

A Commentary on Eftetah Prayer

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The month of Ramazan is the month of worship, prayers, spiritual purification and moral revision. In every instance of this month –with the help of the guidelines Allah has bestowed upon us- we have a chance to assess ourselves and compensate for our shortcomings. These guidelines emphasis on reciting the Quran, by which doing so and thinking about its verses, we can learn the lessons of life.

These guidelines also consist of Prayers (Duas) which have been narrated from the Messenger of Allah, Fatimah al-Zahra and the Infallible Imams (p.b.u.h.) who convey God's words and repeat what has been revealed to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). These Prayers also have important lessons and messages for us.

The Dua of Eftetah is one of such divine guidelines that has been given to us to read in one the year's most precious moments: the nights of the month of Ramazan.

In this essay, we would like to touch on it very briefly.

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This Dua, which is full of moral and ethical points, has been narrated by the great Shia scholar *Sayyid Razi al-din Ali ibn Tavoos* (589 – 664 AH) from Imam al-Mahdi (p.b.u.h.) about 1100 years ago in his book *Iqbal ul-a'mal*, from *Mohammad ibn Uthman ibn Sa'eed* the second deputy of the Imam. This Dua has also been narrated by Sheikh Abbas al-Qumi in his book *Mafatih al-Jinan*.

Thus, a priceless Dua filled with lessons of humanity and morality has been given to us through Imam al-Mahdi (p.b.u.h.), which if we appreciate will illuminate for us the true path of guidance.

Dua, in the rich Shia culture is a mixture of divine wisdom, deep human feelings, pure worship of Allah, deep insight, the way of living today (in this world) and a correct glance at tomorrow (the hereafter).

The Dua of Eftetah , which has been taught to us by the *Hujjah* of Allah, Imam al-Mahdi (p.b.u.h.) -who is an infallible teacher who has been given

The Dua starts with this sentence:

“*Allahuma enni
aftateho asthana’a
bihamdek*”,
“*Oh lord I begin
praising you by
expressing my
gratitude*”

and this is why it is called the Dua of Eftetah or ‘beginning’.

knowledge by Allah - is a textbook about our relation with God which opens to us the doors of Allah's *marifah*¹.

The Dua's starting sentences are like this:

“allahuma azenta li fi duaeka va masalatek fa’isma’ ya samio medhati...”,

“Oh Lord, You gave me permission to pray to you and ask you, so hear (me) oh He who hears my praises, answer me He who is merciful towards my needs, and forgive me He who covers my errors”.

It is here that a great lesson can be taught: Allah, with all His highness and majesty, who has no need of us and knows of our sins and errors, has allowed us to speak to Him, pray to him, beg him and ask him our needs. The following points can be stated from this sentence:

- First, we remind ourselves about Allah's kindness to us.
- We partially thank Allah because of this Blessing by speaking about it.
- We too, should have mercy on those who are weaker than us or those we have authority over. We should forgive their errors and not impose hardships on them because of what they have done.

*I*n the Dua of Eftetah we learn to praise Allah and thank him, an overall thank and praise of all the blessings he has bestowed upon us.

¹ *Ma'refah* of Allah is the knowledge we have about Allah and how much we know Him.

We should know that every blessing has a different kind of gratitude. Thanking Allah for what he has given us is not done only by saying “*Alhamdu lilah*” or “All praises be to Allah”. Rather, to thank Allah for his blessings, we must take what he has given us and use them for God’s cause and his satisfaction and use them to serve Allah’s servants. Thus, thanking Allah for wealth is done differently from thanking him for knowledge or for social stature.

Here when we say:

*“Alhamdu lilah bejami’e mahamedehi kolleha ala Jamie
ne’amehi kolleha”,
“Praise be to Allah with all that He is praised with because of
all his blessings”,*

We mean that we will try our best to use all of Allah’s Blessings correctly to satisfy Him and abstain from disobeying Him and use His blessings to serve mankind.

In this Dua we say:

*“Allahuma enni asaloka ghalilan min kathir ma’a hajaton bi
ilaihe azimah va ghinaka anho ghadim va huwa endi kathir va
huwa alaika sahlon yasir”.
“Oh Lord, I ask you (to give me) a little from the many (that
you have), for I have great need towards it while you never
had any need for it. What I beg from you is very important for
me, while for you, it is very little and a simple matter”.*

In this part of the Dua, on one hand, we admit that we are very weak and simple problems like illness and

poverty cripple us and on the other hand we find ourselves connected to the limitless source of wealth and power, who can solve all our problems and hardships. We see that higher than the pinnacle of all hardships and grieves, there exists a God that easily removes all our miseries and sufferings.

*W*hat we learn here is a lesson of hope, a hope in the Lord that can solve our problems and distinguish our miseries in the hard days of our life and in our most unbearable moments.

*I*n this Dua, we praise and thank a Lord, who although knows about all our sins and disobediences, is not in a hurry to make us suffer. A Lord who forgives us even though he has the power to punish. A Lord who is angry with our actions and although has the ability to do what he wants with us, has mercy on us and gives us time to change ourselves. This results in the following:

- God covers our sins, forgives them and hides them.
- With this attitude Gods guilty servants are encouraged to Ask Allah for their needs, even those needs which they are not worthy of asking for.
- God's kindness is so great, that man with all his sins, is not only not afraid of asking his Lord, but also sees himself under his protection and refuge.

Because of God's boundless kindness, we are not only provided with our worldly needs like supplications and food, but we are also provided with our spiritual needs, the most important one of these being guidance. By this guidance we are taught the ways of life in this world and the hereafter. Guidance is only provided by Allah who is our creator and

knows better than anyone else about our needs. Because God Himself is needless, and perfect in all aspects, His guidance will not be influenced by flaws like lack of knowledge and greed for power and money.

We read in this Dua:

*“Alhamdo lilahi allazi hadana lihadha va ma konna lenahtadi
lo la an hadana allah”,*

*“All praise be to Allah who guided us (to the true path) and if
it was not for His guidelines we would not have accepted his
guidance”.*

Allah’s guidance has reached us through a Prophet, who has come to show us the path of salvation, the same path that the bygone Prophets had shown to the people of their age. This great Prophet is God’s servant, His messenger, His chosen one, His beloved and the keeper of His secrets who conveys God’s messages to us. He is Mohammad ibn Abdullah (p.b.u.h.) who tried his hardest to guide the people of his time to the path of salvation, even though they did not appreciate his struggles. He, who has spent some of his time astray and lost from the paths of guidance and has tried to find the correct way, will know the value of a messenger from God and appreciate his efforts.

In this Dua Imam al-Mahdi teaches us how to appreciate the Prophet’s efforts and thank him for them:

*“Allahuma salli ala mohammaden... afazala va ahsana... va
akthara ma sallayta va barakta... ala ahaden min ebadek va
anbiaeka va rosolek...”*,

“Oh Allah, give Your best and most superior regards to Mohammad... Regards which are greater and more gracious than all those that you have bestowed upon any of Your servants, Prophets and Messengers”.

The life of the Prophet is limited and the needs of mankind unlimited. He, which is the symbol of God’s mercy and grace, left a deputy in his place whenever he took a journey –long or short- so that his followers would not go astray.

Like some people believe, is it acceptable that such a person would not appoint a deputy or successor to look after his global and eternal religion, once he passed away?

The Prophet’s successor, like the Prophet himself must possess the highest virtues and ranks among his people. This person is none but *Ali ibn Abu Taleb* (p.b.u.h.) .

*I*n the Dua of Eftetah at least seven of this great person’s characteristics have been mentioned:

- *Amir al-Momenin*, the ‘leader of the believers’ whom the people must obey and follow.
- *The prophets true successor*, who was given this post from the first day of the Prophet’s call to Islam. The same person that tens of thousands of people took oath at the day of *Ghadir*¹ to obey him (which except a few, all broke their oath later on).
- *Allah’s servant and His appointed guardian*, who has been given many virtues, but his highest virtue is that he is a true servant of Allah.

¹ The name of a place near Mecca in which the prophet gave a great sermon about Imam Ali and that he had been chosen by God to be his successor

- *The prophets brother*, who has been called by this title by the Prophet many times.
- *Allah's Hujjah*, who Allah through him, will leave no excuse for people because of their deeds.
- *Gods greatest sign*, who more than anyone else shows Allah's perfection.
- *The great news*¹, better said Allah's greatest news from all the news from the past and future which Allah has told us about in the Quran.

These are just some of the characteristics of Imam Ali (p.b.u.h.) who have been revealed by Allah. He who has these virtues is surely the most suited to become the Prophet's successor.

Allah's guidance reaches us, not just through the Prophet and Imam Ali (p.b.u.h.), but through twelve other illuminating souls:

“Fatimah al-Zahra the Prophets beloved daughter, his two grandchildren al-Hasan ibn Ali and al-Husain ibn Ali and nine Imams from the decendants of al-Husain: Ali ibn al-Husain (al-Sajjad), Mohammad ibn Ali (al-Baqir), Jafar ibn Mohammad (al-Sadiq), al-Musa ibn Jafar (al-Kazim), Ali ibn al-Musa (al-Riza), Mohammad ibn Ali (al-Javad), Ali ibn Mohammad (al-Hadi), al-Hasan ibn Ali (al-Askari) and finally Hujjah ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (p.b.u.h.)”.

These are Allah's Guardians over people and his trustees on earth. Today the responsibility of guiding people has been

¹ See the holy Quran 78:1-3

given to the last Imam, Imam Mahdi, who like his great grandfather - the Prophet (p.b.u.h.)- is a mercy and blessing for the worlds.

In the Dua of Eftetah he has been introduced like this:

- He, who will rise for justice and he that all people await his global uprising.
- He, who himself is absolute justice and fairness, he who shall not act unjustly and with tyranny. Therefore it is only he who can bring justice to this world.

In this Dua we ask Allah to fulfill these for Imam Mahdi:

*G*ive him power on earth, just as he had given power to his chosen servants *Soleyman* (Solomon) and *Davoud* (David) and make him victorious over all tyrants just as he made Moses victorious over the Pharaoh.

*G*ive him safety and security so that the seekers of justice, the noble and the pious finally reach their holy aims.

*H*elp him introduce the true Islam just as it was revealed to the Prophet and not how it is being practiced today.

*D*isgrace the hypocrites and infidels in his gracious government and give stature to the believers and those that have purified themselves for Allah.

Every Dua that is narrated to us from the Prophet and Imams (p.b.u.h.), is a Heavenly supplication granted to us so that we use it to fulfill our spiritual needs and desires.

Every Dua is like a bottomless mine of knowledge and lessons. The more we read the Dua and think about its

meanings and verses, the more we will be illuminated by what it has to offer us.

For a nation that has such great spiritual reserves, it is not rational to get spiritual needs from sources other than these. It is also unfair if we don't introduce these rich resources to mankind.

This concise report was written with the aim of introducing an authentic document, which has been with the pious and righteous for more than 1100 years, which has kept their hearts connected with Allah, the source of all blessings.

We hope that the illuminating torch of the Dua of Eftetah stays lightened in our lives and with the blessings of its teacher –Imam Mahdi– teaches us the lessons of worship and guidance.

Meet people in such a manner that if you die they should weep for you and if you live they should long for you.

The most helpless of all men is he who cannot find a few brothers during his life, but still more helpless is he who finds such a brother but loses him.

Forgive the shortcomings of considerate people because when they fall into error Allah raises them up.

The heart of a fool is in his mouth while the tongue of the wise man is in his heart.

*As intelligence increase, speech decreases.**

* Nahjul-Balagha , sayings, translated by: Sayyid Ali Reza