

FORTY FORCES OF BEING SERVANT, FORTY LESSONS FOR LIFE

(A window to Abu-Hamze supplication,
commemorating the 1400 birthday of imam Sajjad)

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The **supplication of Abu Hamza al-Thumali** is a Du'a attributed to Ali Zayn al-Abidin. Abu Hamzah Al-Thumali, who was a companion of three Shia Imams, received it from Ali Zayn al-Abidin and was the principal narrator of the work. This supplication is mentioned in *Eqbal al-a'mal* – a work in Arabic authored by Sayyed Ibn Tawus that included Du'as, prayers, and practices which were recommended to be performed at specific times of the year. It was said that Ali Zayn al-Abidin recited the supplication every evening or dawn during Ramadan. Thābit ibn Safiyya, known as Abu Hamza al-Thumali, descends from the Safiyye family. Born in Kufa, al-Thumali was a companion of three Shia Imams – Ali Zayn al-Abidin, Muhammad al-Baqir, and Ja'far al-Sadiq. Although there is little information about his birth, it is believed that he lived in the seventh and eighth centuries. Therefore, it is possible that he was a companion of Imam Kadhim, also.

Abu Hamza al-Thumali had great esteem for Imams, and they apparently considered him trustworthy. Ali al-Ridha, the eighth Imam of Shia, stated about him: "Abu Hamza in his time was similar to Salman in the prophet's time." Ahmad ibn Ali al-Najashi, a grand

scholar of Shia, said: "He was the best of our companions and the most reliable of them in narration and tradition." He wrote several works about Islamic subjects such as the Kitab fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim (an exegesis of the Quran), Kitab al-Nawadir (a book on the rare things), Kitab al-Zuhd (on asceticism) and Al-Risalah al-Huquq (about all kinds of rights). He died in the year 150 A.H.

The supplication touches on following subjects:

- a. Awareness of Allah
 1. The inevitability of creatures in the dominion of Allah
 2. Knowing Allah by himself
 3. Allah Being guidance
- b. An explanation of ways of bills and salvation for man
 1. Resorting to the Mercy of Allah
 2. Practicing moral virtues and avoiding moral vices
- c. Du'a
 1. Invocation
 2. Salawat
 3. Help request
- d. Perseverance (repeated sentence)
- e. A guilty plea
- f. Humility and modesty

Part one- a general look at “pray and supplication”

God created mankind with need, poverty, and weakness, then He gave him boundless blessings, reminded human beings of being trustee not owner of these blessings.

Mankind has seen this truth in his life, and gradually finds himself the owner of these blessings and he makes change in them as he likes deliberately, and forget this ownership is limited, possible by the order of God Who is the highest Owner. This is He Who increases His blessings, changes or takes them back.

Birth and death which are the simplest process of life are seen by everyone. God puts this simple but important truth in front of us. To understand this truth, human beings do not need any prior knowledge or attempt or long contemplation; by looking at birth and death, people can realize they come into existence from nonexistence, without their will.

All people can see the Wise God puts the clothes of creation on them and shows them the way of salvation.

People are witnessing different colorful periods of creation from childhood to young age to old ages and finally they should surrender to death.

Any person in this long trip faces joys and sorrows which some of them are out of his desire or ability. Illnesses, inabilities, sorrows, and joys and creations are all together. All these are signs of this truth that above these “effects”, there should be “cause of all effects”.

All these things means limitations of human beings. When human beings contemplate on themselves by the eyes of wisdom, and see the world inside and around with purified eyes from selfishness, they will find this limitation is in their favor. The question is how it is possible to be limitless in this limited world, live unlimitedly, while all the time we are in the cradle of the world, and a ceiling casting shade on us. The least benefit of these limitations is to learn leaving arrogance, to know our limitations, and respect others.

In the mirror of these limitations we can see God by the eyes of heart, a kind of recognition which is not limited by any means, though God Himself assigned limitations to everything and puts everything in its special circle.

This truth which is higher than skies causes human beings raise his hands to the needless God and in this process the connection of ashamed servant of God

with merciful God will shape.

This will illuminate inside of mankind, opens the doors of unseen world to him, takes him to the worlds that he can see unseen.

There he can join beauty of flowers, majesty of mountains, peace of rivers, ups and downs of waves, And praise God harmoniously with them.

Then man expresses his old promise in a wish, a wish which is needless of words, a wish from inside, which the movement of tongue and pens is a realization of it, a wish which has a world of unspoken words.

His God shows His signs inside and outside of him and man facing the beauty of His creations bows down wisely and prostrates sagely.

And “prayer” comes into existence.

Prayer is the need of human beings. A need which is felt in his inside even before getting to know religions. His inner tendency invites him to this and pushes him towards it; at least to gratitude that God Who gives Him these boundless blessings.

And who can rebel against this inside wish? Except one who pretends being blind, closes his eyes to the sun and undo his ties with the world.

The content of these verses is the interpretation of feelings of creatures by

the words of God which is the most eloquent description:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

“Your Lord has said: ‘Call on Me and I will answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me shall enter Gehenna utterly abject.”

قُلْ مَا يَعْجَبُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا

“Say: ‘My Lord cares little for you if it was not for your supplication, indeed you have belied (the Messenger and the Koran) so it (the punishment) will be fastened.’”

Religion and authentic religious sources - Quran and traditions - are the threshold towards the true religious practices and the way towards this vast spirituality world. How can human beings enter this territory? How to pass the way? What is his target? What should ask for? How? By which words?

These questions in an atmosphere where we should be “just eyes to see and just ears to hear” are key questions.

Lets see one more time: the connection of an all-needly person to needless God: How are they related? Here is when logic gets help from God’s proof, who are infallibles, These two messengers of God, logic and infallibles, like two wings, can fly sealed-to-earth mankind to the sky of meaning, lead him to a the highest point

which is not seen or heard, but perceived.

Infallibles opened the ways of prayer in front of people:

a. In their practice, they show real honor is to worship God and be humble in His court. Midnight cries, Quran recitation, and prays are evident of this claim. Imam Husayn on the day of Ashoora, asked only one thing from Omavi troop, he asked for a night cease fire, to pray and worship God.

b. They taught people how to worship, decoding the secrets of why prays are not answered. Infallibles show others that how people should ask God politely.

c. They teach the texts of prays to people, whether those they read themselves or those advised to others. Some of these prays become famous among people, like Komeyl, Samat, Iftitah,... and some of them which have no names and are mentioned in authentic books. These assets are gifts of skies for mankind who is tied to the earth and his missed treasury is among them.

In each of these fields is a vast world of words, but here, we suffice to a pray from imam Sajjad, by the excuse of his 1400 year of his birthday. This prayer is **Abu Hamza al-Thumali**.

Second part- a review over the content of Abu Hamza Thumali prayer

1. This prayer is a pray that Abu Hamza Thumali – of special companions of Imam- has narrated from that imam. The text of this prayer has been included in the books of some Shia tradition narrators in last decades, such as: Sheikh Tousi (d.1067) in Mesbah al-Mutehajjid, vol.2, p.582; Sayyid ibn Tawos (d.1265) in Iqbal al-Amal, vol.1, p.67; Ibrahim ibn Ali Kafami (d.1499) in his two books: al-bold al-Amin p.205, Junatul Aman, p.588, Sheikh Hurr Ameli in Vasaal al-Shia, vol.8, p.23, Allameh Mohammad Baqir Majlisi in Bahar Al-Anwar, vol.95, p.82.

Among them, the narration of ibn Tawos is supported by an authentic documentation which is another proof on its authenticity. The text of this prayer has been included in Mafatih Al-Jinan by the well-known tradition narrator of the last century, Sheikh Abbas Qumi.

2. This prayer starts with sentences which include the answer to the old unsolved puzzle of Jabr and Tafwiz. According to them:

- a. the foundation of goodness is just God. He helps people to reach goodness, without forcing them to accept it or not accept this goodness.
- b. human beings can choose good or bad willingly.

c. a benevolent person in his good deeds is not needless of God's Favor.

d. an evil doer can not overcome God by choosing bad actions.

In this way the problem of Jabr is solved, as mankind has freedom in his will. It can also solve the problem of Tafviz as human beings can not abuse blessings of God to overcome Him. Therefore just a way left which is “ امر بين الامرین ” : the third way is : God has given power and will to human beings, and gets human beings to be owner of them, while at the same time God has absolute possession over them and whenever He wants He can extend or decrease people's possession, limit or even take back. Any way, He makes people responsible to the extent of anyone's ability and possession and not more and never oppresses anyone.

3. God is close to His servants. Closer than them to themselves. He is not hidden from them.

Now this is human being who can choose: being excluded from God's court or staying there.

4. No one has anything from himself to be deserved receiving blesses of God or his prayers being accepted by God or being forgiven by God.

Mankind before this creation was absolute nothing, it means he does not exist at all, let alone has a request. All creations are kindness of God and His Grace, therefore

mankind should not be proud of his belongings, but be aware they are from God and he is trustee, otherwise he will lose those blessings.

5. Backrest of mankind is the true belief regarding the unity of God, sound belief and honesty in actions. These are the base and the backrest. Therefore in this pray we say, "oh God! But I do not deny your being God." Here men request to be forgiven by God. We learn to talk to God in this way from this prayer.

6. The guide to God is gnosis. If God did not give this internal gnosis, no one can go towards Him. Imam Sajjad said, «بنورك» means just and only we accept guidance in the ray of your Light.

Description of God in our language and in our tongue is not possible. He Himself can only describe Him. What can a limited one know about an unlimited one? Whatever we say for the greatness of God, God is more, in a way we can not even imagine. Therefore to describe Him we should be silent or say as much as He teaches us not more. This lesson from imam Sajjad is very valuable that he said, «أنت كما تقول و فوق ما نقول»

7. "escaping from God to God" is what this prayer teaches us. (هارب منك اليك). Means escaping from Justice of God to Fazl of God. Justice of God is in the way that no one can tolerate it. If God wants to face people by it, no blessings will remain at the hand of people, because no one is

claimant and all are owing to Him. But when it gets to his Fazl, His bounty is unlimited. Because of this in Quran we read, «واستلوا الله من فضله»

8. In a sentence (فما ندرى ما نشكر), there are four things we should thank God for :

- a. good deeds which make us famous.
- b. covering and hiding our bad deeds.
- c. numerous blessings which are given to us.
- d. hardship which are being hold back from us.

Who is the one never faced one of these examples in his life?

9. Good deeds and our worship, no matter how much they are, are nothing in front of His blessings; human being is sinking in the vast ocean of his blessings. Even that pray is a blessing of God which needs another thank. Therefore, human beings are also in debt. They should realized this truth and believe in it. This knowledge is the soul of pray.

10. Kindness of God to human beings is so indefinite that bad or evil actions of people does not halt His kindness. If it was supposed sins of people hinder the way of kindness of God to people, no one can be included in His Kindness.

11. From this prayer, we learn that in the sweet moments of praying, pray for all (alive or dead, present ones or absent ones, men or women) specially our parents who

have great right over us. This teaching is explanation of a point in Surah Hamd that each Muslim repeats at least ten times in his pray, “اهدنا الصراط المستقيم” it means to pray for all not just yourself.

Imam Sajjad said in his pray:

“أعطني سؤلى فى نفسى و أهلى و والدئى و ولدى و أهل حزانتى و إخوانى فىك”

12. Imam Sajjad mentioned eleven reasons of reluctance to pray. Some are like this:

God deports him from His court for some reasons, like he does not respect right of God, tells lie, does not thank God for the blessings, does not spend his time with good people.

Noticing these factors and keeping away from them has a great role in the destiny of human being.

13. Imam Sajjad counted 18 blessings of God to name a few. Otherwise blessings of God are not countable. It is good to mention some of them here:

I was little, He grew me up, I was ignorant, he taught me, I was misled, He showed me the way, I was low, He elevated me, I was insecure, He gave me security, I was hungry, thirsty, naked, and poor, He changed my weakness to honor, I was sick, He healed me, I requested, He answered me, He hid my sins, I was nomad, He gave me shelter.

14. God’s kindness gives time to sinful people to compensate their mistakes.

“Hilm” of God means He does not hurry to punish. He hides sins in the way that sometimes people think He is not aware or does not see them.

In front of such a kind God with all these kindness, being ingratitude and sinful is not fair. On the other hand, it is good to hold such a tolerance facing other people.

15. With all of my sins and still committing sins, if I am living on my own, I will be hopeless. While I have a Merciful God, and there is no place for hopelessness. The Mercy of God is superior to anything and fades all hopelessness. Every human being can realize this, when he sees kindness of God from one hand and his actions on the other hand. But sins no matter how big are not bigger than kindness of God.

16. Remembrance of God can keep hearts alive. In the most difficult time of life, this is the breeze of kindness which pats failed man and gives him a second start. Of course, this reviving water reaches his heart when he avoids sins, those sins which halt obedience of God. Because of this, we say oh God! Make a long distance between sins and I.

17. The capital of each person is his hope in God’s favor. I say, “oh God! I call you by the old hope I have. That hope lightens up our heart? Who is the one not seeing this kindness in his life?”

18. Sometimes human beings’ bad behavior will deprive them of this rain of

blessing. For example, not to be patient.

Human beings should believe that God is kinder than their parents. Therefore, He postpones giving them what they want to its proper time.

Abu Hamza prayer is the lesson of life from the tongue of the chief of worshippers.

19. Human beings should accept his poverty and weakness. This is the order of logic that all people in each situation without any special knowledge can easily realize this poverty. This logical acceptance, is the capital of human beings which is means of men to request God who is needless and the most powerful One.

20. Hope in kindness of God can save human beings. It means not to neglect God even for a moment. (إلى معروفك أديم نظري)

This hope can save us from hell. (فلا تحرقني بالنار و أنت موضع أملی).

Confessing to our sins can keep us from hell. Confession only to God not to people is a basic path towards God's satisfaction. Confession to poverty, loneliness, inability, ignorance. In all periods (lifetime, grave, resurrection day,...) and at the same time hope in the kindness of God.

21. God hides people's sins, though His knowledge is precise, with no mistake, and aware of every ones' intention. From one hand, He is Creator and does not need men. But at the same time «سَنَارُ الْعُيُوبِ»

(He is coverer of sins.)

People should learn from this attribute of God. While people usually express their ideas when:

a. they are not informed of all details.

b. are not aware of people's intentions and do not know the background. If you consider the background of a person, his behavior may seem fair and logical.

c. people all need each other. Basically life is formed by people's attachment.

But with all these things why do people not learn to hid mistakes of others and disregard them?

22. Shortcoming in prayer is always attached to us even when we are able to thank God, and for this ability of thanking even we should thank God. At this time men have three responsibilities:

a. accept this inability in himself

b. accept this shortcoming can be solved by God only.

c. he should not reveal his mistakes to all.

23. Bounty of God is so vast that even those who do not ask Him or even those who deny Him are not deprived of His Bounty. So how can a believer who is even sinful be hopeless?

But reaching this Kindness of Him has a way. And that is pray. Men by pray knocks at the door of His house, while is

assure when they knock, someone will answer, whether he gets his desire soon or late. Anyway, men should not get tired from praying so as not to cut his connection with the world of lightness and not to harm himself. It is better to leave our affairs to God and to take care of our responsibilities.

We should learn from what infallibles – prophets and imams- ask God for.

24. If anyone thinks bad about God, the problem is in his mind not God. God neither does bother by these disrespect, and nor be bothered by multitude requests of people. But He likes the voice of praying people, though He does not need any of them. People could not leave any chance to get closer to God. Resurrection day is the day of «تغابن»; everyone is regretful and feels deceived if they were satisfied with a little worship.

25. Against those Sufism who do not like comfortable life, imam Sajjad teaches us in this pray to ask God for long life, good deeds, pure life, happiness, comfortable life, security, good family and children, health, obedience. This teaching is the border between religious thought and Sufism.

26. paying serious attention the Qadr night, as a unique night in year. It is so valuable that in this pray we request God to increase our knowledge concerning this night not to lose it. Ask God to give us blessings, health, security, ...

27. asking Hajj is what is what repeatedly mentioned in this pray. This is what its value is not recognized completely yet. It is not limited only to a trip but is a journey from heart to sky, from earth to skies. Therefore, we should ask God to understand its value.

28. one of the important requests we have from God is to return people's favor to them. The duties we have towards people and we are not aware. The consequences of this can make our life hard.

29. in this prayer, we learn to take refugee to God from three groups:

a. those who hold hatred towards us and are our enemy, are jealous or ask for more than they deserve.

b. Satan with all his fans and troops come to the field to stop people from the right path. Imam Sajjad in his pray talked to God about this in details.

d. Cruel rulers are present at any time, who are giving golden opportunities to people for their perfection. Imam Sajjad in the fourteen prayer of Sahifah talked about it and asked God to turn their animosity away.

the important point is no matter how powerful they are, their power is nothing in front of God. Now, if God gives them time to reveal their nature to others, is based on His Hikmah, including He wants to test people how they use their power. This is one of the Hikmah of God which is

a goal of creation. Another Hikmah is to draw people to His court and get them to ask Him which is a ladder for them to get closer to God.

30. Prayer to God is an invaluable asset. Satan is greedy to steal it and there are some holes on the path of pray which ruin it. In Abu-Hamza prayer, four of them are referred to:

A. hypocrisy, it means men like to show off their good deeds and let others see.

B. hearing. Means men like others hear about his good deeds.

C. arrogance

D. violating others' rights

31. To accompany infallibles we should request God. This companionship is not only limited to this world but in hereafter is also needed.

32. It is feasible that someone's report card as he makes mistakes. But this report card should not stop him.

33. God's forgiveness does not only belong to good people but also sinful people. His Grace braces all. Like water which wet stones and trees both on its way.

34. One of the beautiful lessons of Abu Hamza pray is to address God and say: Oh God! If you take me to heaven, your Prophet would be happy and if you throw him into fire, Satan will become happy. I know Prophet is your friend and Satan is

your enemy. And I know you -God- like the happiness of your Prophet more than happiness of your enemies.

35. Heart is the house of God. If we enter anyone else but God inside, it is not true. Love of parents, children and good people are in the path of God but kindness with enemies of God is to abuse this home. From this prayer, we learn to ask God fill our heart with love of Himself, fear of Him, interest in His Book, faith and eager.

36. We learn from imam Sajjad that to ask friendly visit with God, to live our life in bilateral friendship, not only in this world but also hereafter. We should feel relief from this visit. Not only do we love His accompany, but He also likes our accompany. This is what God says, "He loves them and they love Him." And "God is satisfied with them and they are satisfied with God."

It is clear "vising God" is not by eyes. Because God is not material; it means to see favor and Bless of God in ourselves.

37. From Abu Hamza pray we learn to ask for unchangeable faith, in all life time, and do not lose it in different tests. Fake faith will parish in the ups and downs of life.

The point is God in His book talks of two types of faith: "permanent and impermanent". In another verse, He talks of those who worships God and if on their way a benefit reaches them, they will stick to the way but if they are tested, they will return from their way.

In this pray we ask God not to put us in this group but put us among those we praise them like this:

«لا تأخذه في الله لومة لائم»

Do not fear from any blame in the path of God.

38. The guest of God is enjoying God's blessing. At this pray, he explains his wishes to God. Some of these wishes are as follows:

- a. prudence in religion
- b. deep understanding of God's decree
- c. contemplate on justice of God
- d. two wings of blessings of God
- e. a kind of fear which stops us from sins.

A brief explanation on each wish

Religion is the most invaluable treasure that has existed in the hands of people since long time ago, regardless of being the follower of which religion, even by a historical look this fact becomes clear. For this, Satan and his followers and friends do their best to put their hands on this subject. They do this tactfully and lots of people absorbed by them. Meanwhile God who sends a religion for human beings sends guides for people, introduces them to people and asks people to join them and follow them.

39. we should take refuge to God from some attributes: laziness, reluctance, obsession with negative thoughts,

improper fear, stinginess, cruelties, poverty, different plights, hidden or open evilness, a heart which does not know contentment, a heart which is not humble, a pray which is not heard, a good deed which is not beneficial.

40. The pray of Abu Hamza ends with beautiful sentences. Imam Sajjad reminded some orders of God to us which are lessons of life:

a. *O Allah, You have ordered us in Your book that we should overlook those who wrong us and we have wronged ourselves (by sinning) so pardon our conduct.*

b. *we are And You commanded us not turn away the needy who knock on our doors and I hereby come to You needy, so turn me not away until You fulfill my need.*

c. *You have ordered us to act nicely to those under our authorities and You hold authority over us, so liberate our necks from the hell fire.*

d. *Oh God! You yourself teaches all these things to us, so why should I compare? Basically you do whatever you teaches to us.*

The third part: some final points

The Abu-hamza prayer – with all its majesty- is only a piece of imam Sajjad's vast knowledge. To familiarize with other aspects of this heavenly charter, we

should refer to other words of his holiness. Therefore we only draw your attention to two points:

First: here we refer to this fact that only God should be asked for and no one else deserves to be our hope.

To complete this, it should be said that trust in God has only one face: revoking to the infallibles. This is the message of Sura Maede, verse 35 that **“to seek the means by which you come to Him”** comes hand in hand with **“to have fear from God”**. In fact, we can say revoking is the practical interpretation of Taqwa (fear from God) and is the other way of what God says **“accompanied truthful people.”**

Invocation has several aspects, here we refer to three aspects: the practical aspect, scientific aspect, supplication aspect.

In scientific aspect, we should learn science of religion just from Ahlul Bayt. This is the decree of logic, because they speak based on heavenly science which is immaculate from any mistakes. It is not “acquiring” by human beings who usually “test and trial”. Therefore, Ali (a.s.) told Komayl,

“يا كميل لا تأخذ إلا عنا تكن منا”

The necessity of accompanying Ahlul Bayt is because we should get science of religion from Ahlul Bayt. In practical aspect, this invocation means following their ways and avoiding the behavior of enemies. In an authentic Ziyarah which is

famous as Ziyarah Aminullah we read, **“Oh God! help me to follow the trends of your infallibles and avoid the trends of your enemies.”** Therefore, it cannot be claimed we love Ahlul Bayt but do not try to get closer to Ahlul Bayt. The lessons of life which we learn from Abu-Hamza prayer can be our guide in this way.

In invocation aspect, we should not forget that we do not have a great report card of actions, and in fact, we go towards God with a bad report card of actions which according to Abu Hamza builds up a barrier between God and us. What should we do in this situation?

Quran answers us by the tongue of brothers of Jusef, when after their big mistake, they told their father, Jacob, **“oh father! Ask forgiveness for us from God!”** and his holiness not only stopped them from this but also promised them **“to ask for forgiveness from God soon.”**

Invocation has detailed discussions in each of its aspects but here we suffice to this issue mentioned in Abu-Hamza prayer. In this prayer we read, **“oh God! I seek invocation to you by the handle of Islam, I rely on you by the respect of Quran, and because of my feelings towards Prophet ... I hope getting closer to you.”**

I finish this article with this point that fulfilling this prayer in our time depends on praying for the reappearance of imam Mahdi (may God hasten his

reappearance). His reappearance is the problem solving movement for all problems of life. In addition, it can pave the way to real worship of God and can make all spiritual requests of this prayer happen.

Various traditions from imam Sajjad regarding rewards for praying for imam Mahdi's reappearance and virtues in awaiting for him are evidences on this claim. For example, Imam Sajjad's prayer for imam Mahdi's success. His companions confirmed that imam Sajjad prayed for imam Mahdi on Arafah day and now this pray is in Sahifa Sajjadiyah. It is worth mentioning this pray was recited one and a half century before Imam's birth. So how heavy would be the responsibility of those who are living contemporary with Imam Mahdi?

Therefore, an individual who addresses his God by the words of Abuhamza, in each line of this prayer, should ask for reappearance of Imam Mahdi. By the hope that his holiness notices this praying servant and his prayers are fulfilled.