowed him, alive. He recited this continuously when he was in extreme difficulties in the belly of the fish.

Background of the Prophet

Prophet Yunus (AS) was sent by Allah (SWT) to the people of Nineveh (Babylon) to guide them on the right path. The people of Nineveh were idol worshippers, and although Prophet Yunus (AS) tried night and day to explain to them how useless their worship was, they did not accept his advice. They said to him, "You are a liar. Our forefathers have always worshipped these idols and we will do the same."

Prophet Yunus (AS) tried to convince the people for a long time to worship One God. He even warned them of Allah (SWT)'s punishment if they continued in their sinful ways, but they refused to give up their idol worshipping. They said "O Yunus do not bother yourself about us. We neither believe in your Lord, nor do we care about any punishment."

At last Prophet Yunus (AS) was fed up with these stubborn people. He asked Allah (SWT) to send His punishment on them and walked out of their town.



After his departure, the signs of Allah (SWT)'s punishment appeared over Nineveh. A huge cloud came over the whole area and the land was plunged into darkness.

The people at once realized that they were about to be punished for their sins. A wise man from amongst them advised them to ask for Allah (SWT)'s forgiveness at once, before they were all destroyed. All the people, young and old, men and women, came out of their homes and sincerely begged Allah (SWT) to forgive them. Allah (SWT) accepted their prayers and withdrew His punishment.

Then Prophet Yunus went towards his town. When he reached the outskirts, he saw that the town was intact, and people were going about with their lives. Disappointed that they were not punished and had not listened to his advice, Prophet Yunus (AS) turned back from them in anger. As a prophet of God, although he did not commit a sin, it was not expected for him to be angry in this way.

Meanwhile, Prophet Yunus (AS) had gone a long distance and had reached the sea.



There he saw some people in a boat that was ready to sail. He requested them to allow him to join them. Since he looked like a very respectable person, the passengers of the boat cheerfully welcomed him on board. In the sea, the boat was suddenly caught up in a heavy storm. It was in danger of going under and the captain said that unless they reduced the weight load, they would all drown. It was agreed that one person would have to be thrown overboard. To decide who that person would be, the passengers cast lots. The first time the lot fell to Prophet Yunus (AS), but since he was considered to be a dignified person, the lots were cast again.

When the lot fell to Prophet Yunus (AS) the second time, they had no choice but to throw him overboard. At that moment, Prophet Yunus (AS) realized that he should not have walked away from his people with anger and felt sorry for it. But he knew that God was Merciful and he would accept his regret.

In the meantime, Allah (SWT) commanded a large fish to swallow Prophet Yunus (AS) into its belly. Prophet Yunus (AS) suddenly found himself in the stomach of the fish, and he lay there, frightened but unharmed.

The Holy Qur'an says:

Yunus was certainly a Messenger. He abandoned his people and sailed away in a full ship where the people cast lots. Because he lost, he was thrown in the water. The fish swallowed him up and he deserved (all this). Had he not glorified Allah, he would certainly have remained inside the fish until the Day of Resurrection. (Qur'an 37:139-144)



Prophet Yunus (AS) spent several days and nights inside the fish while it swam across the sea. In the darkness of the stomach of the fish Prophet Yunus (AS) prayed to Allah (SWT) to forgive him for his mistake and his prayers were accepted. The Holy Qur'an says:

Zan Nun (Yunus (AS)) went away in anger and thought We would never have Power over him, but in darkness he cried, "Lord! You are the only Lord whom I glorify. I have certainly done wrong to myself so forgive me." We answered his prayer and saved him from his grief. Thus do We save the faithful ones, (Qur'an 21:87-88). The fish went to the seashore and vomited out Prophet Yunus (AS) safely onto the ground. Prophet Yunus (AS)'s body was badly burnt by the acids inside the fish and Allah (SWT) caused a plant to grow whose leaves healed Prophet Yunus (AS) and whose fruits fed him. Soon Prophet Yunus (AS) had regained his health and he was commanded to return to Nineveh.

Striving

Prophet Yunus (AS) did not commit a sin by leaving his people but if he had stayed and still tried to convince the people it would have been better. Therefore, he prayed to

Allah (SWT) and glorified Him and admitted that he was hasty in his decision and asked for forgiveness. This continuous repentance allowed his action to be forgiven. When we commit something wrong we need to ask Allah (SWT) often for our forgiveness. It is said by Imam Jaffer Sadiq (AS): one who continuously knocks on Allah's doors will get answered.

Lesson learnt

Prophet Yunus (AS) after inviting people to the way of Allah (SWT) for a long time lost hope and left them. Since he was Allah (SWT)'s messenger he should not have given up on the people. But he realized that he should not have been hasty and continuously glorified Allah (SWT)'s forgiveness. Allah (SWT) being Merciful, listened to his prayer and forgave him as He is the most Merciful. Allah (SWT) wants us to realize our mistakes and seek His forgiveness for He is ready to forgive anyone who asks Him so.

Applications in our daily life

In life, we may come across situations that make us angry or upset. It is important for us to learn how to manage those emotions before we do something that we will regret. There are many strategies that we can use to help us regulate our emotions. We can try to walk away from the situation, take a deep breathe, go to a calm corner and use a fidget toy or to drink water. The Holy Prophet (s) has said, "If one of you is angry while he is standing, let him sit down so his anger will leave him; otherwise, let him lie down."

Questions

1. Why did Prophet Yunus (AS) leave his people at Nineveh in anger?
2. How were the people of Nineveh saved from Allah (SWT)'s punishment?
3. Why did the people of the boat throw Prophet Yunus (AS) out of the boat?
4. What did Prophet Yunus (AS) do that made the fish vomit him out?
5. How did Prophet Yunus (AS) get cured after he was thrown on the seashore?

Dua to show gratitude – Dua of Prophet Sulayman (AS)

Short Dua

قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ

He said my Lord inspire me to thank You for Your blessings with which You have blessed me and my parents (27: 19)

Long Dua

وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى
وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ
الصَّالِحِينَ

He said my Lord inspire me to thank You for Your blessings with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I do good deeds that please You, and make me enter by Your mercy among Your righteous servants (27: 19)

Context of the Dua

Once, Prophet Sulayman (AS) was marching with his armies of men, jinn and birds, to a battlefield. When they reached the valley of the ants, an ant, seeing the huge gathering of men and jinn, warned all other ants to enter their dwellings lest Prophet Sulayman (AS) and his armies crush them, because of their negligence. Hearing this Prophet Sulayman (AS) thanked Allah (SWT) and recited this Dua.

Background of the Prophet

Prophet Sulayman (AS) was the youngest son of Prophet Dawood (AS) and inherited him. Allah (SWT) granted him the greatest kingdom that any king had ever ruled over. He had control over the wind and could use it to direct his throne through the air. Both men and jinn served him faithfully and he could order the birds to carry out his commands by speaking to them in their own language. As a result of these special blessings, Prophet Sulayman (AS)'s kingdom was very powerful and many countries were under its control. When the army of Prophet Sulayman (AS) marched on a mission, it was an awe-inspiring sight. The Holy Qur'an describes one such episode as follows:

Prophet Sulayman (AS)'s army consisting of men, jinn and birds were gathered together in his presence in ranks. When they arrived in the valley of the ants, an ant said (to the others), "O ants, enter your dwellings lest you are crushed by Prophet Sulayman (AS) and his army by mistake." (Qur'an 27:17-18)

Prophet Sulayman (AS) heard the warning of the chief of the ants and asked it to come forward. He said to it, *"Did you think that a Prophet of Allah (SWT) would ever harm any of His creatures?"* The ant replied, "No I did not, but I was worried that when my fellow ants would see the grandeur of your army, they would underestimate their own bounties from Allah (SWT) and become ungrateful. It is for this reason that I asked them to hide out of sight."

One day Prophet Sulayman (AS) noticed that his messenger bird, Hud Hud (a Hoopoe bird) was missing. The Holy Qur'an says:

And (Prophet Sulayman (AS)) inspected the birds and said, "How is it that I cannot see Hud Hud. Is he absent? I shall certainly punish him severely or slaughter him unless he has a good reason (for his absence). (Qur'an 27:20-21)

It was not long before Hud Hud appeared, saying: "I have been to a country about which you may know nothing. The country is Saba (Sheba) and it is ruled by a woman who has complete control over her people. Her throne is especially grand. However, they all worship the sun and have forsaken Allah (SWT)."

Prophet Sulayman (AS) sent a letter to Bilqees, the Queen of Saba, inviting her towards submission to Allah (SWT). When Bilqees received the letter, she asked her ministers' advice. Bilqees wanted to settle the matter peacefully so she sent her messengers to Prophet Sulayman (AS) with costly gifts and waited for his reaction. When the representatives of Saba arrived in the kingdom of Prophet Sulayman (AS), they were amazed to see the splendor of his buildings and palace. Prophet Sulayman (AS) welcomed and asked them for the reply to his letter. When they presented him with the gifts, he told them, that he had been given such bounties from Allah (SWT) that none other possessed. He asked them to return to their country and to inform their Queen that he would be sending an army towards Saba."

When Bilqees received this message and the report about Prophet Sulayman (AS)'s power, she decided to submit herself before him and accept his invitation to embrace Islam. When Prophet Sulayman (AS) learnt that she was coming to his kingdom, he turned to his people and said, "Who amongst you can bring me the throne of the Queen of Saba before she herself gets here?"

One jinn said, "I will bring it before you rise from your place." But Asife Barqiah, who had been taught the special Name of Allah (SWT) by Prophet Sulayman (AS), and had some knowledge of the Book said: "I will bring it to you before your eye blinks", and when he (Prophet Sulayman (AS)) saw the throne brought to him so quickly, he knew that it was by the Grace of Allah (SWT) that he had people under him who could accomplish something so miraculous. He said, *"This is by the Grace of my Lord so that He may test whether I am grateful or ungrateful... (Qur'an 27:40).*

In preparation for the arrival of Bilqees, Prophet Sulayman (AS) had ordered a palace of glass to be built. Under the glass floors, there was a pool of water with various kinds of fish swimming in it. When Bilqees arrived, he took her to the palace.

Bilqees was fooled by the appearance of water and hitched up her dress to her knees to save it from getting wet. When she realized her mistake, she at once understood the subtle point that Prophet Sulayman (AS) was making to her. He was showing her that things are not always what they seem, and even if the sun she worshipped was the most powerful force she could see, there was another, more powerful, Force behind it. The intelligent lady understood the message and turned to Allah (SWT) in repentance and faith.

Prophet Sulayman (AS) then returned her to Saba and allowed her to rule in his name. Prophet Sulayman (AS) ruled over his people with justice for a long time. His power extended across most of the known world. This unique blessing was in response to his prayer which is recorded in the Holy Qur'an: He said, *"O my Lord! Forgive me and grant me a kingdom such as shall not befit anyone after me, verily You are the Granter of bounties (without measure). (Qur'an 38:35)*

Striving

Despite Prophet Sulayman (AS) having a huge kingdom he was always aware of those less powerful than him and strived to maintain justice to all. Even the incidence of the ants shows that he was concerned about them and would not crush them. By working for the sake of Allah (SWT), Prophet Sulayman (AS) showed his gratitude to Allah (SWT) for the bounties that were bestowed upon him.

Lesson learnt

This Dua reflects gratitude of Prophet Sulayman (AS) who was granted everything anyone could want and realized who the giver was. He had the comfort and the kingdom that Allah (SWT) had bestowed on him that no one had before him and no one would have after him. Prophet Sulayman (AS) recognized that whatever he possessed was from Allah (SWT) and always thanked Allah (SWT) for it. He never thought it was from his own effort or an inheritance from his father, but acknowledged it as bounty from Allah (SWT) and always gave thanks.

Applications in our daily life

When we are blessed with favors and bounties from Allah (SWT), or when any occasion of happiness comes into our lives, we must thank Allah (SWT) and recognize the giver because Shaytan can lead us to pride and arrogance. Reciting this Dua when we achieve success in our work makes us realize that the giver of all bounties is Allah (SWT). We can recognize our gratitude by saying it verbally like after salaah going into sajda and

saying: *Shukran lillahi wahidil qahhaar* (all praise is to Allah (SWT) the one, the mighty) or when we realize the bounties we possess and immediately think that this all is from Allah (SWT) and saying a silent thank you is also accepted by the Almighty.

Questions

1. When the ant saw Prophet Sulayman (AS)'s army what did he tell his people? Why did he warn them such?
2. How was Prophet Sulayman (AS)'s rule different from that of other Prophets?
3. Who found the kingdom of Bilqees and what did he do?
4. Why did Prophet Sulayman (AS) build a glass palace for Bilqees?

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