**The First Gleam**

**Taking refuge in God with the supplication of the Prophet Jonah**

**In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.**

*Eventually he called out in the veils of darkness (formed of the belly of the fish, the sea, and dark, rainy night):*

لَۤا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ۠ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

*“There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves).”* (21:87)

*He called out to his Lord, saying, “Truly, affliction has visited me (so that I can no longer worship You as I must); and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”* (21:83)

*Still, if they turn away from you (O Messenger), say: “God is sufficient for me; there is no deity but He. In Him have I put my trust, and He is the Lord of the Supreme Throne (as the absolute Ruler and Sustainer of the universe and all creation, Who maintains and protects it).”* (9:129)

*God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Guardian is He!* (3:173)

*There is no power and strength save with God, the All-High, the All- Mighty.*

*O the Everlasting, You are the Everlasting, O the Everlasting, You are the Everlasting!*

*For those who believe, it is guidance and healing.* (41:44)

That follows are six *Gleams*, each of which describes one of the many lights emanating from the blessed verses and phrases above. Reciting these verses and phrases each thirty-three times, particularly between the Evening Prayer and the Nightfall Prayer is of great merit.

The supplication of the Prophet Jonah, upon him and our Prophet be peace and blessings, is a most powerful supplication, and a most effective means to receive an answer to our prayers from God. What follows is a summary of the well-known experience of the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace.

He was cast into the sea, and a large fish swallowed him. The sea was stormy, and the night turbulent and dark; there was no sign of hope from any direction. While in that situation, he prayed:

*There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves).*

This supplication was a swift means of salvation for him. The power of his prayer lies in what follows:

In that situation there was no apparent means or causes to which Jonah could have had recourse for salvation; he was in need of one who could command the whale and the sea, and the night and the sky if he were to be saved. The night, the sea, and the whale were united against him. Only one who could subject all three of these to their command could bring Jonah forth on the shore of salvation. Even if all of creation had become Jonah’s servants and helpers, this would have been of no avail.

This means that apparent means and causes have no part of their own in the production of results. Since Jonah saw with the eye of certainty that there was no refuge other than the Causer of Causes, and as he, through his utmost conviction of God’s absolute Oneness and His dominion over the universe, fully perceived that in addition to His overall manifestations that reign supreme over all of creation, God also has manifestations particular to each thing and being as the All-Compassionate, his supplication served to be a means for the night, the sea, and the whale to be subjected to him. Through the light of his conviction of the Oneness of God, Who has absolute control over everything, the belly of the whale became a submarine for him, and the awesome sea roaring with mountain-like waves became a peaceful plain, a pleasant place for an excursion. His supplication, based on and proclaiming God’s Oneness, also served for the sky to be cleared of all clouds and for the moon to shine over his head like a lantern. Those things that had been pressing him from all sides, threatening him, now showed to him a friendly face. So, he reached the shore of salvation, where under a gourd plant he fully perceived the great extent to which his Lord had favored him.

Now we are in a situation one hundred times more awful than that in which the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace, first found himself. Our night is the future. When we look upon our future with heedlessness towards our religious responsibilities, it is a hundred times darker and more fearful than his night. Our sea is this moving, unstable earth. Each wave of this sea bears on it thousands of dead bodies, and so is a thousand times more frightening than his sea. Our fish consists of the lusts and caprices of our evil-commanding soul, which strive to destroy our eternal life. Such a fish is a thousand times more harmful than his. For his fish could have destroyed a hundred-year lifespan, whereas ours seeks to destroy a life that will last hundreds of millions of years.

This being our true state, we should do as the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace, did; turning away from all means and causes, we should take refuge directly in our Lord, Who is the Causer of Causes. We should say:

*There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves).*

We should understand and know with a certainty which comes from observation that only He, our Lord, Who keeps the future under His command, the world under His absolute control, and our evil-commanding souls under His direction, can remove from us the harm of the future, this world, and the lusts and caprices of our evil-commanding souls, all of which are united against us because of our neglect and misguidance.

What agent is there other than the Creator of the heavens and earth who can know whatever occurs in our heart, down to its most subtle and secret thoughts, and illuminate the future for us by establishing the Hereafter, saving us from the countless suffocating waves of the world? Nothing, no one other than the Necessarily Existent One can in any way help us or save us; we can only be saved with His will and permission.

As this was the case, the result of Jonah’s prayers was that the whale became a mount or a vessel for him and the sea became a peaceful plain; the night was serenely lit for him by the moon. We too should then make the same supplication:

*There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves).*

With the sentence *There is no deity but You*, we should ask for God’s mercy upon our future; with the phrase *All-Glorified are You* we should ask for mercy upon our world; with the phrase *Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves*), we should ask for mercy upon our souls. Thus, our future may be illuminated with the light of belief in an atmosphere that is lit by the Qur’an, and the awe and dread of our night may be transformed into serenity and joy. Also, while we travel this earth amidst the waves of years and centuries, a sea on which countless beings have embarked, and one out of which countless ones have been thrown into nothingness through the alternation of life and death, we should board the vessel of the truth of Islam, constructed in the dockyards of the wise Qur’an, so that we may fulfill our duty of life on the shore of safety and salvation. The tempest and turbulence of the sea will become a series of pleasing, ever renewed spectacles, like the changing scenes on a screen, and instead of instilling fearful loneliness and dread they will enlighten our minds and urge us to take a reflective look on everything around us and to learn from the lessons. By virtue of the guidance of the Qur’an and the education that the Criterion of Truth and Falsehood gives, our soul will no longer ride us, but will instead become our mount. As we ride it, it will serve us to attain eternal life.

In short, humans have a comprehensive nature; as we suffer from and shiver with the infection of malaria, so also do we suffer from the quakes and tremors of the earth, and will also suffer from the mighty convulsions that all of creation will undergo on the Day of Resurrection. As we fear a microscopic organism, we also fear a shooting star that appears among the heavenly bodies. As we love our home, we also love the entire world. As we love our little garden, we also love the infinite and eternal Paradise, and we love this ardently. Therefore, such a being’s object of worship, the Lord, our refuge, our savior, and our goal can only be the One in Whose grasp of Power is the whole universe, and under Whose command are both the atoms and planets, at one and the same time. Human beings therefore need to constantly pray, saying like Jonah, upon him be peace:

لَۤا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ۠ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

*There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves). (Anbiya, 21/87)*

All-Glorified are You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. Surely You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.