139005 - Is there a specific du‘aa’ to help one understand?

the question

Is there a specific du‘aa’ to help one with understand lessons, for students who do not learn easily? Someone advised me to say this du‘aa’: “O Allah, bestow on us Your wisdom and bestow on us Your mercy, O Possessor of majesty and honour).”

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It should be noted that what will help most with understanding is two things:

1. Taking real measures to understand, by listening attentively, focusing, memorising, reflecting and asking about anything one finds difficult. These are very important matters, that may be difficult to apply in the beginning, but they will become the best means of helping oneself to understand if the learner practices doing them and gets used to them, then they will become second nature to him.

2. Sincerely turning to Allah, may He be exalted, and asking Him to help one understand and learn. Knowledge is light that Allah casts into one’s heart, but if the heart is far from Allah, he will not be ready to receive this light. As for the heart that is close to Allah, by means of worship, love, repentance, praying for forgiveness and turning to Him, it deserves to attain divine help in understanding.

Ibn al-Qayyim stated in his great book I‘laam al-Muwaqqi‘een a number of things that will help the mufti to understand and comprehend the true nature of matters and new issues with which he is faced, which any seeker of knowledge and truth may use.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The righteous mufti, if he is faced with a new issue, should feel his real need in all situations – not only in the academic sense – for the One Who could inspire him with the correct answer, the One Who teaches what is good, the One Who guides hearts. He should ask Him to guide him to the right answer and help him to come up with the correct response, guiding him to His ruling that He has prescribed for His slaves with regard to this issue. If he knocks at that door, then he has knocked at the door of success, for the one who hopes for the help of his Lord is the most deserving that He should not deprive him of it. Once he finds this aspiration in his heart, this is a sign of success. In that case he has to turn to and look at the source of guidance, the basis of soundness and the foundation of wisdom, which is the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the reports of the Sahaabah. Then he should strive his utmost to work out the ruling on that new issue from those texts. Once he has attained it, he may tell others about it, but if he is still not sure, he should hasten to repent, seek forgiveness and remember Allah much. For knowledge is the light of Allah which He casts into the heart of His slave, but desires and sins are strong winds that extinguish that light, or almost extinguish it; at least they will inevitably weaken it.

I saw Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah sanctify his soul) when he was faced with difficult issues for which he could not find an answer and it was very hard for him. He would flee from them and repent, pray for forgiveness, ask Allah for help, turn to Him, ask Him to inspire him to find the right answer and to bestow upon him from the treasures of His mercy. Then divine help would start to reach him persistently, and he would soon find the answer through divine inspiration. Undoubtedly whoever is guided to realise his need for Allah and express it, and feel that need strongly in his heart, is indeed most fortunate, and whoever is deprived of that will be deprived of any achievement and any help. Once a person combines this sense of need with striving his utmost to find out the truth about an issue, then he is following the straight path. That is the grace of Allah, which He bestows upon whomever He wills, for Allah is the Possessor of abundant grace. End quote.

I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een (6/67-68); annotated by Mashhoor Hasan Salmaan.

Ibn 'Abd al-Haadi (may Allah have mercy on him) quoted from Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah his

words:

I keep wondering and thinking about an issue or situation, then I ask Allah, may He be exalted, for forgiveness a thousand times, more or less, until I feel comfort in my heart, then the confusion concerning that issue is soon resolved.

He said: Sometimes in that situation I may be in the marketplace or the mosque, or on the road, or in the school, but that does not prevent me from remembering Allah and seeking His forgiveness, and persisting in that until I attain what I am seeking. End quote.

Al-'Uqood ad-Durriyyah (p. 6)

Secondly:

We have not come across any specific supplication attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that it is Sunnah to recite when seeking proper understanding of an issue. Rather there are adhkaar that were narrated from some of the early generation, or that are based on the interpretation of some Prophetic hadiths, or are based on some good supplications that are mentioned in those hadiths. Even though these supplications are not limited to the situation mentioned, reciting it in that situation is based on the understanding and ijtihaad of the early scholars who did that.

If someone recites these adhkaar and du'aas that were narrated from the early generations, without believing that this is something specific to this particular situation, or that reciting it in this particular situation is Sunnah, or that it has a specific virtue, there is nothing wrong with that.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

It is appropriate for the mufti to frequently recite the supplication from the saheeh hadith: Allaahumma Rabba Jibreela wa Mikaa'eela wa Israafeel, faatir al-samawaati wa'l-ard, 'aalim al-ghaybi wa'l-shahaadah, anta tahkumu bayna 'ibaadika fima kaanu fihi yukhtalifoon, ihdini lima'khtulifa fihi min al-haqq bi idhnika, innaka tahdi man tasha' ila siraatin mustaqeem (O Allaah, Lord of Jibreel (Gabriel), Michael and Israfeel, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the

unseen and the seen, You are the Knower of the unseen and the seen, You will judge between Your slaves concerning that wherein they differ. Guide me to the truth of that wherein they differed by Your leave, for You guide whomsoever You will to the Straight Path). Our shaykh – namely Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah – often used to recite this. If he came across difficult issues, he would say: O Teacher of Ibraaheem, teach me. And he would often seek divine help with these words, following the example of Mu'aadh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him).

Some of the early generations used to say when issuing fatwas: Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us, for verily You are the All-Knowing , Most Wise.

Mak-hool used to say: Laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah (There is no power and no strength except with Allah).

Maalik used to say: Ma sha Allah, laa quwwata illa Billaah al-'Aliy al-'Azeem (As Allah wills; there is no strength except with Allah, the Most High, the Most Great).

Some of them used to say: "O my Lord! Open for me my chest (grant me self-confidence, contentment, and boldness); And ease my task for me; And make loose the knot (the defect) from my tongue, (i.e. remove the incorrectness from my speech), That they understand my speech " [Ta-Ha 20:25-28].

Some of them used to say: O Allah, help me, guide me, correct me, enable me to attain what is right and earn reward, and forgive me if I make a mistake or am deprived of an answer.

Some of them used to recite al-Faatihah.

We have tried that ourselves, and we found it to be among the most effective means of finding the right answer.

What matters in all of that is having a good intention, sincerity and a proper aim.

Imam Ahmad was asked: If it is too difficult for us to come to you and ask you, who can we ask after you? He said: Ask 'Abd al-Wahhaab al-Warraaq, for he is most qualified to be guided to the

right answer.

Imam Ahmad followed the advice of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him): Come close to the mouths of those who are obedient to Allah and listen to what they say, because matters are made clear to them.

That is because their hearts are close to Allah. The closer the heart is to Allah, the more the confusion and distractions that result from bad deeds will be removed from the heart, and the more perfect and strong will be the light by means of which he sees the truth. The further away the heart is from Allah, the more he is exposed to confusion and distraction, and the weaker will be the light by means of which he could see the truth. Knowledge is light that Allah casts into the heart, by means of which a person may distinguish between right and wrong.

Maalik said to ash-Shaafa‘i (may Allah be pleased with them both) the first time he met him: I see that Allah has cast light into your heart, so do not extinguish it with the darkness of sin.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “O you who believe! If you obey and fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion ((to judge between right and wrong)” [al-Anfaal 8:29]. Part of that criterion is the light by means of which a person may differentiate between truth and falsehood. The closer his heart is to Allah, the more perfect his criterion will be. And Allah is the source of strength. End quote.

I‘laam al-Muwaqqi‘een (6/197-199)

And Allah knows best.