



Du'ā – A Tool for Change

At the end of Surah al-Baqarah, Allah says:

Allah does not burden a soul except with what it can bear. And to its account is what it has merited by way of its goodness, and against it is what it has earned. Our Lord! Do not condemn us if we forget, or if we unwittingly do wrong. Our Lord! Do not lay upon us a burden like those who came before us. Our Lord! Do not burden us with what we have no strength to bear. Pardon us, forgive us, have mercy on us. You are our Master, so aid us against those who cover up the truth.

And again in Surah al-Hajj:

Have they not traveled in the land, and do they not have hearts with which to understand or ears with which to hear? Surely, it is not the eyes that become blind, but it is the hearts in the breasts that grow blind.

And in Surah Ādiyāt:

Does he not know that when the contents of the graves are brought forth, what is in the hearts is bared? Truly, on that day the Lord should be aware of that.

I want to continue with what I have been talking about and what I was speaking of last night, especially on the *du'ā* and the use of *muqallib al-qulub* (the changer of hearts). I

went into some detail last night, but I will repeat some of it. It won't hurt anyone to hear it twice. On the authority of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), he said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (sal) say, "Allah the Almighty said, 'O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky, and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam! Were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.'"

It was also related by Tirmidhi and Ibn Hanbal that the Prophet (sal) said, "*Du'ā is the core of worship (the heart of the faith).*" I want to examine the importance of *du'ā*, beginning with *āyat* from Surah al-Baqarah that I began with, "**Allah does not lay upon anyone a responsibility or burden beyond their capacity.**" It was revealed around Miraj, a year before the Hijra to Medina. The struggle between Islam and unbelief was at a climax point. Muslims were condemned for everything they did, and people were feeling lots of burden. There is a parallel to today, where nearly everywhere we see the demonization of Islam and its values, and those who follow it, and by those who claim to follow it. The Prophet Isa (as) said in the Injīl about a certain group of people: "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of their righteousness. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely.*" This is not a new situation, then. The Jews were persecuting his followers. He was a Jew; he wasn't a Christian. He was preaching only to the Jews at the time. Now you see the Muslims are persecuting Muslims – nothing new.

So who are the 'blessed people'? Wars are waged against Muslims as we know, by us or our country; and previous to that by others, like the Russians in Afghanistan. Muslim lands are occupied, as we know, and Muslims are oppressed and persecuted from the

outside and the inside. There are many who are hungry, homeless, and a large number of refugees and orphans throughout the world. Now from north Sudan to south Sudan this week, they expect 75,000 people to cross the border. We should not forget that women are Muslims, as well as men. Muslims are denied human rights and civil rights and persecuted. Innocent Muslims are abused and accused and detained in prisons, in the most miserable conditions in Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places by their own people, let alone by non-Muslims who render them in some other ways.

Those in power don't want to give up their power or share it. Rampant corruption, nepotism, tribalism, and feudalism abound. In some places, Muslims are persecuted for practicing their faith; or there are those who would like to persecute them, even in this country. Many academics and many knowledgeable pundits and writers and lecturers have been used to produce lies and propaganda against people of our community.

So, what do we do? First of all, we have to attempt to understand the challenges and analyze our condition, reform our ways, unite our efforts, and work harder. We have to be willing to listen and to work and to take other points of view. And we have to turn to Allah sincerely and make our appeal to Allah and Allah alone. That is the greatest tool we, and all of those people, have; who have no other tool – *du'ā*. Efforts alone are not enough sometimes, but with *du'ā*, everything can be changed. You have to believe it, and be patient, but it can be changed. In our work, we go into different countries and help people to help themselves make changes. When we go into Muslim countries, most of the time these days, I encourage people to make *du'ā*. I encourage people to look toward their beliefs and faith, to listen to what's being said. Even if it is being said by a person you don't like, or your perceived enemy, or you think you have been treated unjustly. If you don't turn to *du'ā* to understand it, then you are only turning to the material, objectified ways of dealing with issues.

I had lunch the other day with a major-general who is the military attaché to the US from Egypt. There are a lot of people who won't like him because of who he is, or what his job is. I can say he was a very personable person, a very articulate individual; he was both extremely diplomatic and direct and honest. I'm sure some would not agree with much of what he said; nonetheless, he was honest about what he believed and truthful about what he said. I asked him direct questions, as others did. He wasn't trying to win anyone over. If someone was against him, they might like to believe that he was. He, in fact, was against the military ruling Egypt. He said, "[The military] are not trained to be police. We are trained to fight and defend our country." That's true. Then he talked about the corruption in the Ministry of the Interior, and in the police, and how ending the corruption of that is one of the biggest problems. Then he talked about the American agencies like IRI and Freedom House that were in Egypt, and explained what their problem was with them.

These are obviously issues of perception and understanding. He made analogies like, if you had a foreign organizations coming into your country and handing envelopes of cash to people on the street who were demonstrating, what would you say or do? There are perspectives on everything, and I'm not there to make any judgment about that. At the same time, if you don't talk to the people you disagree with, you will never end your disagreement. If you think you are right, and they are wrong, you will never end the conflict. If you don't come to people who are different than you, whether it's by culture, sect, race, or gender, there is no difference. In the political sphere, if you don't want to talk to someone because you don't like them, and you think they are fools and liars and whatever, there is no difference between thinking that and thinking that about women, or some other minority. There is no difference. It is prejudice, unwillingness to hear, and it is arrogance. That's what it is.

I appreciated his candor, though I might not agree with many of the things he said. He said, "It takes a long time for democracy, especially in a country that has 60% illiteracy."

That's true. We're still struggling with democracy in this country. The President just signed in a law that allows them to spy on American citizens by drones. We're still struggling. We know it is a very fragile type of governance. There are types of governance: one person / one vote. In Tahrir Square now, everybody brings all their problems there. If the beautician doesn't open her shop on time, they bring it to Tahrir Square. If the grocer doesn't have enough oranges, he gets a complaint in Tahrir Square, as if there is some magic wand there. Walk from one end to the other, and everything can be solved. And people are still being killed. Two days ago, 20 people were killed by thugs and rioters.

When you talk to someone who has the burden of responsibility, whether you agree with how they deal with it or not... If you don't feel the burden of that responsibility, and you stand up and say, "I'll take it and I'll do better," then you are no better than any of these idiots. If we go to Egypt or Morocco, or any of these countries, and we tell them *how* to do things, we're the idiots. If we help them develop skills, maybe we are doing something right. If we support their efforts, we are doing something better. But all of this is *dunya*. Everything I've just said for the last seven minutes is *dunya*. The first thing you need to do, as a Muslim, and the last thing you need to do, as a Muslim, is put your hands up in the air and ask Allah Swt for a blessing that you do what's right, and you are able to listen.

I quoted last night about having ears but not hearing. You think you are going to go and make some great change in the world without the blessing of Allah? You think just because you put your head down on the ground 5 times a day that it's all going to be all right? Ask the major-general. I don't doubt that he puts his head down 5 times a day. I would bet on it. It's not Turkey, where the military used to have to hide to do that. The burden doesn't lift from that. The burden lifts when you start to believe that your faith can move mountains, and you work in the right way with hopefully the right people.

Look at the oppression of Muslims by Muslims in Egypt and Iran and Iraq today, how the mullahs do that, and the imams, and the salafis do that, or the two-faced, split-tongued, Iqwani do that. Then, if you go into a country, like we do, *alhamdulillah*, if we go into a Muslim country, those we send are usually Muslim, with our delegation. At least, we can make *du'ā* before we go, and while we are there, and after we come back. If we were just another Christian organization or secular, we wouldn't know to do that. If you don't do it, and with sincerity, then who are you? And what right do you have? And this is still all *dunya* we are talking about. I'm real serious about this, like I said last night. If you don't want to hear what I have to say, then I'll close my eyes and you can all leave. How many of you did *durūd sharīf* when you went home last night, like you promised to do? Thank you very much.

We have to attempt to understand the challenges, analyze our conditions, reform our ways, unite our efforts, and work harder. We have to turn to Allah with sincerity, and make our appeal to Allah, and to Allah alone. Efforts alone are not enough sometimes. Aisha (ra) said, "*No believer makes du'ā and it is wasted. Either it is granted here in this world, or saved for him in the Hereafter, as long as he remained patient.*" Remember, we started with burdens. There is no question the Egyptian people have a burden on their shoulders. There is no question that other Egyptian people are putting the burden on those shoulders—or in Iran, or in Iraq, or Afghanistan, or Muslims in this country; or Christians in Cairo and south Sudan; or Jews and Palestinians. Who is going to turn and use the real tool that you have with faith?

You can work at it every day, give a training here and a training there; a conference here and there, a seminar here or there. You can march in front of the ministry of interior or justice, and do this and that every day, every day. You get nowhere, in over 30 years, in Iran; or in Israel / Palestine, nowhere since 1948 and the Camp David talks; nowhere in Afghanistan since the Russians. You can keep doing this and doing this...so what do you have to be impatient about, about *du'ā*? Are we going to be impatient with *du'ā*, if the

du'ā isn't answered right away, when all those efforts, day after day after day, in this training and that have not changed things? **“Allah does not change a person until they change them self.”** What is going to change them? Graft? A bag of potatoes the ayatollah gives to the poor people? *Ya muqallib al-qulub wa'l-absar* (O Changer of hearts and sight.) What is going to change is your intention and your faith. The rest of it is a means you are using as a form to actualize that faith. Why we in our work see change where we go in Kyrgyzstan or Indonesia or in Morocco or Egypt, or wherever we do, I believe we see the changes because of the faith behind those changes. I really believe that.

You can work for whoever, this or that organization: Amideast, Meridian International, Freedom House or whatever, it doesn't matter. Sure, good things happen—of course. But overall, the long term change is going to come from *du'ā*, from faith. Aisha (ra) said, *“No believer makes du'ā and it is wasted. Either it is granted in this world, or saved for him in the hereafter, as long as he remains patient.”* It should be done with the most respect. You can't do it with respect if you hate the other person so much that you don't understand their ignorance, their preferences, their desires, or their fears of loss of power, or influence, or whatever it is. [Pray the *du'ā*]in sincerity, and never give up the *du'ā*, and never give up the hope in it, for Allah's blessings are in His Mercy.

O Allah, remove our ills. Change our condition from weakness to strength, from difficulties to ease, from fear to safety, from despair to hope, from humiliation to honor, from defeat to victory, from division to unity, from error to guidance, and from evil of ignorance to the virtues of Islam, Ya muqallib al-qulub (O Changer of hearts).

While many of remember to supplicate to Allah for guidance and knowledge, and maybe some of the hope of Paradise, there is one important thing we tend to forget to include in our prayers. The Prophet (sal) said, **“Unquestionably, there is in the body a lump of**

flesh which if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Behold, it is the heart.” Countless wise scholars, *fakhī*, *ulema* and *shuyukh* have dedicated books upon books to reformation, *tajdid*/ regeneration, and *at-tazkiyat*/ purification of the heart, because it is the key to success or destruction. If the heart is not soft, and if the heart is not generous, and if the heart doesn’t recognize the needs of others, how is change going to come about? How is it going to happen? If you don’t know what makes that person’s heart softer, open, and you only care about what you feel, how are you going to make change? How is it possible?

It’s a funny story: until you are married at least 25 year, don’t give your wife a blender for her birthday. [Give her] a little jewelry, a nice dress, something like that. If you don’t know what opens the other person’s heart, what kind of words, or actions, or looks, what kind of patience, kindness, or love, then how do you expect to communicate? That’s just one person. What about a whole society, or group of individuals? Just like the doctors tell us today that if you have a healthy heart, it’s the key to having a healthy body. The Prophet (sal) conveys that having a good heart is the key to righteousness. Anas (ra) narrated that asking for a firm and obedient heart was one of the constant supplications of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal).

One narration from Umm Salma (raa) said that this was the *du’ā* the Prophet (sal) made: **“*Ya Muqallib al-qulub, thabbit qalbi ‘ala dinik. O Turner of hearts! Make my heart firm upon Your dīn.*”** But there is another *du’ā* from the Sunnah of Rasūlu-Llāh in Sahih Muslim, that isn’t so well known. The Prophet (sal) said, **“*Truly, the hearts of all the sons of Adam are between the two fingers of the compassionate Lord as one heart, and He turns that to any direction He likes.*”** And then the Messenger (sal) said, **“*Ya musarrif al-qulub, thabbit qalbi ‘ala ta’atik. O Allah, Turner of hearts, direct our hearts to Your obedience.*”** You are not obeying Allah if you are just in conflict for the sake of conflict, or you think yourself righteous, and you don’t understand what the other

person is motivated by. Even if they are motivated by greed, you have to understand it— or power, or fear, or doubt, or ignorance. You have to understand it to deal with it.

There are so many beautiful *du'ā* with the words “***Muqallib al-qulub.***” I told you the one about “*Verily the hearts of the sons of Adam.*” And there is, “*O Turner of hearts, direct our hearts to Your obedience.*” As I explained last night, these words are important.

Musarrif and *sarif* are from the same root which means to turn, to divert, to turn from one direction or avert something that’s coming from a direction, and to change. The meaning of this word, this *du'ā*, is to turn and direct your attention. How is this word different from ***Muqallib al-qulub***? There are a couple of linguistic differences, but the essence of both supplications is the same. *Qalaba*, like *sarafa*, means to change and turn the direction of something. But linguistically, *qalaba* points more to constant moving and constant turning, while *sarafa* points to changing a direction, to turn from here to there.

When we make *du'ā*, we are asking Allah Swt to *saraf*: turn and direct our hearts to being obedient to Him. In the other *du'ā*, we are asking Allah to *thabit*: to make our hearts firm on Islam, and not *qalab*, because the heart is constantly changing and turning. *Qulub* is the plural of *qalb*. *Qalb* is the general word for heart, which comes from the root that means it turns around and around and upside down and inside out. The nature of the heart is it is constantly changing. Just like the blood is constantly turning in the heart, circulating; and we are turning and turning and turning. For those of us who meditate, [the words of the *niyyats* indicate that] the heart is rotating. *Ta'atik* means to obey, to submit. The beauty of this word in *du'ā* is that it not only means to submit yourself, but it specifically means to submit willingly and voluntarily and intentionally with your own free will. No one makes you submit.

We are asking Allah Swt to direct our hearts willing to submit and obey Him, in the midst of all of the problems, in the midst of what seems to be the burdens, the difficulties, the wants and desires that are not fulfilled, the confusions, whatever they may be. We make

du'ā and we wait. You are not going to wait any longer for the *du'ā* to be fulfilled than you are going to wait for the mullahs to leave Iran. The *du'ās* will be fulfilled long before. So, all these *du'ās*:

Ya muqallib al-qulub, thabbit qalbi 'ala dinik.

O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon your religion.

- Ya muqallib al-qulub, thabbit 'ala'l-haqq.

O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon the Truth.

Ya muqallib al-qulub, thabbit qalbi 'ala ta'atik.

O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon Your obedience.

- Ya musarrif al-qulub, thabbit qalbi 'ala ta'atik.

O Director of hearts, keep my heart in a state of obedience to You.

- Ya muqallib al-qulub wa 'l-ahwalhawwil halina ila ahsan 'l-hal.

O Transformer of hearts and spiritual states, make our states the loveliest of states.

- Allahumma, ya muqallib al-qulub wa'l-absar, thabbit qalbi 'ala dinik.

O Allah, O Controller of the hearts and eyes, let my heart hold fast onto Your religion.

- Allahuma Ya Musabbib al-Asbab, Ya Mufattih al-Abwab,

Ya Muqallib al-qulubi wal-absar,

Ya Dalil al-mutahayyirin, Ya Ghiyath al-mustaghathin,

Ya Hayyu, Ya Qayyum, Ya Dhul-Jalali wa-l-Ikram!

Wa ufawwidu amri il-Allah, inn-Allaha basirun bil-'ibad.

O Allah, O Causer of causes, O Opener of doors, O Transformer of hearts and eyes,

O Guide of the stupefied ones, O Redresser of complainants,

O Living, O Eternal, O Majestic and Venerable.

I confide my cause to Allah; for surely, Allah is the Overseer of all His slaves.

What is the common bond here? Pop quiz! Heart and the different ways in which the heart acts: in obedience, submission, and trust. When we go into a country, we are not the doers. We go into a country, and we are not the doers. We help someone with something, but we are not the changers. Maybe we are an agent of change, but we are not the changer. What should we be proud of? Of the fact that we are conveying a message of peace and trust in Allah to hearts that are open, so they can be empowered to change themselves, so they can change the society or whatever they need to change. That's all. That's enough. And that's subtle. Allah is the one who controls the hearts of the people.

Remember the *hadith* in Sahih Muslim that Allah doesn't look at your bodies and appearance, but rather at your hearts and your acts. In Qur'an, it is said only ones with clean hearts will be accepted by Allah. "*O Allah, clean our hearts and cleanse our deeds from hypocrisy, and make us better people.*" Supplications of the heart are found both in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In the Qur'an, the believers supplicate, "**Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate after you have guided us.**" Sura al-Hashr. And there is a share, a portion, for those who came after them, saying, "**Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and put not in our hearts any resentment toward those who have believed.**"

Do I know anything about the belief of that major-general? I know nothing about it. Can I assume things? I could; but why should I? If I see him raise his sword or gun to another Muslim, that's another story. If I see him imprisoning someone and torturing them, that's another story...or giving orders to do that, then you can make certain judgments about it. Both of these *du'ā* I just recited are seeking refuge in Allah from corrupted hearts. The first seeks refuge from deviation after guidance, and the second *du'ā* is from evil and ill feelings toward fellow Muslims. The nature of the heart is to constantly change. By

asking Allah Swt in this supplication to direct our hearts to be obedient, shows that we are constantly falling short in our obedience.

Our hearts wander. They go from here to there, and we can't really trust them fully, until they are fully developed. They wander here: Oh, that's nice. That person's nice. Oh, I like that. Oh, that's sweet. I think I'll do that. Someone sat with me recently who didn't know what to do with their life. "My heart tells me to do this, and my heart tells me to do that." I said, "Precisely. That's exactly what the heart does." My mind tells me this, and my heart tells me that." "Precisely." "What do I do about it?" "Make *du'ā*. Come to understand your heart. Hold to the standard. Have high values and low expectations." To make this *du'ā* is to ask Allah to keep changing back our hearts to obedience. The heart is turning? Turn it back to obedience. Turn it back to the *dīn*. Turn it back to service, but know that is what you are doing. Don't play a crapshoot game where it is all chance. Even Imam ibn Khaim and Ibn Uthaymin state that the intelligence of the human being lies in their heart and not necessarily in their brain. The evidence of this statement is in the *'āyat*,

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason, and ears by which to hear? Indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded; but blinded are their hearts which are within their chests.

That's what is blind. If your heart isn't soft and is not alive, and your heart is not relating, just in your personal life, how is it going to relate to 10 people, 100 people, 1,000 people, a hundred thousand, a million, or 85 million people? How is it possible? If I went up to Khaled and said, "Happy birthday," it's different than if I give him a kiss and a hug and say, "Happy birthday! I'm so glad you are alive. May Allah bless you with this and that and this." It's a lot different. That's why we have Eids also. Call it Eid al Fitr or Christmas or Mother's Day, which is coming up. (Side note): perfume—not a new pot or pan.

The Prophet (sal) constantly made *du'ā* for a righteous and good heart. We learn the status of the heart from that, and we supplicate. The nature of the heart is to constantly change. We ask Allah Swt in supplication to direct our hearts, because we are falling short. The heart is the core; the heart is the foundation. We have to purify our hearts, at *tazkiyat al qalbi*, from associating partners with Allah. Even my ego is a partner with Allah if I think I'm the doer. This is *bida* in its true sense. [We must purify our hearts] from ill-feelings against other Muslims, and against other human beings; from wrong actions and wrong deeds. As Muslims, people should focus on reforming their own hearts, making good deeds, because the heart is the source of those good deeds. The heart is where we will be tested, day after day after day.

Allah says, **“Does he not know that when the contents of the graves are scattered that what is within the chest is brought out? Indeed, their Lord, with them that Day, is fully acquainted.”** In another final *hadith*, the Prophet (sal) points to his heart and says, three times: **“*Taqwa is here. Taqwa is here. Taqwa is here.*”** I told you in a previous discourse more detail on *taqwa*: it is not just piety or fear. This *hadith* shows us that when the heart has *taqwa*, then the limbs will follow, just as the first *hadith* said: **“*When the heart is sound, the whole body is sound.*”** This is a constant reminder for us that we are not in control of our guiding. It is crucial for us to make *du'ā* for our hearts on a regular basis. We don't know where our hearts will stand tomorrow. We don't know what is going to catch our hearts tomorrow: Shaytan or the best looking guy or girl in the world, or the baby, whatever it may be. What is going to catch our heart tomorrow?

Make *du'ā* for the heart. Be courageous, because the hearts of the children of Adam are between the two fingers of Allah. Who else can turn that *musarrafa al qalb*, to keep our hearts turned in directions of obedience? That doesn't mean away from people, or away from the baby, or the good looking guy or beautiful woman, or job, or whatever it is, but know where it comes from. Test it out. Is it coming from here or there? Is it coming from

my ego or my heart? Let's close with this very profound and loving *du'ā* of Imam Ali (ra):

O Allah, help me to say words of truth in the face of the mighty, and to refrain from speaking ill in order to gain the applause of the weak. And do not let me accuse my adversaries of treachery because their opinions oppose mine.

Ya Allah, should You give me wealth, do not take away my happiness. Should You give me might, do not take away my wisdom. Should You give me success, do not take away my humility. Should You give me modesty, do not take away my dignity.

Ya Allah, teach me to love others as I love myself, and teach me to judge myself as I judge others. Teach me that forgiveness is one of the greatest steps toward strength.

O Allah, do not curse me with arrogance should I be successful, and neither with despair and hopelessness should I fail. O Allah, remind me always that failure is the trial that precedes success. Should you take away my wealth, do let me keep my hopefulness. And should I fail, do let me keep my power of determination. And should You take away the blessings of good health, do let me keep the blessing of faith.

Ya Allah, should I have harmed others, give me the courage to apologize. And should others harm me, bless me with the courage to forgive. Should I forget You Allah, I beg that You should not exclude me from Your compassion and clemency, for You are the greatest, the vanquisher, and the all powerful over all things.

Amin.

O Allah, we ask You especially this week for blessings on Khadijah, and for a complete recovery for her. We ask You to make our *du'ā* strong, and her intention strong, and to bring her home with increased health and long life and fulfillment. *Amin*.