

THE WORD THAT WASN'T

BOOK II

THE CATALOGUE

Every Fear Named. Every Fear Detonated. None Surviving.

The Four Prayers Applied to Every Fear Known to the Human Race

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ، يَشْتَدُّ عَلَيْنَا الْبَلَاءُ وَيُضَاعَفُ لَنَا الْأَجْرُ

“Indeed, that is how it is for us — our trials are made more severe, and our rewards are multiplied.” — The Prophet ☺, upon him be peace

THE WEAPONS

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تُطَعِيَ عَرْجِي جَارِي، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَغْرَبَ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجِي جَارِي، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

“Indeed, that is how it is for us — our trials are made more severe, and our rewards are multiplied.

*When you can read that sentence and feel joy,
dunya has ended for you.”*

INTRODUCTION

How to Read This Book

On the method, the repetition, and why neither will relent

Book I built the case. It demonstrated, through philosophical examination and through the precise architecture of four ancient prayers, that fear has no structural basis. That its two requirements — a bounded self and an independent threatening power — cannot be found anywhere upon honest examination. That every fear, traced all the way back, leads not to an external threat but to the only power there is. And that the only power there is is also the only protection there is.

This book does not repeat that case. It applies it.

There is a difference between understanding that all fears share the same structure and having that understanding reach the place where specific fears live. A person can read Book I, agree with every word, and still feel their stomach contract when the tax notice arrives. Still feel their chest tighten at the doctor's words. Still feel the old familiar dread when the crowd turns against them. Not because the argument was wrong. Because understanding and seeing are not the same thing. The argument reached the mind. The specific fear lives somewhere the argument has not yet visited.

This book visits every room.

The Method

Each chapter of this book takes a single fear. It names it without flinching. It describes it in full — what it feels like, what it claims, what it threatens, what it has cost people across the full range of human history. It does not minimise. It does not offer comfort before the examination. It faces the fear directly, in all its apparent power, and gives it the respect of treating it as a real adversary.

Then the four prayers are applied. Each one in full. No compression, no summary, no reference to Book I with an instruction to recall what was explained there. The full detonation, every time. Prayer One: the structure of the only power established, the impossible request made, the protection sought from the protector. Prayer Two: the fear named, outranked cosmically, traced to its true source, the category of otherness dissolved. Prayer Three: the will released, the outcome surrendered, whatever You will spoken into the specific fear's face. Prayer Four: refuge sought within the divine from the divine, praise found to be innumerable, everything returned to the only one adequate to hold it.

And then the fear is gone. Not managed. Not made smaller. Gone — found to have been, like all fears, a story about something that was never there.

The Repetition

The reader will notice that the four prayers appear in every chapter. In full. Without variation. This is not an oversight. This is the method.

Allah the Exalted revealed Surah Al-Rahman, and in it asked the same question fifty-one times: *فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ* — So which of the favours of your Lord will you deny? Not because the first asking was insufficient. But because the question is addressed to a different place each time. And the human heart has many places that require the same truth to arrive before the whole of it is illuminated.

The fear of poverty is not the same room as the fear of humiliation, even though the same four prayers detonate both. The specific texture of each fear — its particular grip, its unique history in a human life, the specific story it tells about why this particular threat is the one that cannot be survived — means that the demolition must be performed in each room separately. Not because the weapon is different. Because the room is.

Read this book in the room. When the chapter on fear of illness is reached, read it in the presence of whatever fear of illness is alive in you right now. When the chapter on fear of humiliation is reached, read it with the specific humiliation that has haunted you. The prayers are not abstract. They are weapons. Weapons require a target. Each chapter names the target precisely.

The Destination

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was asked: through whom does divine disclosure come most intensely? He said: the prophets, then the righteous. One of them received divine disclosure through poverty until he could find nothing but a cloak which he would cut a hole in and wear. One of them received divine disclosure through lice until it would kill him. And yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of you would rejoice at a gift.

This is the destination. Not the absence of hardship. Not a life from which divine disclosure has been removed. But a complete transformation of the relationship to hardship — so complete that the arrival of what the world calls its worst becomes the occasion of what the soul knows as its best. When one of them rejoices more intensely at the divine disclosure than any of us would at a gift — that is when the self that was afraid has dissolved into recognition. Dunya, like fear before it, has become an archaeological artifact. A word that future people will read about and not quite understand.

This book is the path from here to there. One fear at a time. Four prayers each time. No exceptions. No survivors.

The fears are named below.

They will not all survive the reading.

CHAPTER ONE

The Fear of Death

The root fear. The one all others borrow their power from.

The Fear Named

Death is the fear that powers all other fears. Strip any dread to its foundation and you will find, somewhere in the basement, the fear of death. The fear of poverty is the fear of dying without enough. The fear of illness is the fear of dying in pain. The fear of humiliation is the fear of social death, which feels, to the organism, like a rehearsal for the real thing. Every fear borrows its existential weight from this one. Remove death from the human imagination and the entire architecture of human dread collapses.

This is what makes it the right place to begin. If this fear falls, all others are already weakened. They have been borrowing power from a source that no longer exists.

What does the fear of death actually claim? It claims several things simultaneously. That there is a self that currently exists and has value. That death threatens to end that self permanently and completely. That permanent ending is the worst possible outcome. That this self has something to lose that cannot be recovered. And that the loss will be experienced — by someone, somehow — as deprivation.

The fear of death is terrified of non-existence. But notice the contradiction embedded in that terror. Non-existence, if genuine, would be experienced by no one. The self that fears its own ending cannot actually imagine what it is afraid of — because the moment of its realisation would also be the moment of the fearer's disappearance. The fear of death is the fear of something that no version of the self will ever experience. It is a fear of an experience that, by definition, will never arrive.

And yet it is real. The dread is real. The contraction at the thought of it is real. The way it shadows every pleasure, qualifies every joy, sits at the edge of every love saying: this ends.

This is real. And it is precisely because it is real that it must be fully detonated rather than dismissed.

Bring it now into full view. Your death. The specific version: alone in a hospital bed, or suddenly without warning, or slowly through illness, or in violence, or in old age watching everything familiar dissolve. Hold it. Feel the grip of it. Do not look away.

Now bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins by establishing what actually exists. Not the self and its preferred outcomes. Not the self and its terror of ending. What actually exists: the Lord of the seven heavens. The Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The one power that holds everything in existence — including the existence of the self that is currently afraid of ceasing to exist.

Death, in this frame, is not something that happens to the self from outside. Death is a permission granted by the Lord of the seven heavens. The body that the self currently inhabits: a form held in existence by the one power, released by the one power, at a time determined by the one power, which is the same power now being addressed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my protector from Yourself. The prayer does not ask to escape death. It does not petition for immortality or for a longer span or for a gentler ending. It asks for something structurally different: to be held by the same power that ordains death, as a neighbour holds a neighbour. The relationship is not between a self and an ending. It is

between an awareness and the only power — asking that power to be the neighbour in the very moment it acts.

The fear of death assumes that death is something that arrives from outside, from a power other than the one the self belongs to. The first prayer dismantles that assumption in its opening breath. There is no outside. There is no other power. Death, like life, like every breath between them, is the action of the Lord of the seven heavens. And the Lord of the seven heavens is the one being addressed. The one being asked to be near.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the neighbour-protector is not the protection of safety from harm. It is the protection of proximity — of being in the presence of the one who holds everything, including the transition called death, including whatever lies beyond it. The self does not need to survive death in the terms it currently understands. It needs only the one who ordains death to be near when it comes. And the prayer establishes: the nearness is available. The neighbour does not abandon at the threshold.

وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ — and there is no god but You. The declaration of unity seals the first prayer's demolition of the fear of death. There is no power that ends the self without the permission of the one being addressed. There is no darkness beyond death that operates outside the governance of the one being addressed. There is no moment — not the last one, not whatever comes after — in which the one power is absent. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ: not even in death. Especially not in death.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاقُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my

protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than death. Not by a comfortable margin — by an infinite margin. Death is creation. The Creator is mightier than all of His creation combined. Death is a transition within the governance of the one power. It cannot be mightier than that power. It cannot exceed it. It cannot operate outside it.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحَدِّرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it now precisely. The fear of your own death. The dread of the moment of departure, of what might come after, of the complete unknowing. Say it: this. This specific thing. This is what I fear. And over this specific thing — Allah is mightier. Not mightier in the abstract. Mightier than this. Than your death. Than whatever form it takes. Than whatever follows it.

The second prayer then places even the most catastrophic event within divine governance: the one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission. If even the collapse of the sky requires permission, then your death — this particular death, at this particular moment, in this particular form — is not a catastrophe that happens outside governance. It is an act of governance. Held in the same hands that hold the heavens.

مِنْ شَرِّهِ — from His evil. From death's evil. Not pretending death has no sting. Not denying that the transition is real, that what is lost is lost, that the grief of those left behind is real. The prayer faces death honestly: it has evil in it. And then it places that evil within the governance of the one power.

اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ — O Allah, be my protector from your evil. The pivot. The third-person pronoun becoming second-person. The fear of death is not, at its deepest root, the fear of a process. It is the fear of the power that ordains the process. Every death feared was always Allah feared. And Allah is being asked directly: protect me from You. The fear names its true source. And the true source is the protection.

وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ — there is no god other than You. The category of otherness that death seemed to represent — the absolute other, the end, the great unknown that stands over against the self as the ultimate threat — is dissolved. Death has no address of its own. It is not other. There is no other. The fear had been projecting separateness onto something that was always within the one. And the one is the one being addressed.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

Seven words. The will that was managing death — that was trying to ensure it came late, came gently, came after enough had been accomplished, came in a form that could be survived with dignity — is handed back entirely.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. Not: whenever I am ready. Not: in a form I can accept. Not: after I have finished what I need to finish. Whatever You will. The time is Yours. The manner is Yours. The moment is Yours. The what-comes-after is Yours. Every specification the self wanted to place on its own death — every negotiation the fearful mind had been conducting with the idea of death for its entire life — is surrendered in three Arabic words.

This is not defeat. This is the recognition that the negotiation was always imaginary. The self was never in a position to set the terms of its own departure. The bargaining with death that occupied so much of its energy — the health regimens, the risk avoidances, the accumulated strategies for postponement — was conducted with a counterparty that was never at the table. The only one at the table is the one being addressed. And the one being addressed is being asked to suffice — completely, without remainder — against Himself. Whatever You will.

The fear of death was sustained by the gap between what the will wanted — continued existence, on its own terms — and what reality might deliver. Close that gap not by extending life but by releasing the insistence on particular terms, and the fear has nothing to feed on. Whatever You will is not resignation to death. It is the discovery that the will's grip on its preferred version of existence was the actual source of the suffering. The death was always coming. The suffering was always optional.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. In the face of death: not the plea of a self desperate to survive. But the movement of awareness seeking to be received by the quality of divine pleasure rather than divine severity. The death, when it comes, comes within divine governance. The prayer asks: let it come in Your pleasure. Not in the sense of a pleasant death — but in the sense of a death that occurs within the divine's satisfaction. A death that is welcome, because what returns was always Yours.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. Stripped of attribute, stripped of any specification. Not from death specifically. Not from the pain of it or the unknowing of it or the grief it leaves behind. Just: You from You. The one power, undivided, sought as shelter from itself. This is what the fear of death was always underneath: the trembling of a wave before the ocean, not knowing it is made of ocean. The prayer names the trembling honestly and then dissolves the premise of the separation that generated it.

لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ — I cannot enumerate Your praise. The self that was afraid of death reaches, in this phrase, the limit of its instrument. It cannot count what awaits. It cannot measure what lies beyond the threshold. It cannot take inventory of the qualities of the one who

holds death in governance. The counting apparatus — the very faculty that was running the calculations of risk and probability and remaining time — finds itself in a domain where counting is simply not the right tool. And in that discovery, it rests.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتُنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self steps entirely out of the frame. It cannot add to this. It cannot describe what lies on the other side of death, because You are what lies on the other side, and You are as You have praised Yourself, and no praise the self could offer is adequate to what that means. What remains after this recognition is not a self bracing against its eventual ending. It is awareness, already at home in the one power, recognising that home was never anywhere else.

*The fear of death borrowed its power from a story
about a self that could be permanently ended
by a power other than the one it belonged to.
Neither self nor other power can be found.
The fear has no ground left to stand on.*

CHAPTER TWO

The Fear of Non-Existence

The terror of the void. The dread that after death there is simply nothing.

The Fear Named

The fear of death and the fear of non-existence are not identical, though they travel together. The fear of death is the fear of the process — the pain, the loss, the transition. The fear of non-existence is what lies beneath it: the terror that after the process, there is simply nothing. No awareness. No continuity. No witness to what was. Just the void where a self once stood.

This fear has a peculiar quality: it cannot be experienced. If non-existence is genuine, there will be no one to experience it. The fear is of an event that, by its own definition, will never arrive for any subject. And yet it is real. The dread of it is one of the most paralysing forces in human psychology. People have spent fortunes, built monuments, written books, had children, started religions — all as strategies against the intolerable possibility that awareness simply ends.

Hold it now. Not the abstract philosophical version — the visceral one. The lights going out. The complete cessation of the experience of being you. Not sleep, which contains a waker. Not anaesthesia, which is temporary. The permanent, total extinction of the one who is reading these words right now. That.

Now bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفِرَّطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاوُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins with the establishment of the one power that holds everything in existence. Seven heavens. The Magnificent Throne. Everything that is, held. Notice: the prayer does not begin with the self and its fear of ending. It begins with the one who holds. The frame is not: there is a self that might cease. The frame is: there is a Lord of everything that is, was, or will be.

The fear of non-existence assumes that awareness is produced by the physical body and therefore ends when the body ends. This assumption is the entire foundation of the fear. The first prayer does not argue against it philosophically. It places the awareness, right now, in relationship with the Lord of the seven heavens — the one who holds existence itself — and asks that power to be the protector. *كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ* — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself.

If the one power holds the seven heavens lest they fall, if existence itself is sustained moment by moment by this holding — then the awareness that fears its own extinction is not a self-generated phenomenon that the universe will simply lose when the body stops. It is a mode of the one power's expression. The neighbour-protector being asked to draw near is the same power in which the awareness already lives and moves and has its being. Non-existence, in this frame, is not a destination the awareness travels to. It is a concept that the awareness — if it understood what it was — would recognise as having no address it could ever reach.

وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ — there is no god but You. There is no power other than the one being addressed. The void that the fear imagines as waiting on the other side of death is not a power. It has no governance. It cannot reach into existence and claim the awareness. The only thing that exists, including whatever exists on the other side of the transition called

death, is within the governance of the one being addressed. The void is not a rival. It is a story about the absence of something that was never absent.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ جَمًّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than non-existence. Greater than the void. The void is the absence of existence. The one power is the source of existence. The one power does not compete with the void — the void is simply what is named when the one power's expression is imagined to have withdrawn. And the one power's expression is not something that withdraws. It is what is.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the void. The nothingness. The total cessation of this awareness. Allah is mightier than that. Not mightier in the sense of defeating it in combat — mightier in the sense that the thing feared has no reality of its own. It is the shadow of the one power, not the one power's rival. Shadow and light do not compete. When the light is, the shadow has no independent existence.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission: this is the structure of reality. Everything that is, is held. The awareness reading these words is held. What it will be after the transition called death is held. There is no moment at which the holding stops and the void takes over, because the void is simply the word for what would be named if holding stopped — and holding is what the one power is.

مِنْ شَرِّكَ — from your evil. The potential evil of non-existence acknowledged: yes, the ending of this particular form of awareness would be, from within this form's perspective, a loss. The prayer does not pretend otherwise. It faces the evil of it directly. And then asks: be my protector from You. The one who ordains whatever comes after death is the one being asked to govern that ordaining with mercy rather than severity. Not to make non-existence impossible — but to ensure that whatever the transition holds, it holds it within divine care.

وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ — there is no god other than You. The void has no address. It is not a god. It is not a power. There is nothing other than the one power — and the one power is not nothing. Whatever is on the other side of death, it is within the governance of the one power. Which means: it is not the void. The void was always a story told by a self that could not imagine its own continuity within the one. But continuity within the one is not the self's continuity. It is something the self cannot count, cannot enumerate, and cannot, from its current position, adequately praise.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been conducting a lifelong negotiation with non-existence. Trying to ensure it does not arrive. Trying to build things that outlast it, to be remembered, to leave a mark, to earn an afterlife, to accumulate good deeds against the account of the void. All of this negotiation is handed back in three words.

Not as defeat. As recognition. The negotiation was with a void that was never real. The currency being spent was the anxiety of a self that believed its continuity was its own project to maintain. It was not. It was always the one power's project, conducted within

the one power's governance, resolved in the one power's timing and manner. Whatever You will. Not: whatever keeps me in existence. Whatever You will.

The fear of non-existence was the will insisting on the specific outcome of continued existence. The third prayer releases that insistence. What remains after the release is not a self bravely accepting its potential annihilation. It is awareness recognising that the question of its own continuation was never its question to answer. It was always the one power's question — and the one power has already answered it in ways the awareness cannot yet read.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. In the face of non-existence: the awareness seeks to be received within divine pleasure. Not: please make me exist forever in the terms I currently understand. But: whatever the transition holds, let it be held within Your pleasure. Let what I am — which is Yours, which was always Yours — return to You in a state that You are pleased with.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The void that the fear imagined was always, at its deepest level, the face of the one power that had not yet been recognised as the one power. The darkness that the self called non-existence was the one power seen through the lens of a self that did not know what it was. When the self knows what it is — awareness within the one power, not separate from it — the darkness is seen for what it is: not void, but the one power, undivided, in the mode of transition. I seek refuge in You from You: the prayer that can only be spoken by someone who has seen that You is the only address there is.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَّيَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot count what lies on the other side of the transition. It cannot enumerate the qualities of whatever awaits. It cannot adequately describe what the one power holds in the space the fear called void. All it can do is point: You are what You are. What lies on the other side of death is You. And You are as You have praised Yourself. The void was a story. The story has no last chapter. There is only You.

*The void was never a destination.
It was the name given to the one power
by a self that had not yet recognised
that the one power is all there is.
There is no non-existence.
There is only You.*

CHAPTER THREE

The Fear of Divine Punishment

The dread that the judge has already decided, and the verdict is ruin.

The Fear Named

This is the fear that religious people rarely name out loud. It lives beneath the surface of practice, beneath the recitations and the prostrations and the acts of charity — a quiet, constant dread that none of it is enough. That the accounting will come and the scales will tip the wrong way. That the God who knows every hidden deed, every private thought, every moment of heedlessness and ingratitude and sin, will look at what was accumulated over a lifetime and find it wanting.

It is a fear that religion sometimes inadvertently amplifies. The descriptions of the fire. The weight of the questioning. The bridge finer than a hair stretched over an abyss. The fear of divine punishment can become so pervasive that worship itself becomes contaminated by it — not the worship of a beloved, but the cowering of a prisoner who hopes that sufficient cowering might soften the sentence.

And yet the fear has something real in it. There is a reckoning. There is accountability. The self is not without responsibility for what it chose, how it treated others, what it did with what it was given. Dismissing the fear as irrational would be dishonest. It has a basis. What needs examination is not whether accountability is real but whether the fear of it is the appropriate response to a Lord who describes Himself first and above all as الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ — the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

Hold the fear now. Not the theological abstraction — the personal version. Your specific life. The specific things you know about yourself that you hope no one else knows. The moments of failure you cannot undo. The accounting of it. Hold it. And bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins not with the courtroom but with the cosmos. Not with judgment but with lordship. The one being addressed is the Lord — the sovereign, the sustainer, the one who holds everything in existence. Before any verdict, before any reckoning, before any accounting: Lord.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. This prayer was designed for exactly this moment. The one asking for protection is asking the judge to be the protection. Not asking to escape judgment — asking the judge to be near, to be the neighbour whose presence transforms what the judgment means. In Arabic tradition the neighbour-protector does not abandon at the moment of crisis. The neighbour-protector is precisely who you turn to when the threat is greatest.

And the threat here is the judge Himself. The prayer names this with astonishing honesty: be my protector from Yourself. Not from the fire in the abstract. Not from consequence as an impersonal mechanism. From You. The fear of divine punishment, brought all the way to its root, is the fear of the divine. And the divine is the only one being asked for protection. The judge is the only lawyer available. The one who holds the scales is the only one being asked to tip them with mercy.

عَرْجَاكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of this neighbour — the Lord of the seven heavens — is not weak. It is not a hope or a wish or a prayer into uncertainty. It is mighty. When the Lord of the Magnificent Throne is the neighbour-protector, the protection is of a magnitude that dwarfs whatever the fear imagines as the threat. The

punishment feared is created. The protection offered is the creator of everything that exists.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَوَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the punishment feared. The fire that the imagination pictures: creation. The questioning that the mind rehearses: creation. The bridge that the heart trembles before: creation. The Creator is greater than all of it combined, greater than the sum of everything that has ever been created, greater by an infinite margin. The fear had been picturing a threat of a certain magnitude. Allah is greater than that magnitude by a distance the mind cannot traverse.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the punishment. The specific version that lives in you. The reckoning for the specific things you know. Allah is mightier than that. This does not mean the accountability is dismissed. It means the one who holds the accountability is mightier than the accountability itself. The judge is greater than the sentence. And the judge has described Himself, before any other description, as merciful.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission: this is the governance structure within which the reckoning occurs. The reckoning does not operate outside divine governance. It is divine governance. Which means: it is in the hands of the one power, which is the one being addressed, which is also the one being asked for mercy. The prayer is not asked into a void. It is asked to the one

who holds the scales, who also holds the heavens, who also holds the awareness that is asking.

اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ — O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Here is the pivot. The punishment that is feared: it is His evil, in the third person. Then: from your evil. The fear of divine punishment is, at its root, the fear of the divine. And the divine is being addressed directly. Not with a legal argument. Not with a list of good deeds that might outweigh the bad. With a prayer: be my protector from You. The intimacy of this is staggering. The one who might punish is the only one who can protect from the punishment. And the one who can protect is being asked.

وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ — there is no god other than You. There is no court operating outside divine mercy. There is no judge who is not also the Entirely Merciful. The fear had been picturing a divine justice operating independently of divine mercy, as if the two were in competition. There is no god other than You: the mercy and the justice are not in competition. They are both expressions of the one. And the one is the one being addressed. The one being asked. The one whose neighbour-protection has already been declared mighty.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self that has been managing its relationship to divine judgment — calculating, accumulating, anxiously tallying — hands the entire accounting back. Not: I have done enough, please pass me. Not: here is what I have managed to accumulate, please weigh it generously. Whatever You will.

This is the most radical act of trust available to a human being. It acknowledges: I do not know how the accounting looks from Your side. I do not know what weighs what. I do not

know the full measure of what was given or what was returned. Whatever You will. The self steps out of the role of advocate in its own case and hands the case entirely to the judge. And the judge is the one who described Himself, before all other descriptions, as merciful.

The fear of divine punishment was sustained by the self's attempt to manage the verdict. Whatever You will releases that management. What remains is not indifference to one's actions or their consequences. It is the recognition that the outcome was never the self's to determine — and that the one who determines it is not the cold administrator of an impersonal law but the Lord of the seven heavens who is being asked right now, in this prayer, to be the neighbour-protector.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. This prayer was given by the Prophet, upon him be peace, for precisely this fear. Refuge in the pleasure of the one from the anger of the one. The same one. Not two competing forces — one benevolent and one wrathful. The same one, whose pleasure is being asked to receive the self, whose anger the self asks to be sheltered from by that same pleasure.

وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The pardon is named directly. Not hinted at, not hoped for obliquely. The pardon is named as a refuge. The self asks to stand inside the pardon rather than before the punishment. And the one being asked is the one who has the pardon to give. The punishment is real. The pardon is also real. Both are His. The prayer asks to be received by the pardon.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The absolute. The structure beneath all the specific forms: the judge and the mercy and the pardon and the punishment are all expressions of the one. The self seeks refuge in the one from the one. There is no external court. There is no impersonal justice machine operating outside divine relationship. There is only the one — and the self asking to be received by the one's mercy rather than the one's severity.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَّيَّنْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot enumerate what the divine mercy actually encompasses. It cannot count the pardons given. It cannot measure the weight of the forgiveness offered across all of creation, across all of time, across every soul that ever turned and asked. All it can do is point: You are as You have praised Yourself. And You have praised Yourself first and above all as الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ. Let that be enough.

*The fear of divine punishment forgot
that the judge and the mercy are the same one.*

*The one being asked to protect
is the one who described Himself as merciful
before He described Himself as anything else.*

Seek refuge in His pleasure from His anger.

They are both His.

He is mightier than both.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fear of Fear Itself

The snake that eats its own tail. The only fear that creates what it fears.

The Fear Named

This is the most recursive of all fears and in some ways the most crippling. The fear of fear itself is not the fear of any particular object or outcome. It is the fear of the experience of fear — the dread of the physical sensation of panic, the anticipatory terror of the anxiety attack, the catastrophising that begins the moment the first sign of fear is felt.

It works like this: fear arises. The self notices fear arising. The self then fears that the fear will become overwhelming, that it will spiral, that the panic will become unbearable, that losing control of the fear response will itself be the catastrophe. The fear of the fear produces more fear. The more fear there is, the more there is to fear. The loop closes and tightens until the person is incapacitated not by any external threat but entirely by the experience of their own nervous system.

This is what panic attacks do. What chronic anxiety does. What agoraphobia does in its final form — where the person stops going anywhere because any environment might trigger the fear, and the fear of triggering the fear has become more crippling than any specific feared thing. The fear of fear is the fear that has finally turned on itself and begun consuming its own host.

Notice what this fear reveals: that the real problem was never the external threat. The fear of fear has no external object. There is no tiger. There is only the experience of fear, and the fear of having that experience. Which means: fear was always about the experience of fear. Every fear was, underneath, the fear of the feeling of being afraid. The fear of poverty was the fear of feeling the terror of financial collapse. The fear of death was the fear of

feeling the terror of annihilation. Strip them all the way back and what remains is: the self, terrified of its own terror.

Bring this now. The specific version in you. The dread of the panic. The anticipatory fear that tightens the moment any hint of anxiety appears. Hold it. And bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins by placing the awareness — the same awareness that is currently afraid of its own fear response — within the governance of the one power. Not within the governance of its own nervous system. Not within the governance of the fear loop. Within the Lord of the seven heavens.

The fear of fear is a loop that closes within the self. The self observes fear, fears the fear, generates more fear, fears that, and so on. The first prayer breaks the loop by introducing something that exists outside the loop: the Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The loop was only possible while the self was the only reference point. *كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ* — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The prayer does not break the loop by suppressing the fear. It breaks the loop by placing the awareness in relationship with a reality so vast that the loop has nowhere to close.

The protection asked for is from the Lord Himself. Which means: the fear experience, including the fear of the fear experience, is within the governance of the one power. It did not arise outside that governance. The nervous system that generates the fear response is the one power's creation, operating within the one power's permission. The loop does not

operate outside divine governance. It cannot. **وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ**: there is no god but You. Not even the fear loop. Not even the self's terror of its own terror. These are creation. The Creator is mightier than all of it.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the fear. Greater than the fear of the fear. Greater than the panic attack in its most acute form, greater than the anxiety spiral at its most consuming, greater than the total incapacitation of a self that cannot leave its house because any environment might trigger the loop. Allah is greater than the loop. Greater than the system that runs the loop. Greater than whatever the loop was evolved to protect against.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it precisely: the experience of fear itself. The panic. The loss of control. The sensation of the fear response taking over. That. Allah is mightier than that. Not mightier in the abstract — mightier than this specific experience, happening in this specific body, right now if it is happening now.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall: this one holds the nervous system too. Every nerve that fires in the fear response fires within divine governance. The electrochemical cascade of panic: permitted, within governance, happening inside the creation of the Lord of the seven heavens. The fear response does not operate outside the one power. It cannot generate itself. It cannot sustain itself. It exists within the holding of the one who holds everything.

مِنْ شَرِّكَ — from His evil. The prayer acknowledges that the fear experience has evil in it. It does not pretend panic is pleasant. It faces the evil of the experience honestly and then asks: be my protector from that evil. From the evil of the loop closing. From the evil of the self consuming itself in recursive terror. The one power is asked to break the loop not by suppressing the fear but by being the protection that stands outside it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self that has been trying to control its own fear response — the entire industry of anxiety management, breathing techniques, cognitive restructuring, avoidance strategies, all of it — is handed back in three words.

This is not the abandonment of practical help for anxiety. It is the recognition of what was underneath the management: the insistence that the fear response must not be allowed to happen. That insistence is the fear of fear. And that insistence is what the third prayer releases. Whatever You will — including the fear experience, including the panic, including whatever form the anxiety takes in this body. Not: please remove the anxiety. Whatever You will.

When the insistence that fear must not occur is released, something extraordinary happens. The fear of fear cannot survive. It was entirely dependent on the self's insistence that the fear experience was unacceptable. Remove the insistence — whatever You will, including fear — and the recursive loop has no fuel. The fear of fear dies when the fear itself is no longer feared. And the fear of the fear itself dies when whatever You will is meant completely.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. In the experience of fear: refuge in divine pleasure. Not the plea that the fear be removed. The movement of awareness toward the quality of divine pleasure, even inside the fear, even inside the panic, even inside the loop. The refuge is not from the experience but within the experience, in the direction of the one power's pleasure.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The fear of fear was a loop within the self. I seek refuge in You from You breaks every loop by removing the axis the loop was spinning around. There is no self spinning in the loop. There is only the one power, and awareness within the one power seeking refuge in the one power from the one power. The loop has no ground.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self that was generating the recursive fear cannot enumerate what the one power actually is. It cannot count the ways the one power exceeds the loop. It cannot measure the distance between the magnitude of the fear experience and the magnitude of the one being addressed. You are as You have praised Yourself. The fear of fear is not in the praise. The praise has no room for it.

*The fear of fear was a loop that needed the self
as its axis.*

There is no independent self.

There is no axis.

The loop has nothing to spin around.

Whatever You will — even fear.

Even that.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fear of the Unknown

The dread of what cannot be seen, predicted, or prepared for.

The Fear Named

The unknown is the native terrain of fear. Every specific fear — of poverty, of illness, of humiliation — draws its power from the unknown dimension of its object. It is not poverty that is feared but what poverty might bring that cannot yet be seen. It is not the illness that terrifies but what the illness might become, might mean, might take away, that has not yet been revealed. Every fear is, at its root, the fear of what is not yet known.

The unknown is threatening because the self cannot prepare for it. The self is a preparation machine. It runs scenarios, builds contingencies, accumulates resources against anticipated threats, develops strategies for predicted eventualities. The unknown defeats all of this before it begins. You cannot prepare for what you cannot see. You cannot build a defence against what has no known shape. The self experiences the unknown as exposure — naked before whatever is coming without the armour of anticipation.

This fear is universal and ancient. It is the darkness at the edge of the firelight, the silence before the storm, the unopened letter, the unread diagnosis, the unanswered question. It is the future as such — not any particular future but the sheer fact that what comes next is not yet visible. The self cannot tolerate not knowing. And yet not knowing is the permanent condition of every moment it has ever lived in.

Hold it. The specific unknown that is alive in you right now. The thing that cannot yet be seen. The future that has not disclosed itself. Hold the not-knowing and bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who knows. The Lord of the seven heavens does not face the unknown as the self faces it. There is no unknown to the one power. Every event that the self cannot see is seen. Every future that the self cannot access is present. Every darkness at the edge of the self's firelight is illuminated within the knowledge of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The fear of the unknown was the fear of moving through a world that has no one holding it. *كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ* — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The unknown is not ungoverned. It is not a region outside divine knowledge or divine care. It is the one power's creation, within the one power's governance, unfolding within the one power's knowledge — known, in other words, in every detail, to the one being addressed. The self does not know what is coming. The one being asked knows everything that is coming. The neighbour-protector walks into the unknown ahead of the self, because for the neighbour-protector, there is no unknown.

عَرْجَ جَارِكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection is mighty precisely because it is not hindered by ignorance. The self's attempts to protect itself from the unknown are limited by what it cannot see. The one power's protection is not limited by anything. It sees every threat before it arrives. It governs every event before it unfolds. The protection being asked for is not contingency planning. It is the nearness of the one who knows everything that the self does not.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُتَسَبِّحُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَتَّعِنَ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the unknown. Greater than the darkness the self cannot see into. Greater than every threat that might be concealed in what has not yet arrived. The unknown is not greater than the one power. The one power encompasses the unknown entirely. Every possibility that frightens the self from within the fog of the not-yet-known: the one power sees it, holds it, governs it, and is greater than it.

اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. What is feared here is not a specific thing — it is the unknown itself. Allah is mightier than the unknown itself. Mightier than the darkness. Mightier than the unforeseeable. Mightier than whatever is concealed in the not-yet. Not because the not-yet is made visible to the self by this declaration, but because the one making the declaration already sees it and is already greater than it.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall: this governance applies to every moment of the future the self cannot see. Every unknown event will unfold within this holding. There is no moment in the unknown future at which the governance of the one power is suspended. The self walks into the unknown, but the unknown is held. And the one who holds it is the one being addressed.

مِنْ شَرِّكَ — from His evil. The unknown does contain real threats. This is not pretended away. There are genuinely bad things that might come. The prayer faces this honestly. But whatever bad thing arrives, it arrives within divine governance, and the prayer asks that the one power be the protection from whatever evil that governance might permit. The unknown is not dismissed. It is placed in the only hands capable of governing it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's entire project of managing the unknown — the preparation, the contingency, the scenario-building, the risk assessment — is handed back. Not: keep me safe from whatever comes. Whatever You will. Including the worst of what the unknown might contain. Whatever You will.

The fear of the unknown was the self's insistence on seeing before proceeding. I will not move forward until I know what is there. Whatever You will releases that insistence. The self does not need to know what is there before moving forward, because the one power knows what is there, and whatever is there is within the one power's governance, and the one power has been asked to be the protection. The unknown is no longer the self's problem. It was always the one power's domain. It has been returned there.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. In the face of the unknown: refuge in the quality of divine pleasure. Not: make the unknown known to me. Let whatever comes, come within Your pleasure. Let the unknown future unfold within the divine's satisfaction. The self does not need to see the future to be safe within it. It needs the future to be within divine pleasure. And it is.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The unknown was always only unknown to the self. It was never unknown to the one power. There is no unknown in the one power's knowledge. Seeking refuge in You from You: the self takes shelter in the complete knowledge of the one power from its own ignorance, which was never the one power's

ignorance. The unknown dissolves not because the self now sees it, but because the self recognises that the seeing was never its task.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot enumerate the knowledge of the one power. It cannot count what is known. It cannot inventory the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens across all of time, all of the future, all of the unknown that has ever frightened a human being. You are as You have praised Yourself. Whatever is coming is within that. It is enough.

*The unknown was only unknown to the self.
It was never unknown to the one who holds
the seven heavens lest they fall.
Walk forward.
The one who sees everything
is already there.*

CHAPTER SIX

The Fear of Meaninglessness

The dread that none of it means anything. That the universe is indifferent. That this life counts for nothing.

The Fear Named

This is the philosophical horror that lurks beneath a certain kind of modern consciousness. The suspicion that the universe is not a story with a point but a process without a narrator. That birth and death and everything between are rearrangements of matter that carry no more inherent significance than the rearrangement of sand. That love, achievement, suffering, joy — all of it — is noise in a vast silence that does not care and does not record and does not remember.

The fear of meaninglessness is particularly acute for people who have lost the religious framework that once supplied ready-made meaning, or who have never inhabited one. Without a story that places this life within a larger narrative, the mind is left with its own significance to generate. And generating significance from within a closed system — a self inside a universe that produced the self for no discernible purpose — is an exhausting and ultimately futile project.

But even within religious frameworks the fear can appear. The fear that one's specific life — its specific sufferings, its specific failures, its specific smallness in the face of history — means nothing in particular. That the disclosures were random, not ordained. That the losses were accident, not wisdom. That the specific shape of this particular life carries no particular weight in any accounting that matters.

Hold it. The specific version: the sense that what you have lived, what you have suffered, what you have loved and lost, counts for nothing in a universe that will not remember any of it. Hold that. And bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with a narrator. Not the self narrating its own story into a void. But a Lord — the Lord of the seven heavens, the Lord of the Magnificent Throne — within whose lordship this life is occurring.

The fear of meaninglessness assumes a universe without a lord. The first prayer's opening words dismantle that assumption at the root. There is a Lord. The seven heavens have a Lord. The Magnificent Throne has a Lord. The life being lived — this particular life, with its particular sufferings and particular joys — is being lived within the lordship of the one being addressed. It is not occurring in an indifferent universe. It is occurring in a created universe, held in existence moment by moment by the Lord of the Magnificent Throne, who is also the one who has said: we do not waste the reward of those who do good.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The very fact that this prayer can be prayed — that there is a one power who can be addressed, who is asked to be the protection, who can be a neighbour — is the answer to the fear of meaninglessness. A universe without meaning has no one to address. A universe with the Lord of the seven heavens is a universe in which every moment of this particular life is occurring within a relationship. And relationships carry meaning by definition. The neighbour-protector does not protect meaningless lives. The neighbour-protector protects this life, specifically, which the very act of praying confirms has a specific address.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the indifference the fear imagined. Greater than the silence the fear projected onto the universe. The universe is not silent. The Lord of the seven heavens holds it in every moment. The appearance of silence was the appearance of a self listening for a frequency it had not yet tuned to.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. What is feared here is the void of meaning. Allah is mightier than the void of meaning. Not because meaning is declared by fiat from outside the self's experience, but because the one power who holds the seven heavens has said, in revelation after revelation, that nothing is lost. That the weight of a mustard seed of good is recorded. That the one who does an atom's weight of good will see it. The universe is not indifferent. It is governed by a Lord who counts what the self feared was not being counted.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was asked: through whom does Allah disclose Himself most intensely? He said: the prophets, then the righteous — and yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of us would at a gift. This is the opposite of a meaningless universe. This is a universe in which the one power discloses Himself most intensely through those nearest Him, and that disclosure generates a joy that exceeds any ordinary gift. Nothing that is disclosed through is wasted. Everything is address. Everything is the one power making Himself known.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْت — whatever You will. The self had been trying to generate meaning on its own terms — through achievement, through legacy, through being remembered, through the scale of what it built or created or left behind. Whatever You will releases that project.

The meaning of this life is not the self's project to determine. It is within the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens, who records what the self feared was not being recorded, who rewards what the self feared was not being rewarded, who knows this specific life in every detail and holds it within a knowledge that the self cannot enumerate. Whatever You will: including whatever meaning You have placed in this life that the self cannot yet read. The meaning is there. The self's inability to see it was not its absence.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَّبِتُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A life lived within divine pleasure is not a meaningless life. It is a life whose meaning is the most durable kind available: the meaning conferred by being within the pleasure of the Lord of the seven heavens. Not the meaning that legacies give, which are forgotten. Not the meaning that achievements give, which are surpassed. The meaning that exists when a life is within divine pleasure — which the one power has said is better than the world and everything in it.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَّبِتُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot count what it means to be within the governance of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne. It cannot enumerate what it means for every atom of good to be recorded, every divine disclosure

to generate reward, every moment of sincere turning to be received. You are as You have praised Yourself. The meaning of this life is within that praise. And that praise has no end.

*The universe was never indifferent.
A self was listening for a frequency
it had not yet learned to hear.
The Lord of the seven heavens
records the weight of a mustard seed.
Nothing that was lived here
was ever lost.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Fear of Iblis

Shaytan, demons, devils, evil spirits, witches, witchcraft, evil eye, black magic, voodoo — one fear, one name, one demolition.

The Fear Named

This fear is ancient. Older than literacy. Older than cities. It lives in every human culture that has ever existed, wearing different costumes in different places but always making the same claim: there is a hostile intelligent power operating in the unseen, and it is directed at you.

In the Islamic tradition it is Iblis — the one who refused to bow, who was expelled, who was granted respite until the Day of Judgment, and who declared his intention to waylay the children of Adam from every direction. In folk traditions across the world it is demons, evil spirits, jinn acting with malice. In cultural practice it is the evil eye — the gaze of envy that can wither crops, sicken children, destroy marriages. It is black magic — the ritual performed by an enemy in the dark that reaches through the unseen and corrupts a life. It is witchcraft, voodoo, curses, hexes. The names are endless. The claim is always the same: something hostile in the unseen is working against you, and you may not even know it is happening.

This fear has a particular grip because it is officially sanctioned. Unlike superstitions that religion dismisses, Iblis is real within the Islamic framework. Sihr — black magic — is real within the Islamic framework. The evil eye is real within the Islamic framework. The Prophet, upon him be peace, taught protections against all of them. So the person who fears them cannot be told: this is irrational, there is nothing there. There is something there. And the question is not whether it exists but whether it has independent power — power that operates outside divine governance, power that can reach a life without divine permission, power that the one power cannot contain.

It is precisely here that the fear reveals its hidden error. Not in believing that Iblis exists — he does. Not in believing that sihr is real — it is. But in the assumption, felt in the body even when denied by the tongue, that these things operate outside the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens. That the evil eye can destroy what Allah wills to preserve. That black magic can achieve what Allah wills to prevent. That Iblis can take what Allah wills to protect. This assumption is the fear. And this assumption is exactly what the four prayers dismantle.

Hold it now. The specific form this fear takes in you. The worry about the evil eye on your children, your wealth, your health. The suspicion that something has been done against you in the unseen. The dread of enemies working through means you cannot see or counter. The particular texture of it — its helplessness, its paranoia, its sense of being targeted by something that operates outside the rules. Hold it. And bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجِي جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاوُكُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

Begin here. Not with Iblis. Not with the evil eye. Not with the sihr or the sorcerer or the envious glance. Begin with the Lord of the seven heavens. Because whatever Iblis is, whatever the evil eye is, whatever black magic is — it exists within the seven heavens. It exists within creation. And the Lord of the seven heavens is the Lord of everything that exists within them, including every jinn, every shaytan, every hostile intention operating in the unseen, every spell cast in the dark, every envious gaze directed at what you love.

Iblis was created. He was created by the Lord of the seven heavens. He was granted his respite by the Lord of the seven heavens. He was permitted to make his declaration of

enmity by the Lord of the seven heavens. Every action he has ever taken, every whispering, every deception, every path he has ever placed an obstacle on — all of it within the governance of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne. He operates not outside divine permission but within it. He has no independent power base. He has no kingdom that runs parallel to divine governance. He is creation, and the Lord of creation is mightier than all of creation.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The protection being asked for is from the Lord Himself. Not from a counter-spell. Not from a greater magical power. Not from a ruqyah practitioner or an amulet or a ritual. From the Lord of the seven heavens, who is also the Lord of Iblis, who is also the Lord of every jinn and shaytan and evil eye and sorcerer. The neighbour-protector holds authority over everything the fear is afraid of. Every hostile force in the unseen answers to the one being asked for protection. The neighbour is their Lord.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens against Iblis is not a close contest. Iblis declared: I will waylay them from before and behind, from their right and their left. And the Lord of the seven heavens responded: indeed My servants — you will have no authority over them. The protection of the neighbour-protector is not a shield that Iblis might find a way around. It is the absolute authority of the Creator over the created, the Master over the servant. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: the protection is mighty because nothing in creation — not Iblis, not his army, not every sorcerer who has ever lived — is anything other than creation before the Creator.

وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ — there is no god but You. Iblis is not a god. He is not a power with divine authority. He is not a rival to the one power. There is no god but the one being addressed — and Iblis knows this. He prostrated before Allah before his refusal. He knows, better than any human, that there is no god but the one power. His entire project is to make humans forget what he himself cannot forget. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ: said with full understanding, in the presence of the fear of Iblis, is the most devastating counter to that fear available. Because it names the truth that Iblis's entire strategy depends on obscuring.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُتَمَسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than Iblis. Greater than every jinn and shaytan in existence. Greater than every evil eye ever cast, every spell ever worked, every act of black magic ever performed. Greater than the sum of all hostile forces in the unseen combined. Greater by an infinite margin, because they are creation and He is the Creator, and the Creator is mightier than all of His creation.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it now precisely. The evil eye on your child. The black magic you suspect has been worked against your marriage, your livelihood, your health. The shaytan whispering in the ear. The jinn said to be attached. The curse laid by an enemy. Whatever the specific form: Allah is mightier than that. Not by slightly more. By the distance between the Creator and creation. By the distance between the one who holds the seven heavens and the created being who exists only because that one permits its existence.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُتَمَسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ — I seek refuge in Allah, the one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission. The seven heavens are held. They do not fall except by His permission. If even the collapse of the sky requires His permission, then the operation of every hostile force in the unseen requires His permission. The evil eye cannot strike what He wills to preserve. The spell cannot reach what He wills to protect. The shaytan cannot take what He wills to keep. Everything that the fear is afraid of operates within His permission — which means it operates within His governance, within His oversight, within the same holding that holds the seven heavens.

مِنْ شَرِّهِ — from His evil. The prayer acknowledges the evil is real. It does not spiritually bypass the reality of Iblis, the reality of sihr, the reality of the evil eye. These things have evil in them. They can harm. The harm is real. And then: from Your evil. The harm that Iblis can cause is within divine governance. The prayer asks the one power to protect from the evil that the one power permits — which is the only kind of evil that exists, because no evil operates outside divine permission.

اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ — O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Here the fear of Iblis arrives at its true address. Iblis's power is not his own. It is borrowed, permitted, circumscribed, and revocable at any moment by the one power. When the prayer asks for protection from the evil of shaytan, it is asking the one who permits shaytan's operations to withdraw that permission, or to ensure that those operations cannot touch what is under the neighbour's protection. The sorcerer has no power except what is permitted. The evil eye has no reach except what is permitted. Ask the one who permits. Ask directly. That is what this prayer does.

وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ — there is no god other than You. Iblis is not a god. Magic is not a god. The evil eye is not a god. They are creation — powerful within their permitted scope, and zero outside it. There is no god other than You: the declaration that leaves Iblis, for all his malice and all his respite, exactly where he always was: a created being, operating within the governance of the one power, whose threat to any soul under divine protection is — as the Quran states with devastating finality — weak.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self that has been managing its exposure to the unseen — wearing amulets, reciting protective formulas out of anxiety rather than trust, visiting

practitioners, performing counter-rituals, living in a state of perpetual vigilance against forces it cannot see — hands the entire enterprise back.

Whatever You will means: if Allah discloses Himself through the avenue of sihr or the evil eye or the whispering of shaytan — whatever You will. Not because these things are welcomed or sought. But because whatever Allah discloses through these avenues is within the governance of the one power, which is also the one protection, which is also the one being addressed. Every disclosure arrives within the holding of the Lord of the seven heavens. Whatever You will: the management of the unseen was never the self's task to perform. It was always His.

This does not mean abandoning the prophetic protections. The Prophet, upon him be peace, taught the morning and evening adhkar, the Mu'awwidhatain, Ayat al-Kursi — not as anxiety management but as acts of trust and relationship. There is a difference between reciting Ayat al-Kursi from fear — the desperate clutching of a charm — and reciting it from recognition: this is the address of the one who holds the seven heavens, and I am placing myself consciously within that holding. The third prayer does not remove the practice. It removes the fear beneath the practice and replaces it with whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. In the face of the fear of Iblis: refuge in divine pleasure. A life lived within divine pleasure is a life outside Iblis's effective reach. Not because he stops trying — he declared he would waylay until the Day of Judgment. But because the one whose pleasure the self is within has said: indeed My servants — you will have no authority over them. Divine pleasure is the protection. It is not a magical shield. It is a relationship — the relationship with the one

whose authority over Iblis is absolute and whose protection of those within His pleasure is guaranteed by His own word.

وَبِمُعَافَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The fear of Iblis sometimes contains a hidden layer: the fear that one has already been affected, that the magic has already worked, that the curse has already landed, that the jinn has already attached. The pardon being asked for here is the pardon from whatever consequences may have already arrived through these avenues. Not denial — but the recognition that whatever has come, it came within divine governance, and the same one power that permitted it is the one power being asked for its pardon, its lifting, its removal.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. This is the absolute. Iblis's power is not his own. Every act of shaytan, every effective evil eye, every working spell is not Iblis's independent creation — it is the one power's permission, operating within the one power's governance. I seek refuge in You from You: I seek refuge in Your authority from Your permission for harm. Not two powers in conflict. One power, whose mercy is being asked to outweigh whatever its governance has permitted. The fear of Iblis was always, underneath, the fear of the one power permitting what the self did not want permitted. And the one power is the one being addressed.

إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا — indeed the plot of shaytan is weak. This is the Quran's own verdict on the thing the fear called powerful. Not: shaytan does not exist. Not: his efforts are without effect. But: his plot — his entire enterprise, his full capacity, his most sophisticated strategy, everything he declared he would do from every direction — is weak. Weak against what? Against the one power. Against the neighbour-protector. Against the Lord of the seven heavens whose protection has been asked and whose servants he has no authority over.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot enumerate what it means to be under the protection of the Lord of the seven heavens in the face of Iblis's declared enmity. It cannot count the times protection was extended before the self

was even aware of the threat. It cannot measure the distance between Iblis's plot and the one power's protection. You are as You have praised Yourself. What that means for the self's safety exceeds everything the fear was afraid of, by a margin the fear could never have calculated.

Iblis exists. His enmity is real.

His plot is also weak.

The Quran said so.

*He has no authority over the servants
of the Lord of the seven heavens.*

You are one of those servants.

The neighbour-protector has already answered.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Fear of Myself

The last root fear. The one that was hiding behind all the others.

The Fear Named

Every fear examined so far had an object outside the self. Death arrives from outside. Non-existence is what waits beyond the boundary. Divine punishment comes from above. Iblis comes from the unseen. Even the fear of fear, recursive as it is, treats the fear response as something that happens to the self, not something the self is.

This fear is different. Its object is the self itself. Not what might come to the self from outside — but what the self might do, become, repeat, or unleash from within.

It takes many forms. The fear of one's own anger — the knowledge that under sufficient provocation something destructive is capable of emerging. The fear of one's own weakness — that in a moment of temptation the self will capitulate to exactly what it resolved not to capitulate to, again. The fear of one's own capacity for self-destruction — the pattern recognised across years of watching oneself ruin what was good, choose what was harmful, return to what was known to be damaging. The fear of one's own thoughts — the darkness that appears uninvited in the mind, the impulses that arrive from nowhere, the desires that the self is ashamed even to have. The fear of one's own nafs, the lower self, the one the Quran calls *النَّفْسُ الْأَمَّارَةُ بِالسُّوءِ* — the self that persistently commands toward evil.

What gives this fear its particular bite is that there is no escape from its object. From Iblis, one can recite the Mu'awwidhat and feel protected. From poverty, one can imagine rescue. From death, one can imagine heaven. But from the self? Wherever you go, you go with you. Every flight from the self ends at the self. There is no geography that puts distance between a person and their own nafs. The feared thing shares the body.

And the tradition confirms that this is the right thing to fear. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said in the khutbah al-hajah: we seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own souls and from the evil of our deeds. The great companions made du'a' against their own nafs. Yusuf, upon him be peace — the prophet of extraordinary beauty and extraordinary intensity of divine disclosure — said: I do not acquit my own self, for indeed the nafs persistently commands toward evil, except for those upon whom my Lord has mercy. If Yusuf, in his purity, did not acquit his own nafs, the self that reads these words has every reason to fear its own.

And yet. And yet the fear of the self has the same structure as every other fear. It assumes a self with power — specifically, destructive power that operates independently of the one power, that can ruin what the one power wills to preserve, that can take the self somewhere the one power does not govern. This assumption is the error. Not the fear itself — the fear is appropriate. The error is in thinking the nafs operates outside divine governance. That its inclinations toward evil are not also within the holding of the Lord of the seven heavens. That the self's own destructive capacity is a threat the one power cannot contain.

Hold the fear now. The specific version that lives in you. The thing about yourself that you are most afraid you will do, repeat, become, or be unable to stop. The pattern you have watched across years. The weakness you cannot seem to outgrow. The darkness that arrives in the mind without invitation. Hold it. And bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins where it always begins: not with the self and its problem, but with the Lord of everything. Lord of the seven heavens. Lord of the Magnificent Throne. And within that lordship: the nafs. The self's own lower nature — its inclinations, its appetites, its capacity for self-destruction — is not outside the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens. It is within it. The nafs was created. The Lord of the seven heavens created it. The Lord of the seven heavens knows it in every hidden fold. And the Lord of the seven heavens holds it, as He holds everything.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. Now hear this with the fear of the self in mind. The first prayer asks the one power to be the protection — from the one power. We spent three chapters understanding why the feared is always ultimately the one power wearing different faces. Here it is most transparent. The self's own nafs, its own capacity for destruction, is the one power's creation operating within the one power's governance. The protection from it is the same: from Yourself. Be my neighbour-protector from Yourself — from the nafs You created, from the inclinations You permitted within me, from the capacity for evil that You know is present. Protect me from what You have placed within the creation that I am.

This is not a strange request. It is the du'a' of the Prophet, upon him be peace, himself: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ نَفْسِي — O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the evil of my own soul. The Prophet himself — the most purified of creation, the one whose nafs was most under divine care — asked protection from his own nafs. Not because his nafs was dangerous in the way an untrained nafs is dangerous. But because he understood, more clearly than anyone, that the nafs is creation, and all creation requires the one power's governance to remain upright. The protection is not from an external enemy. It is from within. And the one power governs within.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens from the self's own nafs is not a weak protection. It is not the willpower of the self reinforced slightly by religious practice. It is the authority of the Creator over the created, operating at the most intimate level possible — within the very architecture of the self's inclinations.

When the Lord of the seven heavens is the neighbour-protector, the nafs that commands toward evil is not facing the self's resistance. It is facing its own Creator.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the nafs. Greater than the self's own capacity for destruction. Greater than the pattern of failure the self has watched across years. Greater than the appetites that have overpowered the self's resolution. Greater than the darkest thing in the self's interior. The nafs is creation. Allah is greater than all of His creation. This applies to the nafs within the self as absolutely as it applies to Iblis in the unseen — because both are creation, and the Creator is greater than all of it.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it now with precision. The specific thing about yourself that you fear most. The capacity for a particular sin. The pattern that seems unbreakable. The darkness in the mind that arrives unbidden. The weakness that has defeated the self before and might defeat it again. Allah is mightier than that. Mightier than the nafs's pull toward it. Mightier than the habit's momentum. Mightier than the accumulated history of having fallen. Allah is mightier than what I fear in myself.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ — I seek refuge in Allah, the one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission. The seven heavens are held. The nafs is also held. The inclination toward evil does not move except by His permission. The temptation that arrives does not have power except by His permission. The pattern of self-destruction does not perpetuate except within His

governance. This means: the nafs, for all its commands toward evil, operates within a holding. It is not ungoverned. It is not a chaos outside divine authority. It is creation — dark in its inclinations, yes, but held by the same one who holds the seven heavens. And it is held within a permission that can be withdrawn.

مِنْ شَرِّهِ — from His evil. From the evil of the nafs. The prayer does not spiritually bypass this. The nafs has evil in it. Yusuf did not acquit it. The Prophet sought refuge from it. The tradition does not pretend the self is purely good and its inclinations are all trustworthy. The evil of the self is acknowledged, faced, named. And then: from Your evil. The evil that the self fears in itself is within divine governance — which means it is addressable. The one who governs the evil of the nafs is the one being asked to provide protection from it. The enemy is within the house. The one being asked for protection is the owner of the house.

اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ — O Allah, be my protector from your evil. The pivot. The self's own capacity for destruction is the one power's creation, within the one power's governance. The prayer asks the one power directly: be my protection from what You have permitted within me. Not from an external enemy. From the interior. The intimacy of this request is staggering. Allah is being asked to protect the self from the self — which means He is being asked to govern the nafs from within, to strengthen the inclination toward good against the inclination toward evil, to be the protection at the exact place where the self cannot protect itself: inside.

وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ — there is no god other than You. The nafs is not a god. Its appetites are not gods. The patterns of self-destruction are not powers with divine authority. They are creation — powerful within their permitted scope, and nothing outside it. There is no god other than the one being addressed. Which means: the nafs, for all its commanding toward evil, has no ultimate authority. The final word on what the self does, becomes, and is — belongs not to the nafs but to the Lord of the seven heavens. And the Lord of the seven heavens has been asked.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. This is where the fear of the self meets its most radical dissolution.

The self has been trying to manage its own nafs for as long as it can remember. Resolutions made and broken. Strategies developed and abandoned. Years of watching the same pattern repeat and trying harder each time with the same result. The entire enterprise of self-improvement — the discipline, the willpower, the self-monitoring, the shame after failure that was supposed to prevent the next failure but never quite did — all of it was the self trying to govern itself. And the self cannot govern itself. The nafs that commands toward evil is not going to be subdued by the part of the self that wishes it were different. Both the commanding nafs and the wishing self are creation. Creation cannot govern itself.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its own nafs is handed back to the only one capable of managing it. Not as resignation to sin. Not as the abandonment of effort or tawbah or striving. But as the recognition that the striving was always meant to be accompanied by this surrender: I cannot govern this. You govern it. Whatever You will for this nafs — its purification, its restraint, its being turned from evil toward good — whatever You will. The management of the interior belongs to the Lord of the interior.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: مُصَرَّفُ الْقُلُوبِ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ — the hearts are between two of the fingers of the Merciful, He turns them however He wills. The nafs, the heart, the inclinations — they are in His hand. Whatever You will is not the abandonment of the self to its worst inclinations. It is the placement of the self's interior in the hand of the one who turns hearts. Whatever You will: turn this nafs toward what You love.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The fear of the self contains a specific layer: the fear that the self's own sins will call down divine anger. That the pattern of failure is not just a personal tragedy but an accumulating account of actions that displease the Lord of the seven heavens. Refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger: the self asks to be received within divine pleasure rather than divine anger — not by pretending the sins are not there, but by placing itself, exactly as it is, within the one power's mercy, which is greater than the self's sins by an infinite distance.

وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The self has done things that merit punishment. This is not denied. The self that fears itself knows the specific content of its own account. The pardon is not asked because the account is clean. It is asked because the one who holds the account is also the one who said: قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا: عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ — Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. The pardon is asked to the one who offered it before it was asked. The one who fears the self for what the self has done is asking to be held within the pardon of the one who invited even the transgressor not to despair.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. Now this prayer reaches the deepest layer of the fear of the self. The self's capacity for evil is not ultimately the self's own production. It is within divine governance. The nafs that commands toward evil is the one power's creation, moving within the one power's permission. To seek refuge in You from You is to seek refuge in the one power's mercy from the one power's permission for the nafs to incline toward evil. Not two powers. One power, being asked to let its mercy govern what

its governance has permitted. I seek refuge in You from You: the most intimate prayer possible — the self asking its Creator to govern it from within.

لَا أَقُولُ إِنَّ نَفْسِي بَرِيئَةٌ — I do not claim that my soul is innocent. This was Yusuf's declaration. The greatest prophet of inner struggle, having passed through the disclosure of Zulaykha, having been exonerated by testimony and by revelation, still did not acquit his nafs. إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي — indeed the nafs persistently commands toward evil, except those upon whom my Lord has mercy. The exception is mercy. The protection from the self is mercy. The one being asked for mercy is the one who said that mercy is the exception that governs the nafs. Ask for it. It is available. It is why the prayer exists.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The self cannot enumerate the mercy that is available to it. It cannot count the pardons offered. It cannot measure the distance between its own nafs and the mercy of the Lord of the seven heavens. It cannot calculate how many times the inclination toward evil was held back without the self even knowing it was held back. You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who governs the nafs from within is not a distant administrator. You are as You have praised Yourself: the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, the Acceptor of repentance, the Concealer of faults, the one who said do not despair of My mercy. The self, for all its fear of itself, has nowhere better to place that fear than here.

The nafs commands toward evil.

Yusuf did not acquit it.

The Prophet sought refuge from it.

You are right to fear it.

And the one who holds it

is the one you just asked.

The hearts are between two of His fingers.

He turns them however He wills.

Ask Him to turn yours.

SECTION II

Material and Survival

*Fear of poverty — Fear of hunger — Fear of homelessness
Fear of debt — Fear of financial ruin — Fear of losing one's home
Fear of being unable to provide*

*One of them received divine disclosure through poverty
until he could find nothing but a cloak
which he would cut a hole in and wear.
And yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure
than any of you would rejoice at a gift.*

CHAPTER NINE

The Fear of Poverty

The dread of having nothing. The terror of the empty hand.

The Fear Named

Poverty is the fear that dresses itself in practicality. Unlike the fear of death, which can be dismissed as metaphysical, the fear of poverty insists on its own reasonableness. People have starved. People have frozen. People have lost everything and been left with nothing and had no rescue come. The fear of poverty is not irrational. It is based on what has happened to real human beings across the full span of history.

What does the fear of poverty actually claim? It claims that material resources are the basis of survival, and that without them the self is exposed to a level of suffering and degradation that may be unsurvivable. It claims that the self's security is a function of what it possesses. It claims that wealth is the protection and its absence is the vulnerability. And it claims that the provision of material resources is, fundamentally, the self's problem to solve — and that failure to solve it will be catastrophic.

The fear of poverty is also a fear of loss of dignity. Not just material deprivation but the shame of it — the exposure, the dependency, the inability to provide for oneself and those under one's care. In many cultures and in many people the fear of poverty is inseparable from the fear of humiliation. To be poor is to be seen as having failed at the basic human project of self-maintenance.

And then the hadith. One of them received divine disclosure through poverty until he could find nothing but a cloak which he would cut a hole in and wear. The righteous. The prophets and those who followed their path. And yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of us would rejoice at a gift. This is the destination this book is navigating toward: not the absence of poverty but a transformed relationship

to it. Not immunity to material deprivation but recognition that even the worst of it is within the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens, and that within that governance the divine disclosure multiplies the reward.

Hold the fear now. The specific version: the account running low, the bills unpaid, the work drying up, the savings gone, the dependents unfed. The specific texture of this fear in your body. Hold it and bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins with the one who provides. Not with the bank balance. Not with the employer. Not with the government or the family or any human system of provision. With the Lord of the seven heavens — the one whose attribute is Al-Razzaq, the Provider, the Sustainer, the one whose providing sustains every living thing from the worm in the earth to the eagle in the sky to the human being in every condition of wealth and poverty it has ever inhabited.

The fear of poverty assumes that provision comes from human effort alone, and that the absence of human effort or human resources means the absence of provision. The first prayer dismantles this assumption at the root. There is a Lord of the seven heavens. His attribute of provision is not contingent on the self's ability to earn, accumulate, or maintain. He provided for the people of the cave for three hundred years while they slept. He provided manna and quail in the wilderness for a nation that had nothing. He said: there is no creature on earth but that its provision is guaranteed by Allah.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The poverty feared is within divine governance. It is not a condition that arrives from a power outside the one being addressed. Whatever material deprivation the self has known or fears — it is within divine permission, within divine governance, within the same holding that holds the seven heavens. The neighbour-protector being asked is the same one who ordains conditions of material life. Be my protector from Yourself: protect me from the poverty You may permit. The one who can permit it is the one who can prevent it, and the one who can prevent it is the one being asked.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection being offered is not the limited protection of a wealthy friend who might help once and be exhausted. It is the protection of the Lord of the seven heavens, the Al-Razzaq, whose treasury never depletes. The provision that can flow from this neighbour-protector is not constrained by any material condition the self might be in. It is constrained only by divine wisdom — and divine wisdom has declared that its servants' provision is guaranteed.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than poverty. Greater than material deprivation in its most severe form. The Prophet, upon him be peace, who received the hadith that one of the righteous received divine disclosure through poverty until he had only a holed cloak — that same Prophet declared: Allah is the Greatest. The poverty of the righteous is not outside divine governance. It is its very form. And Allah is greater than everything He

discloses Himself through, including the poverty through which He discloses Himself to those nearest Him.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it precisely: the empty account, the inability to pay, the hunger, the dependents unfed. Allah is mightier than that. Not mightier in the sense that it will not happen — it may happen, it happened to the prophets. Mightier in the sense that whatever it becomes within divine governance, it is within divine governance — which means it is within divine care, divine wisdom, and divine reward. The poverty feared cannot exceed the one power's governance of it.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall: this same one holds the conditions of material life. The job market, the economic system, the circumstances that determine who has and who does not have — all of it within His holding. Nothing in the material order operates outside His permission. When provision contracts it contracts within His permission. When it expands it expands within His permission. The self is not subject to an impersonal economic machine operating outside divine governance. It is subject to the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens, who holds everything, including the material conditions of every life.

مِنْ شَرِّكَ — from His evil. The prayer does not pretend poverty is pleasant. Poverty has real evil in it — the suffering of hunger, the indignity of deprivation, the anguish of watching those you love go without. The prayer faces this honestly. And then asks: from Your evil. The poverty that is feared is within divine governance. The prayer asks the one who governs it to be the protection from its worst manifestations. Not immunity. Protection. The neighbour's presence in the poverty if it comes.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتِ — whatever You will. The self that has been managing its material security — accumulating, protecting, calculating, anxiously monitoring balances and reserves — hands the entire enterprise back.

بِمَا شِئْتِ means exactly what it says. Whatever happens, happens. The matter is returned entirely. And with it dissolves the entire engine of the fear of poverty: the sense of responsibility, the burden of stewardship, the weight of ensuring the outcome. These were never the self's to carry. Allah was always the one providing. The self was a channel, never a source. When the matter is returned entirely, what remains is not irresponsibility — responsibility itself was the fear. What remains is rest. The provision is His. The outcome is His. Whatever You will.

The righteous one in the holed cloak was not failing. He was inside the will of the Lord of the seven heavens. And one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of us at a gift. Whatever You will reaches all the way to the holed cloak. That is where its power becomes visible.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The fear of poverty contains a layer of fear about divine abandonment — the suspicion that poverty means divine displeasure, that material deprivation is a sign of being out of divine favour. This prayer confronts that directly. Refuge in Your pleasure: the self asks to be within divine pleasure regardless of its material condition. Not: give me wealth and I will be within Your pleasure. Give me Your pleasure whether You give me wealth or the holed cloak.

وَبِمُعَافَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. If the poverty has come as a consequence of the self's own choices — its mismanagement, its mistakes, its sins — the pardon is asked. The poverty is not denied or spiritually bypassed. It is faced directly and the pardon is asked from the one who holds both the poverty and the pardon. Both are His. Ask for the pardon.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The poverty, if it comes, comes within divine governance. Every contraction of provision is within the one power's permission. I seek refuge in the one power from the one power's permission for poverty — asking that its mercy outweigh whatever its governance has permitted. Not two powers. One power, whose mercy is vast enough to encompass even the poverty of the prophets and make of it a cause of rejoicing.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَنِيَتْ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Razzaq: the Provider. Al-Karim: the Generous. Al-Ghani: the Self-Sufficient. These are among the names with which You have praised Yourself. The self cannot enumerate what provision flows from a Provider who is Self-Sufficient, Generous, and mightier than all that exists. Whatever the material condition the self inhabits, it is within the governance of the one whose names include these. And He is as He has praised Himself.

The provision is guaranteed.

The divine disclosure of the holed cloak is real.

Both are true simultaneously.

The Provider does not abandon.

He discloses Himself most intensely through those nearest Him.

And the reward is multiplied in proportion to the intensity of the disclosure.

Whatever You will —

even the holed cloak.

CHAPTER TEN

The Fear of Hunger

The most ancient fear. The body's alarm at its own depletion.

The Fear Named

Hunger is the body speaking. It is not metaphorical or philosophical or constructed by culture. It is biological urgency — the organism's signal that it is running out of what it needs to continue. The fear of hunger is the fear of that signal becoming permanent, of the body's need going unmet until the organism fails.

It is the oldest human fear. Before fear of death by violence, before fear of social exclusion, before all the sophisticated fears that civilisation generates — the fear of starvation. The fear that this body, which requires constant replenishment, will not receive what it requires. That the hunger will become famine. That the famine will become dissolution.

The fear of hunger also contains a loss of dignity inseparable from the physical experience. To be hungry without the means to eat is to be exposed at the most fundamental level — the level of the body's basic maintenance. It is the poverty of poverty, the deprivation beneath all other deprivations.

And yet: one of them received divine disclosure through poverty until he could find nothing but a cloak which he would cut a hole in and wear. If the clothing was a holed cloak, the food was not abundant. The divine disclosure upon the righteous is not merely material — it reaches the body. The hunger real. And yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of us at a gift. This is the transformed relationship to even the most physical form of deprivation. Not because hunger becomes pleasant. But because within divine governance, what the body suffers is within the governance of the one who created the body, sustains it, and multiplies the reward of those whose sustenance He withholds.

Hold the fear. The specific version: the empty stomach, the children crying for food, the inability to eat. Hold it and bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَنِي عَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

The prayer begins with the one who feeds everything that exists. Not with the grocery store or the income or the food bank. With the Lord of the seven heavens — the one whose provision reaches the fish in the depths of the ocean, the bird that sleeps with an empty nest and wakes to find sustenance, the infant before it can ask, the creature before it can even conceptualise asking. The provision of the Lord of the seven heavens is not contingent on the creature's capacity to obtain it. It is contingent on His attribute as Provider.

Maryam, upon her be peace, receiving fresh dates in the throes of labour in a deserted place. Ibraheem, upon him be peace, leaving Hajar and the infant Ismail in a valley with no food and no water by divine command — and the water of Zamzam erupting from the earth in response to a mother's desperation. These are not stories about the exceptional. They are stories about the structure of provision: that it comes from the Lord of the seven heavens, who is not constrained by geography or circumstance or the absence of human supply chains.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The hunger feared is within divine permission. The one who permits the body's depletion is the same one being asked to be the protection from it. Not a different power that might override the deprivation.

The same power — asked to exercise its capacity for provision in this body, at this moment, within whatever its governance has arranged for this life.

عَزَّ جَارِكُ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens against hunger is the protection of the one whose treasury is inexhaustible. He does not protect against hunger by running out of food. He protects by the provision of a Provider whose giving does not diminish His possession. Nothing of what is in My treasury diminishes when I give, the Lord said. The protection against hunger is offered by the one whose capacity to end hunger is infinite and whose giving does not cost Him anything.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُتَمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّحْمُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than hunger. Greater than the body's depletion. Greater than the absence of food. This declaration is not a denial of hunger's physical reality. It is the placement of that reality within its proper frame: hunger is creation, and the Creator is greater than all of His creation. The hunger that the body feels is real. The one who is greater than it is also real. And the one who is greater is the one who feeds.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the specific hunger feared. The child's hunger. The family's hunger. The hunger of the old age without resources. Allah is mightier than that. Not mightier in the sense that it cannot happen — it happened to the righteous. Mightier in the sense that whatever hunger arrives, it arrives within the governance of the one whose power over it is absolute. He can feed from nothing. He fed a nation in a desert. He is mightier than this hunger, specifically.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall: this holding applies to the body too. The body is held. Its metabolism, its capacity to convert sustenance into life, its very hunger — all of it within the holding of the one power. The body does not operate outside divine governance. Its depletion does not happen outside divine permission. Which means: its provision does not happen outside divine permission either. Ask the one who holds the body. Ask the one who permits hunger. Ask the one who can end it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. Even this. Even the hunger. The self that has been ensuring the food supply — the planning, the saving, the stockpiling against possible shortage — hands the outcome to the one who governs it.

Whatever You will means exactly this. Whatever happens with the body's sustenance — happens. The engine of the fear of hunger was the sense that the self must ensure the body's supply, that it bears responsibility for what the body receives. When that is returned entirely to the one who provides, the engine stops. Allah was always feeding. He feeds the worm in the earth without any effort from the worm. If He wills abundance, abundance comes. If He discloses Himself through the empty stomach — if He wills the holed cloak and the sparse meal or no meal at all — then that disclosure is within His wisdom, within His mercy. Whatever You will reaches into the empty stomach and says: this too is within Your hand. And within Your hand it is not abandoned. It is held.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be hungry within divine pleasure is not to be forgotten. To be fed within divine anger is a catastrophe that no full stomach can compensate for. The prayer asks for the right thing in the right order: pleasure first, provision second. A person in divine pleasure who is hungry is closer to the destination of this book than a person in full provision who is not. Refuge in Your pleasure: whatever the body's condition, let the soul's condition be within Your pleasure.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The hunger, if it comes, is within divine permission. The body's depletion is the one power's governance. Seek refuge in the one power from the one power's permission for the body's trial. Not two powers competing. One power, whose mercy is being asked to hold the body within whose hunger He is disclosing Himself. The same hand that permits the hunger is the hand being asked to feed. Ask it.

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Razzaq. The Provider. You are as You have praised Yourself: the one who provides for every creature that exists, from the worm in the earth to the bird in the sky to the human being in the desert with no food and no water and a crying infant and the command to leave them there and trust. You are as You have praised Yourself. The provision comes from that. Whatever the stomach contains right now, the Provider has not changed.

*Hajar ran between the hills seven times.
The water came from the earth.
Not because she stopped running.
Because the Provider was already there.
He is as He has praised Himself.*

The provision is His to give.

Ask.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Fear of Homelessness

The dread of having no place in the world. No shelter. No ground to stand on.

The Fear Named

Home is not merely shelter. It is ontological. It is the place where the self belongs, the fixed point from which all movement is measured, the space where the self can stop performing and simply be. The fear of losing it is not just the fear of exposure to the elements. It is the fear of losing one's place in the world — the fear of becoming a person without a fixed address, without a ground, without the basic human marker of belonging somewhere.

The homeless person is one of the most invisible members of any society. To be without a home is to be without standing — in the eyes of institutions, in the eyes of neighbours, often in one's own eyes. The fear of homelessness is therefore also the fear of erasure: not physical death but social dissolution, the becoming-invisible that follows the loss of shelter.

And yet the Prophet, upon him be peace, was driven from his home. Makkah — the city of his birth, the city he loved above all others, the city he wept for as he left it — cast him out. He migrated to Madinah with what he could carry. Ibrahim, upon him be peace, was driven from his homeland into exile. Yusuf was separated from his family and his home from childhood. The Ansar of Madinah received people who had lost everything and gave them shelter. And the Quran says: do not think Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He is only deferring them to a Day when eyes will stare in horror.

Hold the fear. The specific version: the eviction notice, the lease ending, the inability to pay, the family without a place to sleep. Hold it. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرِّي جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who provides shelter. Not the landlord. Not the government housing authority. Not the family member with a spare room. The Lord of the seven heavens — the one whose creation is itself the shelter of everything that exists. The seven heavens are the roof of existence. The earth is the floor. Everything that lives moves within the shelter of creation sustained by the Lord of the Magnificent Throne.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The Arab tradition of the jiwaar — the neighbour-protector's sanctuary — was precisely the refuge for the one without a home. When the Prophet, upon him be peace, returned to Makkah for Umrah after years of exile, he entered under the protection of Mutim ibn 'Adi, who placed him under his jiwaar. The one without a home, who has no protector, seeks the protection of a neighbour powerful enough to shelter him. The prayer asks the Lord of the seven heavens to be exactly that. The most powerful neighbour-protector conceivable. And the one being asked holds the seven heavens themselves as His home.

عَرِّي جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The shelter of the Lord of the seven heavens is not subject to eviction. No court order can remove the one under His jiwaar from His protection. No economic condition can make His shelter unavailable. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the Magnificent Throne offers the only shelter that cannot be taken away. وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ: and there is no god but You. No other power determines where the self ultimately belongs. The self belongs to the one power. And the one power's shelter is not a physical structure that can be lost.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than homelessness. Greater than the absence of shelter. Greater than the loss of the physical space the self called home. The self's home is creation. The Lord of creation is mightier than any condition within creation. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the loss of the home, the exposure, the invisibility, the becoming a person without an address. Allah is mightier than that specific fear, that specific loss, that specific form of dissolution. The self's address in the deepest sense is with the one power — and that address cannot be lost.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth: this holding includes the earth. Includes every piece of it. The self is never truly without shelter in a universe whose Creator holds its entire structure in existence. The material shelter may be lost. The belonging of the self within the one power's creation is not a material thing that can be lost. مِنْ شَرِّكَ — from His evil. The evil of homelessness is real. The exposure, the danger, the indignity. The prayer faces it and asks: be my protection from Your permission for this. The one who can permit the loss of shelter is the one being asked to provide what no material structure can provide: the shelter of His protection.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْت — whatever You will. Even this. Even the loss of the home. The Prophet was driven from Makkah and the Lord of the seven heavens said: He who ordained the Quran upon you will return you to a place of return. He was returned — not to the same home but to the fulfilment of the promise. بِمَا شِئْت releases the self's grip on the specific shelter it currently inhabits and places the question of belonging in the hands of the one who determines all belonging. Whatever You will — including exile, including the migration that the prophets made — within Your governance, within Your wisdom, within Your promise of return.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be homeless within divine pleasure is to be in better condition than the person with a palace within divine anger. And to be sheltered within divine pleasure is the fullest state — the shelter of His pleasure and the shelter of His provision together. The prayer does not only ask for the strength to be homeless with dignity. It asks for divine pleasure — and divine pleasure, for the Muhajiroon who had it, led to Madinah. Ask for it before the physical shelter. The physical shelter follows the pleasure. It is the shelter that no eviction notice can disturb. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The homelessness, if it comes, is within Your permission. Shelter me from the full severity of what You permit. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Mu'min: the one who gives security. Al-Hafiz: the Protector. You are as You have praised Yourself. The self's deepest shelter is in that.

The Prophet was driven from Makkah.

The Lord said: We will return you.

The home is His to give

and His to take

and His to restore.

Whatever You will —

You are Al-Mu'min.

The security is Yours to provide.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Fear of Debt

The weight that follows. The obligation that never sleeps.

The Fear Named

Debt is fear with a number on it. It is the quantification of the self's insufficiency — the precise measure of the gap between what the self has and what it owes. And it compounds. The fear of debt is not just the fear of the present number. It is the fear of what the number will become if unpaid, of the interest that will accumulate, of the creditors who will eventually lose patience, of the legal mechanisms that will be deployed, of the assets that will be seized, of the credit that will be destroyed, of the future that will be foreclosed.

Debt also carries a particular shame. To owe is to be beholden. To be beholden is to be constrained. The person in debt is not fully free — part of every future earning belongs to the past, to the creditor, to the obligation incurred before the present moment. The fear of debt is in part the fear of this unfreedom: the self whose future is already spoken for, whose options are already narrowed by what it owes.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, sought refuge with Allah from debt specifically. He said: a man who dies in debt — his deed is held back until his debt is settled. He sought refuge from it in his morning and evening supplications. Not because debt is always avoidable or always sinful, but because debt is a form of bondage, and the Prophet did not wish bondage on himself or his community.

Hold the specific debt. Its number. Its creditor. The specific weight of it. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one before whom all debts are ultimately held. Not the bank. Not the creditor. The Lord of the seven heavens — the one who said: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ* — Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth. The self's wealth, its earnings, its capacity to discharge obligation — all of it is on loan from the Lord of the seven heavens. The debt to the creditor is real. But it exists within the context of a much larger relationship: everything the self has was given by the one power, and what the one power gives, He can multiply.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The debt is within divine governance. The inability to pay is within divine permission. The creditor's patience or impatience is within divine governance. The one being asked to be the protection is the one who governs every aspect of the debt's trajectory — who can expand the provision, soften the creditor, arrange the settlement, or multiply the reward of the one who bears the weight with patience. *عَزَّ جَارِكَ* — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens over the indebted self is not the protection of a co-signer. It is the protection of the one who owns the treasuries of everything.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ جَمًّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the debt. The number on the debt, however large, is finite. The one power is infinite. Greater than what I fear and what I dread — name it: the specific amount, the specific creditor, the specific consequence. Allah is mightier than that. The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall holds the economic system within which the debt exists. He holds the creditor. He holds the courts. He holds every mechanism that the fear imagines deploying against the self. Everything operates within His permission. And His permission can change.

The Prophet used to pray: اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِي بِحَلَالِكَ عَنْ حَرَامِكَ، وَأَغْنِنِي بِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ — O Allah, suffice me with Your lawful provision against Your forbidden, and enrich me through Your grace from all others. The debt's resolution is asked from the one who can provide it without the self needing to turn to unlawful means or humiliating dependencies.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of the debt — the calculations, the schemes, the anxiety about how to make the numbers work — Whatever You will means exactly what it says. The debt and its resolution are returned entirely. The anxiety of management — the calculations, the schemes, the burden of making the numbers work — dissolves when the matter is returned. Not because the debt disappears in the moment of the prayer. But because the engine of the fear — the sense that the self is responsible for resolving it, that failure to resolve it is the self's failure — is dissolved. The resolution is His. The timing is His. The means are His. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The debt is real. The obligation is real. Ask for the pleasure before asking for the discharge. A person within divine pleasure carrying a debt is in better condition than a person free of debt within divine anger. And a person within divine pleasure who is free of debt is in the best condition of all. The prayer does not only ask for patience in the debt. It asks for divine pleasure — and divine pleasure, for the one who carries it, also contains the possibility of the debt's relief. Ask for the pleasure. The pleasure encompasses the relief. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The debt's weight is within divine permission. Ask the one who permitted the weight to lift it, or to be the strength that carries it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَيَّ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Mughniy: the Enricher. The one who can make the self sufficient. He is as He has praised Himself. The enrichment is His to give.

*The debt has a number.
The Provider has no limit.
Ask the Enricher to enrich.
Ask the Protector to protect.
The weight is real.
The one who holds the seven heavens
also holds the number.
Whatever You will.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Fear of Financial Ruin

The total collapse. Losing everything at once.

The Fear Named

Financial ruin is not the gradual pressure of poverty or the specific weight of debt. It is the catastrophic event — the collapse of everything at once. The business that fails taking the savings with it. The investment that vanishes. The lawsuit that strips the assets. The fraud that empties the accounts. The economic crash that destroys what was built over decades. The overnight transformation from sufficiency to nothing.

The fear of financial ruin is the fear of the abyss, not the slope. It is not the fear of gradual deprivation but of sudden freefall. And it is compounded by the social dimension: financial ruin is often public. It cannot be hidden. The reputation, the relationships, the social standing — all of them are bound up with the financial identity, and when the financial identity collapses it tends to pull them all down together.

History is full of people who were financially ruined and survived it, often arriving at something better on the other side. Job, upon him be peace — Ayyub — lost everything: his children, his wealth, his health. Everything he had built and loved and accumulated was taken. And then it was returned and multiplied. Not immediately. Not without the full depth of the disclosure. But it was returned. The Lord of the seven heavens who permitted the loss was the same Lord who restored it.

Hold the specific fear: the total collapse, the overnight nothing, the losing of everything built. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins not with the wealth and what might happen to it, but with the one who gives and takes wealth. Every financial accumulation the self has ever made was within the provision of the Lord of the seven heavens. Every loss the self has ever suffered was within His permission. The fear of financial ruin is the fear of the Lord of the seven heavens withdrawing what He gave. And the Lord of the seven heavens is the one being addressed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The ruin feared is Your permission. Be my protector from that permission. Not the protector who keeps the business afloat through human strategy alone. The protector who governs the conditions of material life from within the one power's authority over all of them. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is Your protection. Ayyub's restoration was not a small provision. It was everything lost and more. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens does not run out when the accounts do.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعَنَّ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than financial ruin. Greater than the total collapse. The fear pictures the worst possible material outcome. Allah is greater than the worst possible material outcome. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific ruin feared, the

specific collapse, the specific totality of the loss. The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall also holds the self after the ruin. The ruin is not the end of divine governance over the self. It is an event within divine governance. Every event within divine governance is within divine care.

Ayyub received divine disclosure through the total loss of everything. And the Quran calls him صَبَّارٌ — one of immense endurance — and نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ — what an excellent servant. The ruin was not a sign of divine abandonment. It was divine self-disclosure of the most intense kind. The prophets and the righteous are those through whom Allah discloses Himself most intensely. Financial ruin, at its most total, can be one of the forms of that disclosure.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. Even the total collapse. Ayyub said it in the depth of his disclosure: harm has touched me and You are the most merciful of the merciful. He did not ask for his wealth back. He asked for mercy. And the mercy came — with the wealth following it. بِمَا شِئْتَ places even financial ruin within the whatever You will. Not because ruin is desired. Because the one who permits it is also the one who restores, and the restoration that follows a whatever You will is the restoration of Ayyub — everything and more.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Ayyub in his ruin was within divine pleasure. We know this because the Quran calls him an excellent servant. To be in financial ruin within divine pleasure is to be in better condition than Qarun in his immense wealth within divine anger. And to be in material ease within divine pleasure is the fullest state of all. The prayer does not ask for ruin to be borne with patience. It asks for divine pleasure — and divine pleasure, when it is present, also restores. Ayyub's pleasure preceded his restoration. The pleasure came first. The wealth followed the pleasure. The prayer asks for the right thing. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the ruin is within Your permission. Ask the one who permitted it to be the restoration. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Baasit: the Extender. The one who extends provision after contraction. He is as He has praised Himself.

Ayyub lost everything.

He did not lose the Lord of the seven heavens.

The Lord called him an excellent servant

in the depth of the ruin.

The ruin was not the end.

Whatever You will —

even this.

You are Al-Baasit.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Fear of Losing One's Home

Not homelessness in the abstract — this specific home, these specific walls, this specific place of belonging.

The Fear Named

The fear of losing one's home is distinct from the fear of homelessness. Homelessness is the abstract condition. This fear is particular: this home. The one where the children grew. Where the family gathered. Where the specific memories live in the specific walls. The fear of losing one's home is the fear of the erasure of a specific world — not just shelter but the physical container of a life.

People fight for their homes with an intensity that exceeds the fight for most other possessions. Not because of the financial value but because of what the home contains: the accumulated texture of a life, the routines and the smells and the specific fall of light in a specific room at a specific time of day that belongs to no other place on earth. To lose the home is to lose the physical anchor of identity. It is a death of a kind.

The Ansar of Madinah lost their comfortable position as hosts when the Muhajiroon arrived and the community's resources were shared. The Muhajiroon had lost their homes in Makkah entirely. They did not return to those specific homes for years. Some never returned. And the Quran says of both: *أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ* — those are the ones who are successful.

Hold the specific home. Its specific rooms. What it would mean to lose it. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who said: the earth is My spread and the sky is My roof. The self's home is a structure within the Lord's creation. It was given. It can be taken. It can be given again in another form in another place. The Lord of the seven heavens is the one who determines where His servants dwell — and His determination is not arbitrary. Every migration the prophets made was within divine wisdom, leading toward something the home being left behind could not contain.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The loss of the home, if it comes, is within divine permission. The protection from it is the same source. The neighbour-protector who is asked is the one who can preserve the home, or who can make the migration that follows the loss into something greater than what was left behind. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is Your protection. The protection encompasses both the preservation of the home and the blessing of whatever replaces it.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعَنَّ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the loss of this specific home. Greater than the grief of it, which is real. Greater than the memories in the walls, which matter. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread: the specific loss, the specific erasure. The one who holds the seven heavens holds this home. And holds whatever comes after it. The

Muhajiroon who left Makkah found in Madinah a community that loved them more than any home's walls could. The Lord of the seven heavens can make the replacement exceed the original.

مِنْ شَرِّكَ: from His evil. The grief of losing one's home is real evil. The prayer faces it honestly and asks: be my protection from the full weight of what Your governance permits here. The loss may come. The protection is not from the knowledge of the loss. It is from being accompanied through it, from having the neighbour-protector present when the keys are handed over.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. Even the loss of this home. The Prophet loved Makkah and wept as he left it. He did not pretend the loss was nothing. He felt it fully. And then he went where the Lord of the seven heavens directed. بِمَا شِئْتَ is not the suppression of grief. It is the placement of the grief and the home and the loss and the future all within the governance of the one who sees the destination that the migration is moving toward, even when the one migrating cannot yet see it.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A home lost within divine pleasure is the Hijra. A home preserved within divine anger is Pharaoh's palace.

The prayer asks for the right thing first. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the loss is within Your permission. Be my protection from the severity of it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتُنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who said: wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah. The home is a specific place. The face of Allah is in every place. Whatever You will.

The Prophet wept for Makkah.

He did not stop moving.

*What waited in Madinah
could not have been found*

by staying.

*Whatever You will —
even this home.*

*Wherever you turn,
there is the face of Allah.*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Fear of Being Unable to Provide

The weight of dependents. The terror of those who rely on you going without.

The Fear Named

This fear is distinct from the fear of one's own poverty because its object is not the self's own deprivation but the deprivation of those under the self's care. The parent who cannot feed the child. The husband who cannot provide for the wife. The person responsible for elderly parents who cannot meet their needs. This fear has a particular cruelty: it is the suffering of the self at the anticipated suffering of those it loves. It is the most altruistic of the material fears and therefore the most tenacious.

It is also the fear that can drive people to unlawful means. More wrongdoing has been committed in the name of providing for dependents than almost any other justification. The man who steals for his hungry child. The person who compromises their ethics to keep the income flowing. The one who remains in a corrupt arrangement because leaving would mean those who rely on them going without. The fear of being unable to provide is the fear that most persistently tries to negotiate with principle.

And yet: the same Lord who created the dependents created the obligation of provision. He created the child and He placed the provision for the child within His governance, not solely within the parent's earning capacity. The Lord who said: kill not your children for fear of poverty — We will provide for them and for you — is the same Lord being addressed in this prayer. The provision of the dependents is within His guarantee, not only within the provider's income.

Hold it: the specific faces of those who depend on you. The specific fear of them going without. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who provides for the dependents directly — not only through the provider, but in His own right. The child was provided for before it could conceptualise a provider. It was provided for in the womb, before it could ask. It was provided for in the first breath, before any human arrangement was in place. The Lord of the seven heavens is the provider of the dependents. The human provider is one of His instruments — not the source.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The inability to provide, if it comes, is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the one who governs the provision of everyone in the household. Not just the provider's income — but the provision of each dependent directly. The neighbour-protector who holds the seven heavens also holds the children, the family, the elderly parents. Their provision is His — directly, immediately, completely — assumed by Him before the provider was born.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the inability to provide. Greater than the gap between what the dependents need and what the provider can currently supply. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ وَمَا

أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than this specific fear — these specific faces, this specific household, this specific shortfall. The Lord who said We will provide for them and for you is mightier than the provision gap. He provided for Maryam in a deserted place. He provided for the people of the cave while they slept. He provided for Ismail in a valley with no water. The dependents are His. He provides.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall: He holds the provision for every creature within them. The dependent child is within this holding as directly as the provider parent. Ask the one who holds both.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's need to be the one who provides — to be the source, to be the one who ensures they are not hungry, to be indispensable to those it loves — is placed alongside everything else into whatever You will. The provision of the dependents is His will to determine. He may route it through the self's earning. He may route it through other means entirely. He may route the provision through other channels entirely, disclosing through the period of the provider's inability that the provision was never from the self in the first place. Whatever You will: the dependents are in Your hands. They were always in Your hands. The self was the instrument, not the source.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A provider within divine pleasure who is temporarily unable to provide is not failing. A provider outside divine pleasure whose income is abundant is the one in true poverty. And a provider within divine pleasure whose household is also provided for is in the fullest state available. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, it also asks the Provider to provide. Both. The pleasure and the provision. Ask for the pleasure first. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the inability is within Your permission. Be my protection from its full severity, and be the provision for those who depend when my ability falls short. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Razzaq. The Provider. Not of the self alone. Of every creature that exists. The dependents are creatures. They are His to provide for. He is as He has praised Himself.

Kill not your children for fear of poverty.

We will provide for them and for you.

The Lord said this.

The provision is His before it is yours.

The dependents are His

before they are yours.

Ask the Provider to provide.

He is Al-Razzaq.

SECTION III

Body and Health

Fear of illness — Fear of pain — Fear of suffering — Fear of disability
Fear of losing one's mind — Fear of medication change
Fear of doctors and hospitals — Fear of ageing — Fear of disfigurement

One of them would be tested with lice until it would kill him.
And yet one of them would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure
than any of you would rejoice at a gift.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Fear of Illness

The dread of the body turning against itself. The self betrayed by its own form.

The Fear Named

The body is not trusted. It has always been capable of this — of breaking down, of harbouring what will harm it, of beginning a process that cannot be stopped once started. The fear of illness is the fear of the body's fragility made sudden and visible. It was always fragile. The fear is that this is now being disclosed.

Illness takes the self as its location. Unlike poverty or homelessness, which happen around the self, illness happens inside it. The self cannot leave the sick body. The sick body is where the self must live for the duration. There is no other address. This is what gives the fear of illness its particular claustrophobia: the threat is the house itself.

The tradition does not pretend illness away. The Prophet, upon him be peace, was ill. He experienced fever. He knew physical suffering. And he said: no fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls the believer, even if it were the prick of a thorn, except that Allah expiates some of his sins through it. The body's suffering is within divine governance. The illness through which Allah discloses Himself is not punishment. It is address.

Hold the specific illness feared. Not the abstract category — the specific one. Cancer. Stroke. The chronic condition that grinds. The sudden event. Whatever form it takes in your specific dread. Hold it and bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرِّي جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who created the body. Not just its external conditions but the body itself — every cell, every organ, every process. The Lord of the seven heavens created the immune system, the healing response, the capacity the body has to repair what is damaged. The illness that the self fears is occurring in a body created by the one power, held in existence by the one power, and subject to the governance of the one power at every biological level.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The illness, if it comes, is within divine permission. The one power permits the cell to mutate or the vessel to rupture or the system to fail. The protection from this is asked from the same one who permits it. Not a doctor. Not a treatment. The one power, asked to be the neighbour-protector in the body's own interior. The protection is not external to the illness. It is within it, as the one power is within everything that exists.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: make use of medicine, for Allah has not sent down an illness except that He has sent down its cure, with the exception of old age. The cure exists because the one power created it. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens encompasses the medical knowledge, the treatment, the healer's skill — all of it is within His governance. The mighty protection works through the created means as well as beyond them. وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ: not even the illness. Especially not the illness. The illness too has no god but the one power.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَنْغَرْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّحْمِ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاوُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my

protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the illness. Greater than the disease process, however advanced. Greater than the prognosis, however severe. The illness is biological process — creation. The Creator is mightier than all of His creation. The cancer is creation. The stroke is creation. The degenerative process is creation. And the Creator is mightier than all of it combined.

اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the specific illness in the specific organ at the specific severity the fear imagines. Allah is mightier than that. Not mightier in the sense of guaranteeing recovery — the prophets became ill and some died of illness. Mightier in the sense that whatever the illness becomes, the one power governs it at every stage. The illness cannot exceed divine governance. It cannot take the self somewhere the one power does not hold.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission: every cell division in the body requires His permission. The illness does not progress outside His permission. The healing does not occur outside His permission. The one power governs the body's interior with the same authority with which it governs the cosmos. Ask the one who governs the interior to exercise that governance with mercy.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been managing its body's health — the diet, the exercise, the monitoring, the early detection, the anxiety about every symptom. When the matter is returned entirely, what dissolves with it is the terror of losing control of the body's outcome. Allah governs the body. Whatever He wills for this body — illness or

health, the acute event or the slow decline, recovery or the approach of death — is within His governance. Whatever You will places the body completely in the hands of the one who made it. And the one who made it knows it better than the self does.

This does not mean the abandonment of medical care. It means the dissolution of the fear beneath the medical care — the anxiety that the self is ultimately responsible for the body's survival. It is not. The body's survival is within divine governance. Use the doctor, take the medicine, follow the treatment — and then: whatever You will. The outcome is not the self's responsibility. It never was. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be ill within divine pleasure is the state of the Prophet on his sickbed. To be healthy within divine anger is the state of Pharaoh in his palace. The prayer asks for the right thing first: divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also healing. A person within divine pleasure who is ill is in better condition than a person within divine anger who is well. And a person within divine pleasure who is also healed is in the fullest state of all. Ask for the pleasure. The healing follows the pleasure. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Shafi: the Healer. You are as You have praised Yourself. Ask the Healer.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The illness is within Your permission. The permission can change. The body that is currently ill is in the hands of the one who holds the seven heavens. Those hands can heal. Ask them directly. Not as a formula. As the address of a person who knows that the only one who governs the body's interior is the one being spoken to right now.

The illness is within His permission.

The cure is within His permission.

He is Al-Shafi.

There is no healing except His healing.

Whatever You will —

and if You will healing,

say: heal, and it is healed.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Fear of Pain

Not the pain itself — the anticipation of it. The dread before the suffering begins.

The Fear Named

Pain is the body's most direct communication. It speaks without translation. It does not allow the self to remain at a distance from what is happening in the body — it closes that distance entirely, places the self at the site of the hurt, and demands presence. The fear of pain is the fear of that forced presence. The fear of being made to stay inside a body that is burning, crushing, cutting, throbbing, screaming without rest.

The fear of pain is often worse than the pain itself. The dread of what is coming — the surgery, the procedure, the chronic condition's next flare, the disease's progression — occupies the self in advance of the experience and multiplies its duration enormously. A person who suffers an hour of pain has suffered an hour. A person who fears an hour of pain for a month before it arrives has suffered a month and an hour.

And yet: one of them received divine disclosure through lice until it would kill him. The body consumed from within, relentlessly, with no relief. This is the form Allah's self-disclosure took for one of the righteous. Not despite the pain. Through it. The pain was the specific form of the divine address. And that person would rejoice more intensely at this disclosure than any of us would at a gift.

Hold the specific pain feared. The one that lives in the imagination as the worst possibility. Bring the first prayer into its presence.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who created the nervous system through which pain is felt. The pain signal travels through a nervous system that the Lord of the seven heavens designed and sustains. The experience of pain is happening within a body whose every nerve was created by the one power. The pain is not happening outside divine governance. It is happening within it — inside a body held in existence moment by moment by the same one now being addressed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The pain, if it comes, comes from within divine permission. Not from outside divine governance — from within it. The protection from it is the same: from Yourself. The one who permits the pain signal is the one being asked to govern it, to limit it, to be present within it. The neighbour-protector in pain is not an anaesthetic. It is the presence of the one power inside the pain itself. عَزَّ: mighty is the protection that can be present within suffering without being undone by it.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the pain. Greater than its intensity, its duration, its specific quality of suffering. Pain is a signal in a nervous system that is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the most intense pain the nervous system is capable of generating. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific

pain feared. Not mightier in the sense that it will not hurt. Mightier in the sense that whatever the pain becomes, the one power is greater than it, present within it, and governing it at every moment of its duration.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, experienced severe pain in his final illness. He said: the pain I am experiencing is equivalent to the pain of two men. And he was patient. Not because he did not feel it — he felt it fully. But because the one power was greater than the pain, and the patience within the pain was itself a form of divine address. The pain through which Allah discloses Himself is not outside His care. It is inside it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been managing its exposure to pain — the avoidance strategies, the prophylactic measures, the anxiety about the body's vulnerability. When the matter is returned entirely, the management dissolves. Not the practical steps to reduce unnecessary suffering — those remain. But the terror beneath the management: the sense that the self is responsible for ensuring pain does not arrive. It is not. The body's experience is within divine governance. Whatever You will: including the pain, if it comes. Including the lice that would kill him. Whatever You will. The one who wills it is also the one present within it.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be in pain within divine pleasure is the state of every prophet who suffered in the body and was patient. To be free of pain within divine anger is the state of the one who has been given comfort and has used it for ingratitude. The prayer asks for the right condition: divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also relief from pain. A person in pain within divine pleasure is closer to the destination of this book than a person free of pain outside it. And a person free of pain within divine pleasure is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the pain is within Your permission. Be my protection from its full severity. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who is with His servant in affliction. You are as You have praised Yourself.

The pain is within His permission.

He is present within it.

*One of them received His disclosure
through lice until it killed him —*

and rejoiced more intensely than any of us at a gift.

Whatever You will.

You are present within whatever You will.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Fear of Suffering

Suffering is more than pain. It is pain with the sense that the pain should not be.

The Fear Named

Pain and suffering are not identical. Pain is the sensation. Suffering is the relationship to the sensation — the layer of resistance, of it should not be this way, of why is this happening to me, of how long will this last, that transforms pain into something more consuming. A person can experience pain without suffering if the pain is understood, accepted, or held within a framework that gives it meaning. And a person can suffer intensely without physical pain at all — through grief, through injustice, through loss, through the relentless accumulation of hardship without apparent relief.

The fear of suffering is the fear of protracted, unrelenting, meaning-stripped hardship. Not a single acute event but the long form: the illness that does not resolve, the grief that does not lift, the circumstances that do not change, the prayer that does not seem to be answered, the years of difficulty without the turn. The fear that this is simply what life is now, and that no relief is coming.

The tradition addresses this directly. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: the affair of the believer is all good, and this is not the case for anyone except the believer. If he is touched by ease, he is grateful — and that is good for him. If he is touched by hardship, he is patient — and that is good for him. The structure of the believer's relationship to suffering is that nothing which touches him is outside the possibility of being good. The suffering that strips meaning has its meaning restored by the one power's governance of it.

Hold it: the specific form of suffering feared. The long form. The protracted difficulty. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the Lord — the one who governs the duration of difficulty as well as its presence. The Lord of the seven heavens does not only determine whether suffering arrives. He determines how long it lasts. When it turns. What it is disclosing. How it ends. The one power governs the entire arc of the suffering, not only its opening moment.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The suffering is within divine permission. The neighbour-protector being asked is the one who permits the duration, who knows the ending, who is present within every moment of it that has not yet arrived. The neighbour-protector does not tell the suffering person when it will end. He is present within the not-yet-knowing. That presence is the protection. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection is mighty because it is present even in the long form. Especially in the long form.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the suffering. Greater than its duration. Greater than the accumulation of difficulty that seems to have no end. Greater than the grief that will not lift. Greater than the years. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ: mightier than the specific fear — the protracted suffering, the long form, the this is just what my life is now. Allah is

mightier than the narrative the suffering generates about itself. And the one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall holds the arc of the suffering — including its turning point, including its end, including what is being disclosed through it that the self cannot yet read from inside.

Ibrahim, upon him be peace, was thrown into a fire. The fire was commanded to be cool and safe for him. Not extinguished — cool. The suffering did not disappear. Its quality changed. This is the governance of the one power over the experience of suffering: not only its presence or absence but its very quality, which is within the one power's hand.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been fighting the suffering — resisting it, trying to make it stop, bargaining with it, attempting to force the turn. When the matter is returned entirely: whatever You will. Not the suppression of the desire for relief — that desire is human and honest. But the release of the insistence that relief must come now, in this form, through this route. Whatever You will includes the duration. Whatever You will includes the form the disclosure takes. The fire can be cool. Or not. Whatever You will. The one who wills the suffering is also the one present within it. Both are the same one.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To suffer within divine pleasure is to be Ayyub: the Quran calls him an excellent servant in the depths of his suffering. To prosper within divine anger is to be Qarun: the Quran shows the earth swallowing him. The prayer asks for the right thing — divine pleasure within the suffering — and within divine pleasure, also the turn. The turn comes to those within His pleasure. Ask for the pleasure first. The relief follows the pleasure as Ayyub’s restoration followed his patience. And a person within divine pleasure who is also free of suffering is in the fullest state. Ask for both: the pleasure and its fullness. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: You are the one who wills the suffering and the one who wills its end. I seek refuge in You from You. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Lateef: the Subtle, the one who is present in the suffering in ways the self cannot detect. You are as You have praised Yourself. Even in the long form. Even in the years.

The affair of the believer is all good.

If touched by ease: gratitude.

If touched by hardship: patience.

Either way: good.

This is not available to anyone except the believer.

You are a believer.

Whatever You will —

all of it is good.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Fear of Disability

The dread of the body's permanent diminishment. Of losing a capacity that will not be returned.

The Fear Named

The fear of disability is distinct from the fear of illness because it introduces permanence. Illness might resolve. Disability, in its defining character, does not. The limb that is lost is not regrown. The sight that is gone does not return. The neurological damage that alters cognition is not repaired. The fear of disability is the fear of a self permanently changed — a before and after with no route back.

It is also the fear of dependency. To be disabled is, in many of its forms, to require help with things the self previously did alone. This wounds something deep in most people — the sense of self-sufficiency, of being a contributor rather than a receiver, of not being a burden. The fear of disability is often the fear of losing one's position in the economy of mutual care and becoming only a recipient within it.

The Quran shows a different economy. The blind man — Ibn Umm Maktum — was the occasion of one of the most significant divine addresses in the history of revelation. Allah revealed عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى — He frowned and turned away — not to rebuke the blind man but to rebuke the Prophet for turning away from him. The blind man's question was more worthy of divine attention than the conversation the Prophet was having with the powerful. Disability did not place Ibn Umm Maktum outside divine care. It placed him at its centre.

Hold the specific capacity feared to lose. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who gave the capacity and who governs its presence and its absence. The eye that sees: His creation. The leg that walks: His creation. The mind that thinks clearly: His creation. Every capacity the self currently has is a gift from the one power, which the one power may maintain or withdraw within His governance. The disability feared is within His governance, which means it is within His wisdom, and the wisdom of the Lord of the seven heavens is not arbitrary or punitive. It is disclosure.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The loss of the capacity, if it comes, is from within divine permission. The protection from it is from the same source: from Yourself. The Lord of the seven heavens, asked to be the neighbour-protector in the body that has lost a capacity, is the same Lord who said to Ibn Umm Maktum's occasion: what would make you know? Perhaps he will purify himself. The one who is blind in the eyes may see with a clarity the sighted do not access. The one power governs the capacities, and the withdrawal of one capacity is not the withdrawal of worth, of address, or of divine nearness.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهِمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the disability. Greater than the loss of the capacity. The self is not its capacities. It is awareness within the one power's governance.

That awareness is not diminished by the body's diminishment. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ**: mightier than the specific loss feared. Mightier than the dependency feared. Mightier than the before-and-after that the fear insists defines the self permanently. Allah is mightier than the definition the disability offers. The disability is creation. The Creator is mightier than all of His creation, including the created condition of the body.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: if I afflict my servant in his two beloved things — his eyes — and he is patient, I will compensate him for them with paradise. The loss of the eyes is within divine governance. The compensation is also within divine governance. And the compensation is not a lesser thing — it is paradise. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the accounting of what is given and what is taken, and the accounting does not show a deficit for the one who receives disability with patience.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's grip on its current capacities — the identification with being able-bodied, sighted, mobile, cognitively intact — is handed back. Whatever You will for this body. The disability, if it comes, does not change the self's address with the one power. Ibn Umm Maktum was at the centre of the divine address. Not in spite of his blindness. In the occasion of his blindness. Whatever You will for this body: the self that inhabits it remains the self that is asking this prayer, and that self has the Lord of the seven heavens as its neighbour-protector regardless of what the body can or cannot do.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A disabled person within divine pleasure is Ibn Umm Maktum — the occasion of Quranic revelation, the addressee of divine rebuke directed at the Prophet on his behalf. A fully-abled person within divine anger is anyone who had all their capacities and used them for ingratitude. The prayer asks for the right condition first: divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also the preservation of the body's capacities, or the grace to inhabit their absence. Both are His to give. And a person within divine pleasure with all their capacities intact is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: whatever capacity You have given and whatever You may withdraw — I seek refuge in You from You. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself.

He frowned and turned away.

Not to rebuke the blind man.

To rebuke the one who turned from him.

The blind man was the occasion of revelation.

*Disability does not move a person
out of divine address.*

It can move them to its centre.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Fear of Losing One's Mind

The self's deepest dread: that the instrument of the self will shatter.

The Fear Named

The mind is the self's instrument for everything. Through it the self perceives, reasons, remembers, loves, prays, understands. The fear of losing the mind is therefore the fear of losing the self's access to itself — not merely a capacity, like sight or movement, but the capacity through which all other capacities are experienced. The fear of dementia, psychosis, cognitive collapse, the dissolution of the personality — this is the fear of the self becoming unrecognisable to itself.

It is also the fear that carries a unique shame. Mental illness and cognitive decline are still, in many cultures and many families, sources of hidden humiliation. The mad person. The demented elder who no longer recognises their children. The one who hears voices or loses the thread of reality. The fear of losing one's mind is inseparable, for many people, from the fear of being seen as having lost it.

And yet: who governs the mind? The mind is creation. Its chemistry, its architecture, its extraordinary complexity — all of it created by the one power, sustained by the one power, subject to the governance of the one power at every synaptic level. The mind that the self fears losing was never the self's own. It was always a gift. The Lord of the seven heavens gave it. The Lord of the seven heavens governs its functioning. The Lord of the seven heavens determines what it remains and what it becomes. The fear of losing the mind is, at its root, the fear of what the one power might do with the instrument He created.

Hold it. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who gave the mind. Not the neuroscientist's description of it — the theological reality: every thought the self has ever had has occurred within the governance of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The mind that the self is afraid of losing belongs, at every level of its functioning, to the one being addressed. It was given. It is held. Its continuation is His to govern.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The loss of the mind, if it comes, comes from within divine permission. The one power permits the neurodegenerative process, permits the psychotic break, permits the chemical imbalance that alters the self's experience of reality. The protection from this is asked from the same source: from Yourself. The neighbour-protector who holds the seven heavens also holds the mind's chemistry. The protection being asked is intimate to the point of being neurological. Be my protection at the level of the neurotransmitter. At the level of the plaque. At the level of whatever the body is doing inside the skull that the self cannot control. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: mighty is the protection that reaches that deep.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the loss of the mind. Greater than cognitive decline, however advanced. Greater than psychosis, however consuming. Greater than

dementia, however total. The mind is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation. And here is the deepest point: the self that fears losing the mind is not identical to the mind. The awareness that is afraid of cognitive collapse is not itself a cognitive function. It is something prior to cognition. The Lord of the seven heavens is the Lord of that awareness too — and that awareness does not depend on the mind's intact functioning to be within divine care.

The person with advanced dementia who no longer recognises their children is not outside divine governance. The mind that has lost its coherence is still within the one power's holding. The one who made it holds it in its dissolution as completely as He held it in its clarity. Allah is greater than the fear of what happens to the mind when the mind loses itself. He is present within the dissolution as He was present within the clarity.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been trying to protect the mind — the cognitive exercises, the mental challenges, the lifestyle measures. Whatever You will dissolves the terror beneath the protective measures without removing the measures themselves. The outcome of the mind's functioning is within divine governance. Whatever You will for this mind: its continuation in clarity, or its particular form of dissolution, or the specific way divine disclosure arrives through the loss of its usual instrument. The self that prays this prayer is not the mind. The self that prays this prayer has the Lord of the seven heavens as its neighbour-protector regardless of what the mind does or does not retain. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A person who has lost their mind within divine pleasure is within divine care — held by the one power in a way the mind's own coherence cannot provide or revoke. A person with a fully functioning mind within divine anger is more lost than anyone diagnosed with psychosis. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also the preservation of the mind's clarity. And a person within divine pleasure whose mind remains clear is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the mind's dissolution, if it comes, is within Your permission. Be my protection from its severity. Hold what the mind can no longer hold. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Hafiz: the Preserver. Preserve the mind, or preserve the self when the mind can no longer preserve itself.

The mind is creation.

The Creator is greater than all of His creation.

*The self that fears losing the mind
is not identical to the mind.*

*Whatever You will for the mind —
the self has the Lord of the seven heavens
as its neighbour-protector.*

He holds what the mind can no longer hold.

The Fear of Medication Change

The specific, modern dread: what happens when what stabilises is altered.

The Fear Named

This fear is specific to a particular kind of contemporary life but it is real and it is widespread. Many people are stabilised — their mental health, their physical condition, their ability to function — by a specific medication, at a specific dose, that has been found after sometimes years of searching. The fear of medication change is the fear of disturbing this fragile equilibrium. Of what happens in the body and mind during the transition. Of whether the new medication will work. Of whether the stability that has been achieved can be maintained or will be lost.

It is also the fear of the period between — the withdrawal, the adjustment, the gap during which the body is neither adequately supported by the old medication nor yet benefiting from the new one. For someone whose stability depends on the medication, this period can be genuinely frightening.

What the fear reveals is the nature of the stability being relied on. Medication-derived stability is real. But it is a created stability — chemistry acting on chemistry, within a body created by the one power. The stability that medication provides is one of the means the one power uses to provide what the body needs. The one power is not limited to this means. And the one power governs the transition between means as completely as He governs the means themselves.

Hold the specific fear: the change that is coming, or that might be required. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who governs the body's chemistry directly — not only through medication but in its own right. The medication is a means. The one power is the source. The stability the medication provides is, at every level, a stability provided by the one power through that means. The Lord of the seven heavens can provide stability through any means He chooses, including means that the self cannot currently anticipate. The change in medication does not change the one power's governance of the body's chemistry.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The transition is within divine governance. The period between is within divine governance. The one power governs every moment of the adjustment — the chemistry, the nervous system's response, the body's adaptation. The neighbour-protector being asked to be present is the one who governs the transition from within. The protection is not the guarantee of a smooth transition. It is the presence of the one power within every moment of the transition, however difficult. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that governs from within the chemistry.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the medication change. Greater than the transition, however difficult. Greater than the withdrawal, however uncomfortable.

Greater than the fear of what the body and mind might experience in the gap. The body's chemistry is creation. The one power is greater than all of His creation, including the specific chemistry that the self depends on for stability. *اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحَدٌ*: mightier than this specific fear — the specific change, the specific transition, the specific gap. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the body's chemistry through every change it undergoes. Ask Him.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been managing its medication with understandable care — the adherence, the monitoring, the anxiety about disruption. When the matter is returned entirely, what dissolves is the terror of the change, not the careful management of it. The management continues: work with the doctor, follow the protocol, monitor the transition carefully. But the outcome of the transition is His. The stability of the body and mind through the change is His to govern. Whatever You will for this body during this transition: whatever form of stability or difficulty the transition brings, it is within the governance of the one who governs the body's chemistry more directly than any medication does.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The stability that matters most is not chemical but relational: to be within divine pleasure. Chemical

stability within divine anger is a body that functions within a life that is not aligned. Chemical instability within divine pleasure is a body in transition within the governance of the one who holds the seven heavens. Ask for divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also stability. A body stable in both chemistry and divine pleasure is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the transition is within Your governance. Be present within it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Thaabit: the one who makes firm, the one who stabilises. You are as You have praised Yourself. The stability is ultimately Yours to provide.

The medication is a means.

The one power is the source.

*He governs the body's chemistry
more directly than any medication does.*

Whatever You will for this transition —

You are Al-Thaabit.

The stability is Yours to give.

The Fear of Doctors and Hospitals

The fear of the place where what is wrong is named. And what is named cannot be unnamed.

The Fear Named

The fear of doctors is, in part, the fear of knowledge. The self that does not go to the doctor does not have to know what the doctor would find. The symptom can remain ambiguous. The lump might be nothing. The tiredness might be stress. The avoidance of the doctor is the preservation of a state of not-knowing that the fear mistakes for safety. But it is the safety of ignorance, not the safety of protection.

The fear of hospitals is the fear of the place where the body is handled by others, where control is surrendered, where the language is clinical and the environment is alien and the vulnerability of the body is made institutional. The hospital strips the self of its ordinary markers of identity and reduces it to a patient in a bed, a body with a case number, dependent on the knowledge and goodwill of strangers. The fear of hospitals is the fear of that reduction.

And yet: the cure exists. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: make use of medicine, for Allah has not sent down an illness except that He has sent down its cure, with the exception of old age. The doctor is one of the means through which the one power has placed the cure in the world. The hospital is one of the structures through which the one power's provision of healing is routed. The fear of the doctor is, in part, the fear of the cure — and the cure is from the one power.

Hold the specific fear: the appointment not made, the symptom not investigated, the procedure not agreed to. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who sent down the illness and the cure together. The doctor is a means within the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens. The hospital is a structure within the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens. Every diagnostic finding, every treatment, every surgery, every recovery — within the governance of the one power who governs the body's interior more directly than any medical instrument does.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The diagnosis that is feared — the knowledge that might be disclosed in the doctor's office or the hospital bed — is within divine permission. The one power knows what the scan will show before the radiologist reads it. The protection from the knowledge is not the avoidance of the knowledge. It is the presence of the neighbour-protector within the knowledge — who is present in the consultation room, in the diagnosis, in whatever the investigation reveals. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: the protection is mighty enough to be present within the worst news the doctor could give.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَتَغَرَّ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than whatever the doctor finds. Greater than the diagnosis, however severe. Greater than the prognosis, however difficult. The medical finding is information about the body's condition. The body's condition is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the specific condition the body is

currently in. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحَدَرُ**: mightier than the specific fear — the specific appointment, the specific procedure, the specific finding that the self is avoiding by avoiding the doctor. Allah is mightier than what the investigation will reveal. Ask the one who already knows what it will reveal to be the protection within the revealing.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self has been avoiding the doctor in order to avoid the knowledge. When the matter is returned entirely, the avoidance dissolves. Whatever You will: the self goes. It goes not with the courage of the self managing its own fear but with the release of the outcome into the one power's governance. The diagnosis is within divine governance. The treatment is within divine governance. The outcome is within divine governance. Go to the doctor. Take the investigation. Hear the finding. And then: whatever You will. The knowledge does not change the one power's governance of the body. It simply informs the self about what the one power is already governing.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The doctor's appointment, taken within divine pleasure, is an act of gratitude for the body the one power has given — the act of seeking the cure that the one power sent down alongside the illness. The appointment avoided within divine pleasure is sometimes the wiser choice when there is genuine reason for it. But the appointment avoided out of fear — out of the

self's refusal to receive whatever the one power has placed in the body — is the fear this prayer is detonating. Ask for divine pleasure in the going. Within divine pleasure, also ask for the finding to be good. And within divine pleasure with a good finding, the fullest state. Ask for all of it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: whatever is found is within Your knowledge before any investigation. I seek refuge in You from whatever Your knowledge contains about this body. Be my protection within the finding. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِيكَ — Al-Shafi: the Healer. The doctor is a means. You are the source.

He sent down the illness.

He sent down the cure alongside it.

The doctor is one of His means.

Go to the doctor.

Whatever the finding —

He already knows it.

He is Al-Shafi.

Ask the Healer.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Fear of Ageing

The slow loss. The body changing in ways that cannot be stopped or reversed. Or: the progressive removal of every excuse not to be home.

The Fear Named

Ageing is the fear that accumulates. Not a single event but a process — the body's slow withdrawal from its peak, the incremental losses of speed, strength, sharpness, beauty, endurance, capacity. The fear of ageing is the fear of the accumulation of small losses that together constitute a transformation from which there is no return. And unlike most fears, the fear of ageing is certain to be at least partially realised. If the self lives long enough, it will age. The question is not whether but what.

The fear of ageing is also a cultural phenomenon of enormous power. In cultures that worship youth, to age is to become progressively less visible, less valued, less relevant. The older person who once held authority watches it transfer to younger hands. The beauty that once opened doors becomes the face that others look past. The ageing body is treated, in such cultures, as something to be fought, concealed, and ultimately mourned.

The tradition reverses this completely. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: respect the elder, for respect for the elder is part of respect for Allah. The white hair of old age is light. The one who reaches old age in Islam has reached something the young have not yet been given — not a diminishment but an accumulation. Not an approach toward irrelevance but an approach toward the recognition that was always the destination.

And then the hadith that appears, at first reading, to be a warning but is actually something else entirely. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: Allah will not accept the excuse of one whom He has allowed to reach the age of sixty years.

Read it through fear and it sounds like a threat. Read it through Al-Mu'min — the Giver of Security, the one whose very name is the root of the word for faith and for peace — and it sounds completely different. It sounds like this:

I fed you. Did you rest? I held you through the loss. Did you rest? I answered before you asked. Did you rest? I disclosed Myself through the hardship and the ease and the morning light and the people you loved and the people who left. Did you rest? I held the seven heavens above you every moment of every night you slept. Did you rest? I left no argument standing. I removed every reason for you to be anything other than still in Me. Sixty years. What more would you like Me to do?

Not a threat. The exhaustion of all obstacles to rest. Sixty years of the systematic removal of every excuse the self had for not coming home. By sixty, Al-Mu'min has not run out of patience. He has run out of remaining excuses. Every buffer the self could hide behind instead of Him has been dismantled. The youth goes — one less thing to rely on instead of Him. The strength goes — one less fortress between the self and its actual ground. The projects wind down — one less thing to complete before resting. The social roles thin — one less performance to maintain. By the end there is nothing left between the self and Al-Mu'min except Al-Mu'min.

The whole arc of a life is the progressive demolition of the excuses for not being here. The fear of ageing is the fear of that demolition. And this book has been detonating excuses from its first page. Which means: the fear of ageing is the fear of arriving at what this entire book is pointing toward.

Hold the specific fear: the body changing, the capacities diminishing, the face in the mirror that is no longer the face the self remembers. And bring the first prayer into its presence.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who ordained the arc of the body's life. Not as an oversight, not as a design flaw, not as a countdown to irrelevance. As the structure of the return. The Lord of the seven heavens created the body to pass through infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, age, and the return. Each stage is His governance. Each stage is a different form of His address. The youth was address. The age is address. The difference is that the age is address that has had decades to accumulate its evidence.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The ageing is from within divine permission. The neighbour-protector being asked is the one who designed the arc, who knows what it is moving toward, who is present within every year of the changing, who calls the white hair light. Not protection from the ageing — protection within it. Be my companion in the dismantling. Be my security in the losses. Be the ground that becomes more visible as everything else that was covering it is removed. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection of the one whose dismantling of the self's props is itself the gift.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأُحَدَّرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than ageing. Greater than the loss of the body's capacities as it ages. Greater than the culture's verdict on the older body. Greater than the fear's narrative that what is being lost is what matters most. The ageing body is creation.

Its youth was creation. Its age is creation. The Creator is greater than all stages of His creation, including the stage the self is afraid of reaching. And the Creator does not diminish as the body diminishes. He remains. And as the things that were covering Him are removed one by one, He becomes more visible — not less.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it: the specific losses feared, the specific capacities, the specific diminishment. Allah is mightier than what ageing will take. And what ageing will reveal, by removing what was obscuring it, is also within His governance. Every loss of a capacity that the self was hiding behind is a gift: one less place to not-be-home. The one who holds the seven heavens is mightier than every cover the self erected between itself and its Lord. He removes them one by one. With love. As Al-Mu'min.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's resistance to ageing — the creams, the procedures, the refusal to identify with the older body, the grief at each loss of capacity — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this body across the full arc of its life. Every year of the arc: whatever You will. Every capacity that remains: whatever You will. Every capacity that is removed: whatever You will. Each removal is the one power clearing the ground. Making more room for Himself. Removing one more excuse for not being fully present to the one who has been fully present across every year.

At sixty, the argument is over. Not because the self is being threatened but because Al-Mu'min has been so thoroughly present, so relentlessly providing, so ceaselessly disclosing, that there is simply nothing left to say in defence of not resting in Him. Whatever You will is the recognition, at last, that it was always whatever He willed. The

youth was His. The strength was His. The beauty was His. The ageing is His. The rest, at the end, is His. Whatever You will. Come home.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. An aged person within divine pleasure is the elder that the tradition commands respect for — the one whose white hair is light, whose years are proximity to Allah, whose losses have each been a disclosure. A young person within divine anger is not envied by the tradition. And a person within divine pleasure who also has vitality, health, and the body's gifts at every age is in the fullest state. Ask for both: the pleasure and the vitality within it. At every age. But ask for the pleasure first. Because the pleasure is what the arc was always moving toward.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. The ageing is within Your ordination. Each loss within it is Your governance clearing the ground. Be my security within each stage of the clearing. Hold what the body loses. Be the ground that the losses reveal. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Mu'min: the Giver of Security. The one who held this self through every year of the arc. The sixty years were not a countdown. They were sixty years of evidence. Sixty years of holding. And at the end of sixty years, Al-Mu'min has not changed. He is as He has praised Himself. The security does not diminish with age. It was always there. The ageing is what finally makes it impossible to pretend otherwise.

*I fed you. Did you rest?
I held the seven heavens above you
every night you slept.*

Did you rest?

Sixty years.

What more would you like Me to do?

The white hair is light.

The ground was always here.

Come home.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Fear of Disfigurement

The body marked. The face changed. The form the self inhabits made strange.

The Fear Named

Disfigurement strikes at the boundary between the self and the world. The face is not merely an organ — it is the primary surface through which the self is recognised, known, and engaged with by others. The fear of disfigurement is the fear of that recognition being interrupted: of the face that greets the world becoming a face that the world recoils from, or looks away from, or pities.

It is also the fear of becoming a self that is read differently than it wishes to be read. The disfigured person — from burns, from illness, from accident — must navigate a world that makes assumptions about the inner life from the outer form. The fear of disfigurement is the fear of those assumptions, and the fear of the labour required to exist within them.

The Quran addresses the final state of the human form directly: on the Day of Judgment, the faces of the believers will be luminous. Not the faces of the young. Not the faces of the beautiful by worldly standards. The faces of the people of paradise are described as radiant with joy. The form the self inhabits on that day is not the form that was disfigured or aged or worn. It is the form the one power will give it. And that form the one power gives for eternity is not subject to disfigurement.

Hold the specific fear: the accident, the burn, the surgery, the disease that changes the face and the form. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرِّي جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who created the form. The body, the face, the form the self inhabits — all of it created by the one power, who said: We have certainly created the human being in the best of forms. The form that was created in the best of forms belongs to the one who created it. Its current state and its future states are within His governance. The disfigurement feared is within His permission, and the one power's relationship to the form does not depend on its external appearance.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The form's change, if it comes, comes within divine permission. The neighbour-protector being asked is the one who created the form and who knows its original state, its changed state, and the state in which it will be raised. The protection being asked is not the preservation of the worldly form at all costs — it is the presence of the one power within whatever form the body inhabits. عَزَّ: the protection is mighty because it is not contingent on the form's appearance. It is contingent on the Lord of the Magnificent Throne, who sees the heart, not the face.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than Allah disfigurement. Greater than the face changed. Greater than the world's gaze redirected. The body's surface is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the surface of the body in any state it inhabits. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذَرُ: mightier than this specific fear. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said:

Allah does not look at your forms or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds. The disfigurement that the world sees: the one power does not see it as the world does. He sees what the disfigurement is covering — which is the same heart and deeds He was already looking at.

The burns victim who saved others from the fire has a form that is disclosure — divine address through the body's specific shape at this moment. The one who was disfigured bearing witness to the truth has a form that is shahada written on the body. The form's change is not outside divine governance. It is, in some cases, one of the most intense forms of divine address available.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will for this form. The self's grip on its current form — the identification with the face as it is, the relationship to the body's current appearance as the true self — is handed back. The form was given. Whatever You will for its continuation or its change. The self that is asking this prayer is not the form. The self is the awareness that inhabits the form, which will inhabit many forms across existence, the last of which will be the form raised in light. Whatever You will for the form this awareness currently inhabits. The form is yours. Do with it as You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A disfigured person within divine pleasure has the face the Quran describes as luminous — within divine governance, if not visible to worldly eyes. A person with a beautiful form within divine anger has the face the Quran describes as dark with dust, covered in darkness. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also beauty, health, and the preservation of the form. A person within divine pleasure whose form is also whole and beautiful is in the fullest state. Ask for all of it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the form's change is within Your permission. Be my protection within the change and within the world's gaze after it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who said: We created the human being in the best of forms. The final form He gives — on the day when forms are perfected — is as He has praised Himself.

Allah does not look at your forms.

He looks at your hearts.

*The disfigured face that the world sees
is not what He sees.*

He sees what was always there.

*And the final form He gives
is radiant.*

He created us in the best of forms.

That is not the last word. It is the first.

SECTION IV

Authority and Power

*Fear of governments — Fear of law and courts — Fear of police
Fear of armies — Fear of imprisonment — Fear of tax — Fear of bureaucracy*

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ

*Say: O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty — You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take
sovereignty from whom You will.*

The Fear of Governments

The largest human power. The one that can reach into every corner of a life.

The Fear Named

Governments are the most comprehensive human power that exists. They determine who may enter and leave a territory. They decide what is legal and what is not, what is taxed and what is exempted, who is protected and who is pursued. They command armies and police. They can take property, imprison bodies, and in extremity take lives. The fear of government is the fear of the most organised and pervasive form of human coercive power that has ever existed.

For many people in many parts of the world, this fear is not abstract. It is the specific fear of a specific government that has demonstrated its willingness to use its power against people like the self. The authoritarian state. The police that targets a particular community. The bureaucracy that can destroy a life through a single decision. The immigration system with the power to erase a family. The fear of governments is, for millions of people alive today, the central fear of their daily existence.

And yet: Say, O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty — You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty from whom You will. Every government that has ever existed received its sovereignty from the one power. Every government that has ever fallen had its sovereignty taken by the one power. Pharaoh was the most powerful government of his age. He commanded the most sophisticated military in the ancient world. He had the full apparatus of the state at his disposal. And the Lord of the seven heavens split the sea.

Hold the specific government feared. Its specific power over the specific circumstances of this life. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins not with the government but with its Lord. Every government that exists — its legislators, its ministers, its officials, its enforcement apparatus — is creation. And the Lord of the seven heavens is the Lord of all creation. The government feared is not the highest power in the self's situation. It is one level of created power within a governance structure whose ultimate authority is the one being addressed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The government's power over the self is within divine permission. The one power permits governments to rise, to act, and to fall. The protection from the government's power is asked from the one whose permission the government operates within. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the seven heavens outranks every government that has ever existed by the infinite distance between the Creator and the created. عَرْجَاكَ: mighty is the protection of the one power against the power of any created governance structure. Every prime minister, every president, every security apparatus exists within the Lord of the Magnificent Throne's governance.

The Prophet Musa faced Pharaoh — the most total governmental power of the ancient world. The Lord of the seven heavens said to Musa: do not fear, for it is I who am with the two of you, hearing and seeing. The instruction was not to take political action or to flee. It was لَا تَخَافَا — do not fear. The neighbour-protector who is present with the one facing governmental power is the one who hears and sees everything the government does.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than every government that has ever existed. Greater than the most powerful state apparatus in human history. Greater than Pharaoh's army, greater than the Roman Empire, greater than every totalitarian state of the twentieth century, greater than every government currently in existence. All of them: creation. The Creator: greater than all of His creation.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name the specific government. Name its specific power over the specific circumstances of this life. Name the fear precisely: the deportation, the prosecution, the surveillance, the policy that targets the self's community. Allah is mightier than that specific power. Not mightier in the sense that it cannot act — governments can and do act, and they cause real harm. Mightier in the sense that everything the government does, it does within divine permission, and divine permission is the permission of the one who split the sea for Musa. The sea split. The government fell. The one power's governance of created powers is not a decoration. It is the structure of reality.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission: the government's power is one of the things held within that permission. When the permission changes — when the Lord of the Magnificent Throne decides that a government's operation has reached its limit — the power changes. The Berlin Wall came down in a night. The Soviet Union dissolved. The Pharaoh drowned. Ask the one who holds the permission.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its exposure to governmental power — the political strategy, the legal navigation, the avoidance and compliance and calculation — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self within the governance of this specific power structure. Whatever the government does or does not do: within Your governance. Whatever it permits or refuses or threatens: within Your permission. The one who wills the government's sovereignty is also the one who takes it away. Whatever You will. The self's situation within the government's reach is the one power's to govern, not the government's.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A person within divine pleasure who is facing governmental persecution is Ibrahim in the fire, Musa before Pharaoh, the Prophet in Makkah before the Hijra. These are not figures who were abandoned by divine governance. They are figures through whom divine governance disclosed itself most spectacularly. A person within divine anger who has the government's full protection is Pharaoh. Ask for the right condition. And within divine pleasure, also ask for safety, security, and the government's power to be exercised with justice or not exercised against the self at all. A person within divine pleasure who is also safe from governmental power is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the government's power is within Your permission. Be my protection from what You have permitted the government to do. And take the sovereignty from those who wield it with

injustice. biY الملك يوتي من يشاء وينزع من يشاء — the sovereignty belongs to You. You give it and You take it. Take it from those who misuse it against Your servants.

Pharaoh had the army.

Musa had: do not fear, I am with you.

The sea split.

The army drowned.

*Every government operates
within His permission.*

The sovereignty belongs to Him.

He gives it. He takes it.

Whatever You will.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Fear of Law and Courts

The system that decides. The verdict that is written and cannot easily be unwritten.

The Fear Named

The law is the formalisation of power. It is the codification of what a society permits and prohibits, enforced by mechanisms ranging from fines to imprisonment to death. The fear of the law is the fear of that enforcement turning toward the self — of becoming the subject of a legal process in which the self's freedom, property, reputation, or life is at stake and the decision is made by strangers applying rules the self may not fully understand.

Courts are the fear's specific location: the building where verdicts are rendered, where the self is reduced to a party in a case, where the complexity of a life is collapsed into a legal question and the legal question is resolved by a judge whose disposition the self cannot control. The fear of courts is the fear of a decision being made about the self by a power that is not the self and is not accountable to the self.

And yet: above every court there is a Court. The Quran describes the Day of Judgment as a day of legal reckoning so precise that the weight of a mustard seed is recorded. The one power is the ultimate Qadi — the ultimate judge — before whom every earthly court is a rough approximation. Every verdict an earthly court renders, the Court of the Lord of the seven heavens has already seen. And the Lord of the seven heavens is العادل — the Just. Every miscarriage of earthly justice is visible to the most just judge who exists.

Hold the specific legal fear: the case, the verdict, the process, the stakes. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the ultimate judge. Not the judge in the courtroom. The one whose judgment is final and whose justice is absolute. The earthly court renders a verdict within the one power's governance. The verdict may be just or unjust by human standards — both are within the one power's governance. An unjust verdict does not escape the one power's observation. It is recorded. Every earthly miscarriage of justice adds to an account that the Lord of the Magnificent Throne will settle.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The legal process feared is within divine permission. The judge's disposition, the jury's reasoning, the evidence presented, the outcome rendered — all within divine governance. The protection from the legal process is asked from the one who governs every participant in it. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the seven heavens is present in the courtroom in a way that no lawyer is. He governs the judge who does not know He is being governed. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that operates from within the legal process itself.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأُخَدَّرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the court. Greater than the verdict. Greater than the legal process with its full apparatus of lawyers and judges and evidence and procedures. The court is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including

the specific court and the specific verdict that the fear is imagining. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ**: mightier than the specific legal fear. The outcome the fear pictures: within divine governance. The unjust outcome the fear dreads: visible to the just judge. The just outcome the self needs: within divine capacity to deliver, through the court or around it.

Yusuf was imprisoned on a false accusation. The court of Egypt found against him. He served years in prison for something he did not do. And the Lord of the seven heavens' governance of his situation did not pause during the imprisonment. It was operating at every moment, moving through the dream of the king's cupbearer, through the king's dream itself, through the turn that came when the one power had prepared what the imprisonment was preparing Yusuf for. The unjust verdict was within divine governance. The reversal was within divine governance. Both served the one power's purpose. Ask the ultimate judge to judge.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The legal outcome is returned entirely. Not the abandonment of legal defence — seek legal counsel, present the evidence, use every legitimate means available. But the outcome: whatever You will. The verdict is within divine governance. A just verdict: within divine governance. An unjust verdict: within divine governance and within the account that the ultimate judge keeps. Whatever the court decides, it decides within the one power's permission. And the one power's ultimate court supersedes every earthly verdict ever rendered. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Yusuf in prison was within divine pleasure. The Quran shows it. A person who wins their legal case through unjust means is within divine anger, whatever the earthly verdict says. The prayer asks for the right condition first: divine pleasure within the legal process, within any verdict it renders, within whatever consequence follows. And within divine pleasure, also the just outcome. A person within divine pleasure who also receives justice from the earthly court is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the legal outcome is within Your permission. Be my protection within whatever Your permission allows the court to do. You are العادل — the Just. The ultimate verdict is Yours.

Yusuf was imprisoned on a false accusation.

The Lord of the seven heavens was present in the prison.

The reversal came.

Every earthly verdict is within His governance.

The ultimate court is His.

He is Al-'Adl.

The just verdict — here or there —

is His to give.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Fear of Police

The face of enforcement. The power that can arrive at any moment.

The Fear Named

The police are the most immediate face of governmental power. They are the ones who appear — at the door, at the traffic stop, on the street. They carry the authority to detain, to search, to arrest, to use force. The fear of police is the fear of that power applied arbitrarily or unjustly, of the encounter that escalates, of the moment in which the self is no longer free to leave.

For many communities this fear is not theoretical. It is accumulated across generations of experience. The community that has learned that police presence means danger rather than safety. The person whose skin colour makes them more likely to be stopped, searched, detained. The undocumented person for whom any police encounter carries the weight of potential deportation. The person who has already been through an unjust arrest and carries the body memory of it. This fear is specific, historical, and earned.

And yet the one power's governance does not vary by the colour of the skin of the person in the encounter. The Lord of the seven heavens is present at the traffic stop. He is present at the door. He is present in the moment of the escalation. He hears what is said. He sees what is done. His governance of the encounter is not suspended because the encounter involves state power. Every police officer — including the one acting unjustly — is creation. The Creator is mightier than all of His creation.

Hold the specific fear. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose authority over the police officer exceeds the police officer's authority over the self by an infinite margin. The police officer's authority is delegated from the government, which received its sovereignty from the one power. The one power's authority is direct, primary, and not delegated from anything. The Lord of the seven heavens governs the police officer who does not know He is being governed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The encounter with police is within divine permission. The officer's disposition, the escalation or de-escalation, the outcome — all within divine governance. The neighbour-protector being asked is present in the encounter. Not as a visible shield that the officer can see. As the governing authority within which the encounter occurs. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection of the Lord of the seven heavens is mighty enough to operate within the most dangerous police encounter. He can change a heart, redirect an action, alter a moment. The protection is active.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَغْفَرَ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the police. Greater than the badge, the weapon, the authority to detain. Greater than the power that can arrive at the door. The police officer is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ:

mightier than the specific encounter feared, the specific officer, the specific escalation the fear imagines. Allah is mightier than that moment. The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall holds the moment of the encounter. He holds the officer's next action within the same governance that holds the stars.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was surrounded by enemies who wished to kill him on the night of the Hijra. He walked out from among them and they did not see him — while he recited the opening of Surah Ya-Sin: and We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see. The one power can make the self invisible to those who mean it harm. Ask the one who covered the sight of those who surrounded the Prophet to be the protection in this encounter.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The outcome of the encounter is returned entirely. Not the abandonment of knowing one's rights or conducting oneself with wisdom. But the outcome: whatever You will. The Lord of the seven heavens governs the encounter. Whatever His governance permits the encounter to become, His governance also holds the self within it. Whatever You will. The fear of the police is returned to the one who governs the police. They are His creation. He is mightier than all of His creation. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the unjust police encounter is Bilal in the hands of his oppressors — a disclosure through which the one power's governance was being made manifest in ways that neither Bilal nor his oppressors could fully see. Within divine anger, the person who holds police power and uses it unjustly is building an account the Lord of the seven heavens is keeping. Ask for divine pleasure within whatever the encounter becomes — and within divine pleasure, also safety, dignity, and the encounter resolving without harm. The fullest state is both. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the encounter is within Your permission. Be my protection within it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The Hearing, the Seeing. You are present in the encounter.

They surrounded the Prophet to kill him.

He walked out from among them.

They did not see him.

*The one who governed that moment
governs this one.*

He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

Ask Him to be present in the encounter.

He already is.

The Fear of Armies and Military

The organised power that destroys. The force that arrives at scale.

The Fear Named

If police are the face of everyday governmental power, armies are its extreme expression. The military is the power that ends lives at scale, that occupies territories, that can arrive at a place and transform it beyond recognition within hours. The fear of armies is the fear of organised violence at the level of the state — the power that is too large to negotiate with, too systematic to evade, too lethal to resist by any ordinary means.

For much of the world's population, this fear is not theoretical. It is the sound of aircraft overhead that might or might not be hostile. The checkpoint manned by armed soldiers whose mood determines whether passage is granted. The family whose son was taken by military forces in the night. The city whose buildings have been reduced to rubble by an army that did not distinguish between combatant and civilian. The fear of armies is among the oldest fears in human experience and among the most legitimate.

And yet: the Quran's account of history is precisely the account of divine governance operating through and against military power. Jalut — Goliath — was killed by Dawud, who had only a sling. Nimrod's army was destroyed by mosquitoes, according to the tradition. The army of Abraha, with its elephants, was destroyed by birds carrying stones. The pattern is consistent: military power, however overwhelming, is creation. The Creator is mightier than all of His creation. No army has ever operated outside divine permission. And divine permission has been withdrawn from armies at the moment of the Lord's choosing, by means that no military strategist anticipated.

Hold the specific military fear. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one before whom every army that has ever existed is a handful of creation. The Lord of the seven heavens commands what armies cannot. He commands the wind. He commands the water. He commands the birds. He commands the mosquitoes. The military power that terrifies the self is a human organisation of created weapons wielded by created beings within a creation that the one power holds in existence moment by moment. Ask the one who holds the existence.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The military power's action is within divine permission. Abraha's army arrived at Makkah within divine governance. The birds arrived within divine governance. The army did not reach the Kaaba. The protection from military power is asked from the one who governs whether it is permitted to reach its target. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection is the protection of the one who destroyed Abraha's elephants with birds. The one who said to the sea: part — and it parted. The military power feared does not operate outside this governance.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَنْعَثَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than every army. Greater than every weapon. Greater than the most advanced military force in human history. The aircraft carrier is creation. The nuclear arsenal is creation. The precision-guided missile is creation. And the Creator is greater than all of His creation combined. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific military power feared. Greater than the specific army, the specific weapon, the specific force that the fear imagines arriving. Allah is mightier than that. The one who holds the seven heavens holds every army within those heavens' shadow.

Dawud faced Jalut with a sling. The calculation of forces was not favourable. And the Quran says: how many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. By permission of Allah. The outcome of military confrontation is not determined by the calculation of forces. It is determined by divine permission. When divine permission is withdrawn from the larger force, the smaller overcomes it. Ask the one who grants and withdraws permission.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self before the military power has no effective means of resistance by its own calculation. This is the condition of whatever You will in its purest form: not a balance of forces but the complete return of the outcome to the one power. Whatever You will for this self in the face of this power. The birds arrived when Abraha's army was at the gates. The sea parted when Pharaoh's army was at Musa's back. Whatever You will. The one who wills the military power is the one who wills its limit. Ask the one who wills the limit.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The person within divine pleasure facing military power is Musa at the shore, Ibraheem in the fire, the companions at Badr. They were outnumbered. They were in physical danger. And the Lord of the seven heavens was with them in the specific way that changes outcomes. Within divine anger, Pharaoh had the largest army of his age. Ask for divine pleasure within whatever military threat arrives — and within divine pleasure, also safety, protection, and the military power's harm turned away. The fullest state is divine pleasure and safety both. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the military's power to harm is within Your permission. Withdraw the permission. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who commands armies of what no eye has seen and no army has faced.

Abraha had elephants.

The Lord of the seven heavens sent birds.

Dawud had a sling.

The Lord of the seven heavens permitted the stone to fly.

The sea parted.

Every army operates within His permission.

Ask the one who grants the permission

to withdraw it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Fear of Imprisonment

The walls that close. The freedom taken. The self confined to what it cannot leave.

The Fear Named

Prison is the most complete form of freedom's removal. Not just the freedom of movement but the freedom of time — when to sleep, when to eat, when to speak, when to be in darkness or light. The prison takes the self's ordinary autonomy and places it entirely under the control of others. The fear of imprisonment is the fear of that total removal — of the self reduced to a body in a cell at the mercy of a system that does not recognise the self's full humanity.

The fear has layers. There is the fear of the physical confinement itself. There is the fear of what imprisonment does to the life outside — to the family, the livelihood, the reputation. There is the fear of what happens inside — the danger, the dehumanisation, the loss of years that cannot be recovered. And there is the particular terror of unjust imprisonment: being confined for something one did not do, with no clear path to release.

Yusuf. The Quran returns to Yusuf in prison more than once. He is there for years. He interprets dreams. He maintains his character. He asks the cupbearer to mention him to the king — and the cupbearer forgets for years. And the Lord of the seven heavens was governing every moment of the imprisonment — including the forgetting, including the wait, including the specific timing of the release that came when the king's dream needed interpretation. The imprisonment was the preparation for the throne. Neither Yusuf nor anyone around him could see that from inside the cell.

Hold the specific fear. The walls. The confinement. The years. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who governed Yusuf's imprisonment. Not the jailer. Not the king's court. The Lord of the seven heavens, who permitted the imprisonment and who governed every moment within it, who was present in the cell as He is present everywhere, whose governance did not stop at the prison wall. The Lord of the Magnificent Throne is present in every cell that has ever confined a servant of His. The confinement of the body does not confine the governance of the one power.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The imprisonment, if it comes, is within divine permission. The one power permits the walls to close. The protection from what happens within those walls is asked from the same source. The neighbour-protector who is present in the prison is the one whose presence is not contingent on the prison's permission. He does not require a visitor's pass. He is present in the cell as He is present in the sky. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that penetrates prison walls.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُتَمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّيْلُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the prison. Greater than its walls, its system, its power to confine. Greater than the sentence, however long. Greater than the years inside. The prison is a human structure of stone and metal and bureaucracy. The Creator

is greater than all of His creation, including every prison wall ever built. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ: mightier than the specific confinement feared. The one who holds the seven heavens also holds the space within the prison cell. The cell is within creation. The Creator is present in it and mightier than it.

Yusuf said, from within the prison: my Lord, prison is more beloved to me than what they invite me to. He chose the prison over the sin. And the Lord of the seven heavens said — of Yusuf, in prison, unjustly — that He is not wasteful of the reward of those who do good. The years in prison were not wasted. They were the preparation. Every day of the imprisonment was within the Lord’s counting. The reward was multiplied by the intensity of the disclosure.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. Even the years. Even the confinement. Even the waiting for the cupbearer to remember and the cupbearer’s forgetting for years before the remembering. Whatever You will for this self within whatever confinement. The Lord of the seven heavens governed Yusuf’s situation from the pit his brothers threw him into through the prison to the throne of Egypt. None of those stages was outside His governance. Whatever You will for this confinement: it is within His governance, which means it is within His wisdom, and His wisdom is the wisdom of the one who sees the throne from inside the pit.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Yusuf in prison was within divine pleasure. The Quran describes his conduct in prison as the conduct of a person whose character was not diminished by the confinement. Within divine pleasure in a prison cell is better than within divine anger in a palace. And within divine pleasure with freedom is the fullest state. Ask for divine pleasure within the confinement — and within divine pleasure, also release, justice, and the restoration of what was taken. Yusuf's release came. The restoration came. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the imprisonment is within Your permission. Release what Your permission has confined. أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Fattah: the Opener. Open what has been closed. You are as You have praised Yourself.

*Prison is more beloved to me
than what they invite me to.*

Yusuf chose the cell.

The Lord of the seven heavens governed every day of it.

*The throne was on the other side
of years Yusuf could not see past.*

Al-Fattah.

The Opener opens what is closed.

Whatever You will.

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Fear of Tax

The claim the state makes on what was earned. The compulsion that cannot be refused.

The Fear Named

Tax is the state's compulsory claim on the resources of those within its reach. It is feared not just for the financial burden it represents but for the coercive nature of the obligation — you do not choose whether to pay, only whether to comply or to face the consequences of non-compliance. The fear of tax is the fear of the audit that finds discrepancies, the underpayment that compounds with penalties, the debt to the state that accumulates interest and then enforcement action.

It is also, for many people, the fear of a system too complex to navigate perfectly, in which honest error is treated the same as deliberate evasion, and in which the power of the tax authority is radically asymmetric: the state can access accounts, freeze assets, garnish income, prosecute, and pursue across decades. The individual faces this power with whatever resources they have available — which are almost always less than the state's.

The power to tax is the power that no government surrenders voluntarily. It is the foundation of every other governmental power. And it too is creation. The state's claim on resources exists within the one power's governance. The tax authority's power to audit is within divine permission. The outcome of the audit is within divine governance. Every number in every account is visible to the Lord of the Magnificent Throne, who keeps a more precise accounting than any tax authority ever has.

Hold the specific fear. The specific liability, the specific obligation, the specific encounter with the tax authority. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who owns everything. Not the state's ownership — the one power's. **لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ** — to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. The income the state taxes belongs, at a more fundamental level than the tax law, to the Lord of the seven heavens, who provided it. The state's claim on it is a created claim operating within the one power's governance. The one power governs the state's claim as it governs everything else.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The tax authority's power is within divine permission. The audit, the finding, the liability — all within divine governance. The protection from it is asked from the one who governs the tax authority's actions. The neighbour-protector holds authority over the system that is making the claim. **عَزَّ جَارِكَ**: mighty is the protection of the one who owns everything the state thinks it is taxing.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُؤَمِّسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the tax authority. Greater than the liability, however large. Greater than the enforcement mechanism, however powerful. The state's power to tax is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ**

وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific tax fear — the specific liability, the specific audit, the specific enforcement. Allah is mightier than all of it. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the account books. The one who owns everything the state is taxing is the one being asked for protection from the state's taxation.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The outcome of the tax matter is returned entirely. Discharge all obligations honestly. Pay what is owed. But the outcome — the audit's finding, the liability's resolution, the enforcement or its absence — is returned to the one who governs the state's power. Whatever You will for this matter. You own everything the state is claiming to own a portion of. The resolution is within Your governance. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, pay what is owed honestly and ask for the one power's provision to replace what is taken. Within divine anger, whatever wealth is preserved through evasion is a poverty of a different kind. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within the tax matter — and within divine pleasure, also the resolution of the liability and the provision that replaces what the state takes. Both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the state's power over this matter is within Your

permission. Govern the outcome. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Razzaq. Everything the state taxes belongs to You first. You provided it. You can provide more.

*To Allah belongs what is in the heavens
and what is on the earth.*

The state's claim is within His governance.

He provided what is being taxed.

He can provide what replaces it.

Whatever You will.

Al-Razzaq.

The Fear of Bureaucracy

The system that decides without a face. The process without a person who can be reached.

The Fear Named

Bureaucracy is the most diffuse and in some ways the most frustrating form of institutional power. Unlike a police officer or a judge, bureaucracy has no single face. It is a system — of forms, procedures, databases, approval chains, and rules applied by individuals who are themselves constrained by rules. The fear of bureaucracy is the fear of being caught in a system that can deny, delay, or destroy what is needed without any single person bearing responsibility for the outcome.

The visa denied by a computer algorithm. The benefit payment stopped by an administrative error that takes months to correct. The medical authorisation refused by a bureaucratic process that has no mechanism for the specific case. The documentation required that cannot be obtained because its issuance depends on another document that cannot be obtained without the first. Bureaucracy has a particular capacity for creating traps from which there is no obvious exit — loops of requirement and refusal that can consume years of a life.

And yet the bureaucratic process, however labyrinthine, is creation. Every rule in every system was written by a created being. Every database runs on created hardware. Every approval chain ends with a human being whose heart is within the governance of the Lord of the seven heavens. The one power governs the bureaucracy from within. He can move the file forward. He can change the disposition of the clerk who reads it. He can make the exception that the system says does not exist. He governs the system that processes the self's application.

Hold the specific bureaucratic obstruction. The form that keeps being rejected. The process that has no end. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who governs every system that humans have ever built. The bureaucratic system feared is one layer of created governance within the one power's governance. Every official in the system, every rule that constrains them, every database that processes the application — within the governance of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne, who governs from above the system and from within it simultaneously.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The bureaucratic obstruction is within divine permission. The one power permits the system to delay, to deny, to create the loop. The protection from the obstruction is asked from the one who governs the system. Not the system administrator. The Lord of the system's creator, and the Lord of every human heart in the chain. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who governs hearts. The official who reads the file has a heart within the Lord of the seven heavens' governance. Ask the Lord of the heart to govern the reading of the file.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my

protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the bureaucracy. Greater than the system's denial. Greater than the loop of requirement and refusal. Greater than every form ever created by a human institution. The bureaucratic system is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every database and every rule and every official in every approval chain. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific obstruction, the specific denial, the specific loop the self is trapped in. Allah is mightier than the bureaucratic trap. He governs the hearts of the people in the system and He can move the one heart that moves the file forward.

The Prophet Musa was sent to Pharaoh — the ultimate bureaucracy, the ultimate institutional power. The Lord said: go to him, for he has transgressed. Not: here is the political strategy for navigating the Egyptian institutional structure. Go. And the one power governed the institutional encounter from within. The most powerful bureaucracy of the ancient world yielded to two men with staffs because the Lord of the seven heavens governed the encounter. Ask the one who governed Pharaoh's court to govern this system.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتِ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتِ — whatever You will. The outcome of the bureaucratic process is returned entirely. Submit the forms. Pursue the process. Use the available channels. But the outcome: whatever You will. The Lord of the seven heavens governs the system's response. He governs the official who reads the file. He governs the rule that is applied. Whatever You will for this matter within this system. If He wills the approval, the approval comes — through the system or around it, through the expected channel or through one that the self could not have anticipated. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the bureaucratic obstruction is a form of divine disclosure — the self being shown that the provision comes from the one power, not the system. Within divine anger, a life of bureaucratic ease that has produced ingratitude is worse than the obstruction. Ask for divine pleasure within the obstruction — and within divine pleasure, also the resolution. The form approved. The process completed. The loop broken. Both. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the system's obstruction is within Your permission. Move what You have permitted to be still. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Fattah: the Opener of what is closed. The Remover of obstruction. You are as You have praised Yourself. Ask the Opener.

The system has no face.

The official has a heart.

The Lord of the seven heavens

governs hearts.

Al-Fattah.

The Opener opens what is closed.

Move what You have permitted to be still.

Whatever You will.

SECTION V

Social and Reputation

Fear of humiliation — Fear of bad reputation — Fear of people's opinion
Fear of rejection — Fear of social exclusion — Fear of being misunderstood
Fear of peer pressure — Fear of public speaking — Fear of being seen

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

Does He not know what He created? And He is the Subtle, the Aware.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The Fear of Humiliation

The dread of being made small before others. Of being seen at one's worst and being unable to recover.

The Fear Named

Humiliation is the violent interruption of the self's social standing. Not just embarrassment — humiliation has a quality of exposure, of the self's deficiency being made visible to others in a way that cannot be quickly managed or explained away. The fear of humiliation is the fear of that exposure: of being seen not as the self wishes to be seen but as the self most dreads being seen — inadequate, ridiculous, incompetent, exposed, diminished.

The fear has ancient roots because humiliation in social animals has historically been dangerous. The diminished standing that follows public humiliation can threaten belonging, alliance, resources, safety. The nervous system treats the risk of humiliation with the same urgency as physical threat because, in the long arc of human history, it often was one. The body that feels the fear of humiliation approaching is responding to something very old and very real.

And yet: who is the humiliator? The Quran says: *قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ* — You honour whom You will and You humiliate whom You will. The one power determines the arc of honour and humiliation. The crowd that humiliates is not the final arbiter of the self's standing. The one who gives and takes honour is the Lord of the seven heavens, and He is the one being addressed.

Hold the specific fear: the specific scenario, the specific witnesses, the specific exposure. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who holds the self's true standing. Not the crowd's verdict. Not the social record. Not the moment of exposure preserved in other people's memory. The one power's assessment of the self is the assessment that determines the self's actual standing in the only accounting that endures. And the one power does not assess the self by the standards the crowd uses. He assesses by what is in the heart. The self that is humiliated before the crowd but not humiliated before the one power has not lost its standing where standing matters.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The humiliation, if it comes, is within divine permission. The one power permits the crowd to see what it sees, permits the moment to unfold as it unfolds, permits the exposure. The protection from it is asked from the same source. Not protection from every form of humiliation — but the neighbour-protector's presence within it. The one power who was with the Prophet when Quraysh mocked him. Who was with Bilal when he was dragged through the streets. Who was with every servant whose public dignity was stripped and whose inner standing remained entirely intact because it was held by the one who cannot be compelled to withdraw it. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that holds the self's true standing inside the humiliation.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَنْعِنَ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the crowd. Greater than the crowd's verdict. Greater than the scene the fear is rehearsing in which the self is made small before witnesses. The crowd is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every crowd that has ever assembled to witness a humiliation. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than this specific fear. The specific exposure, the specific audience, the specific diminishment. Allah is mightier than all of it. And He is the one who said: You honour whom You will and You humiliate whom You will. The one mightier than the humiliation is also the one who governs its occurrence. Ask the governor.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was mocked, ridiculed, and publicly derided by the most powerful people of his society for years. He was called a poet, a madman, a liar. The Quran records the mockery in detail. And the Quran also records: the mockers — We will be sufficient for you against them. The one who governs humiliation also governs its sufficiency. Ask the one who was sufficient against the mockers of the Prophet.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its social standing — the presentation, the image management, the careful control of what others see — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's standing before people. If You will dignity before them, it comes. If You will that the self passes through humiliation, it passes through it — as every prophet passed through it, as every person nearest to Allah has passed through it, and emerged not diminished but disclosed. Whatever You will. The standing before

people is returned to the one who governs it. The standing before the one power is the only standing the self actually needs.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be humiliated before people within divine pleasure is the Prophet in Makkah. To be honoured before people within divine anger is Pharaoh on his throne. The prayer asks for the right standing in the right place: divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also dignity before people. A person within divine pleasure who is also honoured by those around them is in the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the humiliation is within Your permission. You honour whom You will and You humiliate whom You will. Ask the one who governs the arc to govern it toward honour. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-‘Aziz: the Mighty, the Honourable. You are as You have praised Yourself. The self under Your protection cannot be permanently diminished.

You honour whom You will.

You humiliate whom You will.

The crowd's verdict is not the final one.

*The one who governs the arc of honour
is the one being addressed.*

Ask the Mighty to hold your standing.

Al-‘Aziz.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

The Fear of Bad Reputation

The record others hold of the self. What is said when the self is not present.

The Fear Named

Reputation is the self's existence in other people's minds. It is not directly accessible or controllable — it is what others carry about the self, shaped by their observations, their conversations, their assumptions, their willingness to believe what they have heard. The fear of bad reputation is the fear of that distributed record being negative: of being known as the person who did that thing, said that thing, was that way, cannot be trusted, is not what they present themselves as.

The fear has a particular power because the self cannot be everywhere its reputation travels. The conversation in a room the self never enters. The message passed between people the self will never meet. The judgment rendered by someone who has heard only one side. The bad reputation operates in the self's absence and the self can neither observe it nor defend against it in real time.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was known before prophethood as Al-Amin — the Trustworthy. His reputation was impeccable. And then he declared prophethood and the same people who called him Al-Amin called him a sorcerer, a madman, a liar. His reputation was destroyed by those with the loudest voices and the most social power. And Allah said: *إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ* — those who brought the slander are a group from among you. Do not think it bad for you. Rather it is good for you. The attack on the reputation was within divine governance. And within divine governance it was turned toward good.

Hold the specific fear: what is being said, by whom, to whom. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who holds the self's true record. Not the reputation in other people's minds — the record in the one power's knowledge. The one power knows every action the self has ever taken, every intention behind every action, every context within which every choice was made. No accusation made in the self's absence adds to or subtracts from that record. The Lord of the seven heavens holds the complete and accurate account. The bad reputation is a distortion of that account in human minds. The accurate account is with the one being addressed.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The bad reputation's spread is within divine permission. The one power permits the words to travel, permits the distortion to circulate. The protection from it is asked from the same source: from Yourself. The neighbour-protector who governs what travels through human minds about the self is the one being asked to govern it toward truth. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one power over the self's reputation is the protection of the only one who knows the full truth about the self and who can make that truth apparent when He wills.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the reputation. Greater than what is being said in the rooms the self cannot enter. Greater than the distorted record in other people's minds. The reputation is a human construction of words and impressions. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every word ever spoken about the self by another person. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific bad reputation feared — the specific accusation, the specific distortion, the specific words being circulated. Allah is mightier than all of it. The slander of 'Aisha — upon her be peace — spread through the entire community of believers. It was addressed by Quranic revelation. The one power cleared her name in a way that no human defence could have. Ask the one who cleared her name.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its reputation — the public relations, the careful presentation, the corrections of misrepresentation, the anxiety about what is being said — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's record in human minds. The reputation is within the one power's governance. He can clear it when He wills, through means the self cannot engineer. He can let the distortion run for a season if the disclosure through it serves His purpose. Whatever You will. The true record is with Him. The reputation in human minds is His to govern. The self does not need to manage what He is already managing.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. A bad reputation within divine pleasure is ‘Aisha in the month before the Quran cleared her: she had the bad reputation and the divine pleasure simultaneously. The reputation was temporary. The pleasure was not. A good reputation within divine anger is hypocrisy — the person the community respects whose account with the one power is empty. Ask for the right condition: divine pleasure, and within divine pleasure, also a reputation that reflects the truth. Both. The cleared name and the pleasure behind it. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the bad reputation is within Your permission. Clear what Your permission has distorted. You know the truth. Make the truth apparent. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَّيَبْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Haqq: the Truth. You are as You have praised Yourself. The truth is Yours to reveal.

*‘Aisha had the slander and the divine pleasure
simultaneously.*

The slander was cleared by revelation.

The pleasure was never in doubt.

The true record is with Him.

Al-Haqq.

The truth is His to reveal.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

The Fear of People's Opinion

The invisible audience. The judgment that is carried everywhere and consulted constantly.

The Fear Named

This fear is the most pervasive in this section because it does not require an event. It operates continuously. The self carries an imagined audience with it through every decision, every action, every choice of words, every relationship. The fear of people's opinion is not just the fear of what people will think when something specific happens. It is the ongoing orientation of the self toward the imagined reactions of others as its primary navigation instrument.

It shapes what is said and what is left unsaid. What is worn. What is eaten. What is pursued and what is abandoned. What is believed and what is performed as belief. In its most extreme form it produces a self that is entirely a construction for the imagined audience — a performance rather than a presence, a mask rather than a face. The fear of people's opinion is the fear that makes the self a stranger to itself.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, named this: مَنْ طَلَبَ رِضَا النَّاسِ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ سَخَطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَسَخَطَ عَلَيْهِ النَّاسُ — whoever seeks the pleasure of people at the cost of Allah's displeasure, Allah will be displeased with him and the people will also be displeased with him. And: whoever seeks Allah's pleasure despite people's displeasure, Allah will be pleased with him and eventually make the people pleased with him too. The fear of people's opinion is precisely this: seeking the audience's approval as the primary orientation. And the tradition names the outcome with precision: that strategy does not even achieve what it is attempting. The people's approval, sought at the cost of divine pleasure, collapses. The divine pleasure, sought directly, eventually produces the people's approval as a secondary consequence.

Hold the specific imagined audience. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose opinion is the only opinion with ultimate authority. Not the imagined audience. The Lord of the seven heavens, who sees the self without the performance — who sees the heart directly, who said: does He not know what He created? The one whose observation is not managed, whose opinion cannot be performed for, whose knowledge of the self is complete and unfiltered. The fear of people's opinion is the misplacement of a real sensitivity — the sensitivity to being known. Placed correctly, that sensitivity belongs entirely with the one power. He knows. He has always known. The performance was never necessary with Him.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The imagined audience is a construction within the self's own mind, running on divine permission. The neighbour-protector being asked is the one whose actual opinion is the only one that matters — who is being asked to displace the imagined audience with His presence. Not: help me manage the audience. Dissolve the audience. Be the observation that the self orients toward. When the one power's gaze is the gaze the self is aware of, the imagined audience loses its grip. There is no room for the audience when the Lord of the seven heavens is already present. عَزَّ جَارِكَ.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ جَمًّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my

protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the opinion of every person who has ever existed. Greater than the combined judgment of every audience the self has ever feared. The human opinion is creation — a configuration of neurons in a created brain, forming a thought about the self that lasts for a moment and then changes or dissolves. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every opinion every person has ever held about the self. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific opinion feared — the specific person's judgment, the specific community's assessment. Allah is mightier than all of it. And His opinion is the one that determines the self's actual standing.

The Prophet Ibrahim faced a community that unanimously opposed him. His family, his society, his king — the entire human environment around him had one opinion of him and it was hostile. And he said: *إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ* — I have turned my face toward the one who created the heavens and the earth. Not toward the community's opinion. Toward the Creator. That reorientation is what the second prayer is doing. Allah is mightier than what I feared. Turn toward Him.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's navigation by the imagined audience is returned entirely. Not: I will now perform indifference to people's opinion — that is another performance for another audience. Whatever You will for this self's standing in people's minds. The people's opinion is within the one power's governance. He can turn it toward the self or away from it, warm it or cool it, as He wills. The self's only task is to orient toward the one power's opinion directly. The people's approval, the Prophet said, follows

the divine pleasure as a consequence. Whatever You will. The self turns its face toward the one who created the heavens and the earth.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Divine pleasure is the real thing the fear of people's opinion was always misdirectedly reaching for. The self wanted to be seen well, to be approved of, to be accepted — and it tried to obtain this from the audience. But divine pleasure is the only approval that is permanent, that is accurate, that is not subject to the audience's mood. Ask for it directly. And within divine pleasure, also the warm regard of those around the self. The Prophet said: Allah will make the people pleased with the one who seeks His pleasure. Both. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the people's opinion is within Your governance. Govern it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Khabir: the Aware. You know the self without the performance. You have always known. The performance was never necessary with You.

Does He not know what He created?

He knows.

He has always known.

Without the performance.

*Turn your face toward the one
who created the heavens and the earth.*

The people's approval follows His pleasure.

Ask for the pleasure.

Directly.

The Fear of Rejection

The door that does not open. The offering that is not received.

The Fear Named

Rejection is the specific wound of offering something — oneself, one's work, one's love, one's application, one's request — and having it returned or refused. It is the vulnerability of extension: the self reaching toward another person or toward an opportunity and the reaching not being met. The fear of rejection is therefore the fear of extending, because extension makes the self vulnerable to the specific pain of not being received.

The fear of rejection is ultimately the fear of not being enough. The rejection seems to confirm something the self feared about itself: that it is not good enough, not lovable enough, not talented enough, not worthy of the thing it reached for. This is why rejection so often feels like a verdict rather than an event. It feels like information about the self's fundamental adequacy.

And yet: the one power never rejects the one who turns toward Him. وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي وَاقِفٌ مُّقِيمٌ — when My servants ask about Me, I am near. I respond to the call of the caller when he calls. The one power's response to the self's turning is guaranteed. Not conditional on the self's adequacy. Not contingent on the quality of the offering. Guaranteed. The one power does not evaluate the self's worthiness before responding. He responds. This is the only place where rejection is structurally impossible.

Hold the specific rejection feared or already received. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرِّي جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who has never rejected the self. Not once. Every turning toward the one power has been met. Every call has been heard. Every du'a' has been received, even when the answer came in a form other than the one asked for. The Lord of the seven heavens is the one place in existence where the self is always received. Always enough. Always worth the response. The fear of rejection, brought to this address, meets its structural impossibility.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The human rejection feared is within divine permission. The person who did not receive the self's offering, the door that did not open, the love that was not returned — all within divine governance. The protection from rejection is not the guarantee that every offering will be received. It is the presence of the one who always receives the self, regardless of what any human does with it. The neighbour-protector who accepts the self unconditionally is present within every human rejection. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: the protection of being always received by the one power holds the self together within every instance of not being received by another person.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَتَغَرَّ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the rejection. Greater than the door that did not open, the love that was not returned, the application that was refused. The rejection is a human event — one created being failing to receive another. The Creator is greater

than all of His creation, including every instance of human rejection that has ever occurred. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ**: mightier than the specific rejection feared. And here the pivoting logic of Section II applies: what was closed may be covering something better. The door that did not open was not the only door. The offering not received by this person was perhaps not meant for this person. The one who holds the seven heavens governs every door. Ask the one who holds every door.

The Prophet was rejected by Ta'if in a way that was physically violent as well as emotionally devastating. He was driven out. Stones were thrown. He bled. He sat under a tree and made one of the most heartbreaking prayers recorded in the tradition. And the Angel of the Mountains appeared and offered to collapse the mountains of Ta'if on the city. The Prophet refused. He said: perhaps their descendants will worship Allah. The rejection of Ta'if was within divine governance. And from within that governance the entire city of Ta'if eventually accepted Islam. The one power governs what rejection is and is not the end of.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its exposure to rejection — the withholding of offering, the performance of not caring, the pre-emptive withdrawal before rejection can arrive — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's offerings and how they are received. The one power governs the reception of every offering the self makes. He closes some doors and opens others. He directs some offerings to the people and places they are actually meant for. Whatever You will: the self extends, offers, reaches — and the outcome is His. The self was not made to stop reaching in order to avoid rejection. It was made to reach toward the one power, and let the one power direct all other reaching.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The self that is within divine pleasure and has been rejected by a person is not the self that has been found inadequate. It is the self that has been redirected. Within divine pleasure, the rejection is information about direction, not about worth. And within divine pleasure with the offering also received and flourishing: the fullest state. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the rejection is within Your permission. Let what is closed be a redirection, not a verdict. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — when My servants ask about Me, I am near. I respond. You are as You have praised Yourself. The one place in existence where rejection is impossible.

When My servants ask about Me, I am near.

I respond to the call of the caller when he calls.

Not once has He rejected the one who turned toward Him.

Not once.

The human door that closed

is not the address of the one who always opens.

Turn toward Him.

He responds.

The Fear of Social Exclusion

Being outside the circle. The group that continues without the self.

The Fear Named

Social exclusion is the removal of belonging. Not a single act of rejection but a sustained condition: the self is not included, not invited, not a member of the group that others belong to. The fear of social exclusion is the fear of that sustained condition — of being the one who is left out, who exists on the periphery while others occupy the centre, whose absence from the gathering is not noticed because the gathering was never organised around the self's presence.

Humans are social animals. Belonging is not a luxury — in the evolutionary context it was a condition of survival. The social group was the protection. Exclusion from the group was exposure. The nervous system responds to social exclusion with the same alert status it uses for physical threat because, across most of human history, they were equivalent. The fear of social exclusion is the body remembering something very old.

And yet: the one who is excluded by people is not excluded by the one power. The Prophet was socially boycotted for three years in Makkah — his entire community cut off from economic and social life. The believers could not buy, sell, marry, or be visited. The exclusion was total and deliberate. And the Lord of the seven heavens was present within the boycott, governing it, and its end came when the document specifying the boycott was found to have been eaten by termites — all except the words “in Your name, O Allah.” The one whose name remained is the one who governs all social structures, including the structures of exclusion.

Hold the specific exclusion. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose inclusion of the self is permanent and unconditional. The Lord of the seven heavens does not exclude. He said: I am near. He said: I respond. He said: we are closer to him than his jugular vein. The social exclusion feared operates in the human register. The one power's inclusion of the self operates in the only register that is not subject to the moods, politics, and group dynamics of created beings. The self within the one power's address is never outside the circle. The circle the one power draws includes every human being who turns toward Him.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The social exclusion is within divine permission. The neighbour-protector being asked is the one who governs social structures — who can dissolve the boycott document with termites, who can turn the hearts of the excluders, who can provide the self with belonging elsewhere when belonging is refused here. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: the protection of the one power within social exclusion is the protection of one who includes the self in a belonging that human groups cannot revoke.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the social group and its power to include or exclude. Greater than the gathering the self was not invited to. Greater than the circle the self is outside of. The social group is creation — a temporary arrangement of created beings whose membership and exclusion are within the one power's governance. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخَذَرُ: mightier than the specific exclusion feared. The one who holds the seven heavens governs the social structure within which the exclusion is occurring. He governs the hearts of the people in the group. He can open the circle or reveal that there is a better circle elsewhere. Allah is mightier than the group's power over the self's belonging.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its belonging — the social navigation, the effort to be included, the anxiety about standing in the group — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's social belonging. The one power governs where the self belongs. He can include the self in the group the self fears being excluded from, or He can reveal that the self's true belonging is elsewhere — with the community that the Prophet's Ansar built, which was more genuine than anything Quraysh offered. Whatever You will. The self belongs to the one power. Its belonging among people follows from that primary belonging.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be socially excluded within divine pleasure is to be every prophet who was driven from their community and whose community later wished it had not done so. To be socially included within divine anger is the hypocrite sitting at the centre of the gathering, admired, belonging, and empty of the one thing that the belonging cannot provide. Ask for divine pleasure first. And within divine pleasure, also genuine belonging among people — people whose company is itself a form of the one power's provision. Both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the exclusion is within Your permission. Dissolve it or replace it with a better belonging. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتُنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Jami': the Gatherer. You are as You have praised Yourself. You gather whom You will. Gather the self into the belonging it needs.

The boycott document was eaten by termites.

All except the words: in Your name, O Allah.

*The social structure that excluded
was within His governance.*

Its end was within His governance.

Al-Jami'.

He gathers whom He will.

Whatever You will.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

The Fear of Being Misunderstood

The self known incorrectly. The intention read as something other than what it was.

The Fear Named

The fear of being misunderstood is the fear of the gap between the self's interior and what others construct of it from the outside. The self knows its own intentions, its own context, its own history of arriving at a particular action or expression. Others do not have access to this. They have access to the behaviour, the words, the visible surface — and from these they construct an interpretation that may bear no resemblance to what was actually meant. The fear is of that gap: of being held responsible for an interpretation one never intended, of being known as something one is not.

It is also the fear of being unable to correct the misreading. Words once said are loose in the world. Impressions once formed are defended by the ego of the one who formed them. The explanation that comes after the misunderstanding is often less memorable than the original misunderstanding. The self can speak, clarify, demonstrate — and the gap can persist. The fear of being misunderstood is in part the fear of the self's powerlessness to fully control how it is received.

And yet: the one power knows exactly what was meant. *أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ* — does He not know what He created? The subtle, the aware. The one power knows the intention before the action. He knows the context before the word. He knows the complete interior life of the self with a precision that no human observer can approach. The self is never misunderstood by the one power. Never. The complete and accurate reading of the self exists permanently in the one power's knowledge. Whatever distortion enters human minds, the accurate reading is held forever.

Hold the specific misunderstanding. The specific gap. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزْرَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who reads the self without distortion. No gap exists between what the self is and what the Lord of the seven heavens knows it to be. No context is lost, no intention is misread, no history is unavailable to His understanding. The self that fears being misunderstood by people is understood completely — accurately, in full, without distortion — by the one being addressed. This does not make the human misunderstanding irrelevant. But it establishes: the true record exists. The complete reading of the self is held by the one who matters most.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The misunderstanding is within divine permission. The one power permits the gap to exist. He permits the distorted reading to circulate. The protection from it is asked from the one who holds the accurate reading — who can, when He wills, make the true intention apparent. Who can move the hearts of the ones who misunderstand toward understanding. Who can let the accurate reading displace the distortion in His own timing. عَزْرَ جَارِكَ: the protection is the permanent existence of the true record in the one power's knowledge.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزْرَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the misunderstanding. Greater than the distorted reading. Greater than the gap between the self's interior and what others have constructed of it. The misunderstanding is a human event — limited, partial, temporary. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every misreading ever formed in a human mind. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ: mightier than this specific misunderstanding. The self in the one power's knowledge is known correctly. That knowledge cannot be overwritten by any human misreading. Allah is mightier than the distortion.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's effort to be correctly understood — the explanations, the clarifications, the management of impression, the anxiety about being misread — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for the self's reception in human minds. The accurate reading is in Your knowledge. Whether it becomes apparent in human minds — when, through whom, by what means — is within Your governance. The self speaks truly, acts truly, intends truly. The rest is His. Whatever You will. The one who knows what He created will reveal what He knows when He wills.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. To be misunderstood by people within divine pleasure is every prophet: they were all misread by their contemporaries, and history eventually corrected the misreading. To be correctly

understood by people within divine anger is the reputation of the hypocrite — appearing as something clean while the interior is known accurately only to the one power. Ask for divine pleasure — and within divine pleasure, also the correction of the misunderstanding. The true reading becoming apparent. Both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the misunderstanding is within Your permission. Correct what Your permission has allowed to be distorted. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْشَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Khabir: the Aware. Does He not know what He created? He knows. The true reading is permanently with Him.

Does He not know what He created?

He knows.

The true reading is with Him.

Permanently.

Undistorted.

Whatever distortion travels in human minds —

the accurate record

is held by the Aware.

The Fear of Peer Pressure

The weight of the group on the individual. The cost of being different.

The Fear Named

Peer pressure is the social force that compresses the individual toward the group's norms. It does not always operate through direct demand. More often it operates through the self's own anticipation of the group's reaction — the internal calculation of what will happen to belonging, approval, and standing if the self deviates from what the group expects. The fear of peer pressure is the fear of the cost of being different: of the social withdrawal, the mockery, the exclusion that follows the self's refusal to conform.

Its most dangerous form is internal. The self that has internalised the group's norms so completely that it no longer experiences the pressure as external — it simply is the norms, performs them automatically, and experiences any deviation from them not as pressure resisted but as wrongness felt. This is the peer pressure that is hardest to name because it has no external source that can be identified and resisted. It is the self's own voice saying: you cannot do that, you cannot be that, what will they think.

The Prophet Ibrahim stood alone against his entire society's norms. His father. His king. His community. All of them pressing in one direction. And he turned his face toward the one who created the heavens and the earth. That turning is the structural solution to peer pressure in every form: the reorientation of the self away from the group as the primary authority and toward the one power as the only authority. Not defiance. Not performance of independence. Genuine reorientation. When the one power's standard is the standard the self actually holds, the group's pressure loses its leverage — because the cost of refusing the group is already been paid in advance by the choice of the one power.

Hold the specific pressure. The specific norm. The specific cost of deviation. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose standard is the self's actual orientation point. The group's pressure operates by making the group's approval the thing the self most needs. The first prayer reestablishes the hierarchy: the Lord of the seven heavens is the Lord. The group is creation. The Lord's standard is the standard. The group's approval is a secondary consideration at best — valued when it aligns with the one power's pleasure, released when it conflicts with it. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The pressure's social cost is within divine governance. The protection from it is asked from the one who held Ibrahim when his society pressed in every direction at once. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who was sufficient against the fire.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّيْلُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the group. Greater than the group's pressure. Greater than the social cost of refusal. Greater than the fear of what the group will do if

the self does not conform. The group is creation. Its approval is creation. Its disapproval is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation combined, including every social pressure every group has ever applied to an individual. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific group, the specific norm, the specific cost. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the group within those heavens. He governs the group's response to the self's deviation. Ask the one who governs the response.

The believer's position vis-à-vis social pressure was named precisely by the Prophet: Islam began as something strange and will return to being something strange, so glad tidings to the strangers. The one who stands outside the group's norms for the sake of the one power is not simply surviving pressure. They are fulfilling the role that the tradition names with gladness. The glad tidings are not for the conformist. They are for the one who bears the cost of the standard.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's navigation of the group's pressure — the calculation of how much deviation is affordable, the compromise of the standard to preserve the belonging, the exhaustion of managing the distance between what the self holds and what the group requires — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's position relative to the group's norms. The group's approval is within the one power's governance. Its withdrawal is within the one power's governance. The self that holds the one power's standard and bears whatever the group does in response is the self that the tradition calls strange and then calls glad. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, to be outside the group's approval is Ibrahim refusing the fire. Within divine anger, to be perfectly inside the group's approval is Nimrod's court. The prayer asks for divine pleasure first — and within divine pleasure, also the group's understanding and acceptance where that is possible. Where it is not: glad tidings to the stranger. Both situations are within divine governance. Both are within divine care. Ask for divine pleasure across both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the pressure is within Your permission. Be my strength within the cost of standing. وَأَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The fire was commanded to be cool. If He can cool the fire, He can cool the group's pressure.

Islam began as something strange.

It will return to being something strange.

Glad tidings to the strangers.

*Ibrahim turned his face
toward the one who created the heavens and the earth.*

The fire was commanded to be cool.

The group's pressure is also creation.

Whatever You will.

CHAPTER FORTY

The Fear of Public Speaking

The body before the audience. The voice that must hold when everything in the body wants to disappear.

The Fear Named

Public speaking is consistently ranked among the most common human fears. More feared than death, according to some surveys. The comedian observed that the person at the funeral would rather be in the casket than delivering the eulogy. The fear has a particular quality: it is the fear of performance failure witnessed in real time. The mistake cannot be edited. The trembling voice cannot be retaken. The mind that goes blank does so in front of everyone simultaneously.

At its root, the fear of public speaking is the fear of being seen fully by many people at once — the audience's collective attention directed at the self with nowhere to hide. And within that exposure, the fear of the self's inadequacy being confirmed: the voice that breaks, the thought that vanishes, the body that betrays, the words that come out wrong. The audience is the witness of the self's failure in real time.

And yet: Musa, upon him be peace, the prophet sent to confront the most powerful ruler of the ancient world, asked Allah: رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي — my Lord, expand my chest, ease my task, and untie the knot from my tongue so that they may understand what I say. This is the prayer of the public speaker who knows the speech is beyond his natural capacity. Not: give me confidence. Give me the expanded chest. Ease the task. Remove the obstruction from the tongue. The Lord of the seven heavens was asked directly to be the one who speaks through the speaker.

Hold the specific audience. The specific occasion. The specific terror of the voice and the blank mind and the watching faces. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who can expand the chest. The constriction of the public speaking fear is physical — the tightening of the chest, the constriction of the throat, the narrowing of the available breath. The Lord of the seven heavens was asked by Musa to do the opposite: expand. Open. The one power governs the body's physiological state in the moment of the speech. The chest that is tight: He can expand it. The tongue that is knotted: He can untie it. The breath that is shallow: He governs it. Ask the one who governs the body's response to expand what fear constricts.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The audience is within divine governance. Every face in it, every judgment forming behind those faces, every response the speech receives — within divine governance. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the seven heavens is present in the room in a way that no audience member is. He governs the room's reception. He can soften the judgment. He can open the hearts. He can make the words land. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that governs the audience while the self is speaking.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخْدَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the audience. Greater than the audience's judgment. Greater than the fear of the voice breaking or the mind going blank. The audience is creation. Each person in it is creation. Their collective attention is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every audience that has ever assembled. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific audience, the specific occasion, the specific terror. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the room. The one who governed Musa's speech before Pharaoh governs this speech before this audience.

Musa went to the most dangerous audience a human being had ever addressed. He went with a stammer. He went asking for an expanded chest and an untied tongue. And the Lord of the seven heavens expanded the chest and untied the tongue and Pharaoh's magicians, who came to defeat Musa, fell in prostration. The same one who governed that room governs this one. Ask Him.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its public speaking fear — the preparation, the rehearsal, the anxiety about every possible failure mode — is returned entirely. Prepare, yes. Prepare well. And then: whatever You will for this speech, this voice, this audience, this moment. The outcome is His. The body's performance is His to govern. The words that come: His to place. The audience's reception: His to govern. The self is the vessel. The Lord of the seven heavens is the one who fills it and speaks through it when the chest is expanded and the tongue is untied and the task is eased. Whatever You will. My Lord, expand my chest.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the speech that falls short by human standards is still within divine care. Within divine anger, the polished speech that receives a standing ovation is empty of what the one power values. Ask for divine pleasure within the speech — and within divine pleasure, also the expanded chest, the untied tongue, the words that land. Both. The full Musa experience: the divine pleasure and the speech that the audience cannot refuse. Ask for both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the fear of the audience is within Your permission. Expand what Your permission has constricted. Untie what the fear has knotted. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The one who untied Musa's tongue. You are as You have praised Yourself.

My Lord, expand my chest.

Ease my task.

Untie the knot from my tongue

so that they may understand what I say.

Musa asked this.

The Lord of the seven heavens answered.

The magicians fell in prostration.

Ask Him.

The Fear of Being Seen

Not the fear of what is done with the seeing. The fear of the seeing itself.

The Fear Named

The fear of being seen is the deepest fear in this section because it underlies all the others. The fear of humiliation is the fear of being seen at one's worst. The fear of bad reputation is the fear of being seen incorrectly. The fear of rejection is the fear of being seen and found wanting. The fear of public speaking is the fear of being seen by many simultaneously. All of these are variations on the same root: the vulnerability of being visible.

But this fear goes further than its variations. This is the fear of visibility itself — independent of what is done with it. The self that makes itself small so as not to attract attention. That does not speak when it has something to say, does not act when it knows what to do, does not offer when it has something to give — because any of these actions would increase visibility, and visibility is exposure, and exposure is danger. The fear of being seen is the fear that hides the self from the world.

And yet: the self is already seen. Completely. At every moment. By the one power. *وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ* — *أَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ* — He is with you wherever you are. The self has never been unseen. Not for a moment. The one power sees the self in the dark, in the private, in the interior. He sees the intention behind the action and the thought behind the intention and the origin of the thought. The self that fears being seen by people is already seen completely by the only one whose seeing matters. The human gaze that the self fears is limited, partial, distorting, and temporary. The divine gaze is complete, accurate, permanent, and the source of the only assessment that endures.

Hold the fear of being seen. Its specific texture. The specific shrinking. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who sees. Not the human audience with its partial and distorting gaze. The Lord of the seven heavens — Al-Basir, the All-Seeing — who sees the self completely, accurately, and with the love of the Creator for the created. The self is already seen. This is not a threat. It is the dissolving of the fear's premise. The fear of being seen assumes that being seen is dangerous. But the one whose seeing is complete and permanent is not dangerous to the self. He is its Creator, its sustainer, its neighbour-protector. Being seen by Him is not exposure. It is home.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The human gaze that is feared is within divine permission. The one power permits people to see the self. The protection from the fear of that gaze is asked from the one whose gaze is the only one that ultimately matters. When the one power's gaze is the gaze the self is aware of — complete, accurate, loving — the human gaze loses its power to terrify. The audience's eyes are a subset of Al-Basir's seeing. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who sees completely is the protection that dissolves the fear of being seen partially.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ جَمًّا أَخَافُ وَأُخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the human gaze. Greater than the audience's eyes. Greater than the seeing that the self fears. Every human eye that has ever looked at the self is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every gaze ever directed at the self by another person. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the specific seeing feared. Mightier than the specific audience, the specific spotlight, the specific moment of full visibility. Allah is mightier than that. And His seeing — complete, accurate, permanent — is not the seeing the self is hiding from. It is the seeing the self is already always within.

The self that has fully received the fact of the divine gaze — that has sat with *وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ* until it becomes real rather than theoretical — finds something unexpected: the fear of human seeing dissolves. Not by becoming indifferent to others. But by having the quality of being seen already satisfied. Already seen, completely, by the only one whose seeing is complete. What more can any human gaze add to or subtract from that?

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its visibility — the smallness, the hiding, the refusal to offer what it has because offering requires being seen — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's visibility. If You will that it is seen: it is seen, within Your governance, and Your governance of the seeing protects what needs protecting. If You will that it remains unseen: it remains unseen, and the unseen life is not a lesser life. The Prophet said: blessed is the one who is unknown, who is not known.

There is no hierarchy between the seen and the unseen life. There is only: whatever You will. The self offers what it has, speaks what it knows, acts when it is moved to act — and the visibility that results is within Your governance.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, to be unseen by people is to be the one the Prophet called blessed. Within divine anger, to be very visible and very admired is vanity. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within whatever degree of visibility the self inhabits — and within divine pleasure, also the freedom to be seen without fear. The full self, offered to the world, within divine governance, without hiding. And a person within divine pleasure who offers fully and is received fully is in the fullest state. Ask for all of it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the human gaze is within Your permission. Govern it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Basir: the All-Seeing. You are as You have praised Yourself. You see the self completely. Already. Always. The self has never been hidden from You. It was always home.

He is with you wherever you are.

The self has never been unseen.

Not for a moment.

Al-Basir sees completely.

The human gaze is partial, temporary, distorting.

The divine gaze is complete, permanent, loving.

The self is already seen.

By the only one whose seeing is home.

Whatever You will.

SECTION VI

Relational

*Fear for loved ones — Fear of betrayal — Fear of enemies
Fear of abandonment — Fear of loneliness — Fear of intimacy
Fear of conflict — Fear of dependency — Fear of loss of love*

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

Whoever is mindful of Allah — He will make a way out for them.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Fear For Loved Ones

Not fear of them. Not fear from them. Fear for them. One's world. One's universe.

The Fear Named

Every fear in this catalogue so far has had the self as its subject. What might arrive at the self. What might be taken from the self. What might happen inside the self's body, the self's mind, the self's circumstances. This fear is different in kind. Its subject is not the self. Its subject is the ones the self loves.

The mother. The father. The child. The sibling. The friend who has become more than a friend — who has become the person the self is organised around, the one whose wellbeing is felt as one's own, the one without whom the self's world would not be the same world. Not peripheral figures in the self's life. Its universe. Its ground.

This fear has a particular ferocity because the self has even less control over what happens to those it loves than it has over what happens to itself. The self can at least participate in managing its own situation. The loved one's situation is entirely outside the self's governance. The child who is ill and the self cannot be ill for them. The mother whose health is failing and the self cannot slow what is failing. The friend in danger and the self cannot place itself between the friend and the danger. The love is total. The capacity to protect is almost nothing. This is the precise shape of the fear for loved ones: infinite care meeting near-zero control.

It is also the most intimate form the fear of the one power takes. Because underneath every fear for a loved one is the same question: will You take care of them when I cannot? Ibrahim asked this when he left Hajar and the infant Ismail in a valley with no water and no food by divine command and turned to walk away. The Quran records Hajar asking him: has Allah commanded you to do this? He said yes. She said: then He will not neglect

us. That is the question and the answer in their purest form. Has He commanded this? Then He will not neglect them.

And yet the fear persists. Because the loved one's vulnerability is real. The illness that can come for the mother is real. The accident that can come for the child is real. The world that can damage the friend is real. The fear does not need to be dismissed. It needs to meet the four prayers.

Hold it now. The specific face. The specific person. The specific fear for them — their health, their safety, their situation, their pain. Whatever the fear is carrying for whoever it is carrying it for. Hold the face. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who loves the loved one more than the self does. This is the first thing to establish. The self's love for the one it fears for — however intense, however total — is a reflection of a love that precedes it and exceeds it by an infinite margin. The Lord of the seven heavens loved the loved one before the self knew them. He created them, sustains them, governs their situation at every level, and His care for them is not contingent on the self's capacity to protect them. The self is not the primary protector of the loved one. The Lord of the seven heavens is. The self is one of the means He uses.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The prayer is not only for the self. It is for the loved one. Be their neighbour-protector from Yourself. The harm that might come to them is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the same source. The one power who governs the loved one's situation is the one being asked

to be the neighbour-protector within that situation. Not the self standing between the loved one and danger — because the self cannot always stand there. The Lord of the seven heavens standing there. He can always stand there. He is always already there.

Ibrahim did not stay with Hajar. He could not protect her by remaining — the divine command required his leaving. What he did was: address the Lord of the seven heavens. He turned before walking away and said: رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ — Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in a valley with no cultivation, near Your sacred house. He placed them, in the prayer, in the address of the Lord of the seven heavens. That is the action. Not protection by the self's presence. Placement in the Lord's address. Then he walked away. The water came from the earth.

عَزَّ جَارُكَ — mighty is Your protection. The protection of the Lord of the seven heavens over the loved one is not contingent on the self's presence or proximity or capacity. It operates when the self is asleep. It operates when the self is far away. It operated for Ismail in a valley without water before Ismail could even speak. It is mighty precisely because it is not the self's protection — it is the protection of the one who created the loved one and holds them in existence in this moment.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than what threatens the loved one. Greater than the illness that might come for the mother. Greater than the world's capacity to damage the child. Greater than every danger the self's imagination has rehearsed for the ones it loves. Whatever threatens them is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation. The

loved one is held within the one power's governance as completely as the self is. Their situation is not outside divine oversight. Not for a moment.

اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ — Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. Name it now with the specific face in mind. The specific fear for the specific person. The mother's health deteriorating. The child in a dangerous situation. The friend whose pain the self cannot reach. The sibling whose path is causing the self to fear for them. Name it precisely. Allah is mightier than that specific threat to that specific person. Not mightier in the sense of guaranteeing that nothing difficult will reach them — divine disclosure reaches those who are loved by Allah most intensely. Mightier in the sense that whatever reaches them, reaches them within the governance of the one power, which is also the care of the one power, which is also the love of the one power for the one the self loves.

The one who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission holds the loved one with the same governance. Every moment of the loved one's life — including the moments the self cannot see, the moments the self cannot be present for, the moments in the night and in the distance and in the situations the self is powerless to affect — every moment within His holding. Ask the one who holds all of it to hold them.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. This is the hardest whatever You will in the catalogue. Because it is not the self's situation being returned. It is the loved one's. And the love makes the return feel like abandonment. Like: if I say whatever You will for the mother, am I giving up? If I say whatever You will for the child, am I releasing my grip on their safety?

Ibrahim walked away from the valley. He did not give up. He placed them in the address of the Lord of the seven heavens and he walked away. Whatever You will is not the abandonment of the loved one. It is the recognition that the self was never the primary protector. It is the act of Ibrahim: turning to the Lord of the seven heavens, placing the loved one explicitly in His address, and trusting the one whose care exceeds the self's care by the distance between the Creator and the created.

Whatever You will for the mother. Whatever You will for the child. Whatever You will for the one who is the self's world, its universe. The self's grip on their safety is returned not because they stop mattering but because the grip was never the protection. The Lord of the seven heavens is the protection. Whatever You will: take care of them. You take care of everything. Take care of them.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The loved one within divine pleasure is the best possible state they can be in — better than any material safety the self could engineer for them, better than any protection the self could physically provide. A loved one within divine pleasure who is also safe, healthy, and flourishing is in the fullest state. Ask for both: their being within divine pleasure and their wellbeing within it. Not just that they survive. That they thrive. That they are within His pleasure. That they know Him. That their lives are within His governance and they know it. Ask for this for every face the self is holding.

وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The fear for loved ones sometimes carries a layer of fear about their spiritual state — whether the choices they are making, the paths they are on, are within divine pleasure. The pardon is asked not only

for the self but for the loved one. The one who said: O my servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah — this address is also for the ones the self fears for. Their account is with the one whose mercy exceeds the self's love for them. Ask for the pardon.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ — I seek refuge in You from You. Whatever difficulty reaches the loved one is within divine permission. Whatever the one power permits to disclose itself through the loved one's life is within His governance. I seek refuge in You from You: be the protection within whatever Your governance discloses through them. Be the one who is present in their difficulty as the one who created them and loves them and holds them within the seven heavens' shelter. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Wadud: the Loving. Al-Lateef: the Gentle, the one who is present in what cannot be seen. Al-Hafiz: the Preserver. You love the loved one more than the self does. You are present with them when the self cannot be. You preserve what the self cannot reach. You are as You have praised Yourself. Take care of them.

*Has Allah commanded this?
Then He will not neglect us.
Ibrahim placed them in His address
and walked away.
The water came from the earth.
You love them more than I do.
You are with them when I cannot be.
Whatever You will.
Take care of them.*

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

The Fear of Betrayal

The wound that comes from inside. The trust turned against the one who gave it.

The Fear Named

Betrayal is the particular wound of trust violated. It requires intimacy to occur — the stranger cannot betray, only disappoint. Betrayal is the act of the one who was let inside the self's confidence, who was given access to what the self protects, who was trusted with what the self would not give to anyone — and who used that access against the one who gave it. The fear of betrayal is therefore the fear that closeness itself is a vulnerability, that trust is the mechanism of its own violation.

The fear of betrayal is also the fear of one's own judgment. To be betrayed is to have trusted the wrong person, to have misjudged, to have been fooled. The self reproaches itself: I should have seen it. I should have known. I gave too much, too soon, to someone who did not deserve it. The betrayal is doubled: the external wound and the internal verdict on the self that permitted the wound.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, was betrayed. By allies who broke their treaty at a critical moment. By those who made agreements and did not keep them. And the Quran gave him — and through him, every person who has been betrayed — the precise framing: *وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا* — *أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ* — if they intend to deceive you, then Allah is sufficient for you. The answer to betrayal is not the withdrawal of trust from everyone. It is the transfer of ultimate reliance to the one who cannot betray.

Hold the specific betrayal feared or already received. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who cannot betray. Not because betrayal is beneath Him — but because betrayal requires a gap between what is presented and what is held in the interior, and the one power has no interior that is hidden from Himself. He is Al-Haqq: the Truth. His presentation and His reality are identical. His promise and His delivery are identical. The one power is the only being in existence who structurally cannot betray the trust placed in Him. Every trust placed in every created being carries the risk of betrayal. The trust placed in the one power carries none. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the betrayal, if it comes, is within divine permission. The protection from it is from the one who governs the intentions of the person the self has trusted. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who sees all intentions is mighty precisely because no intention is hidden from Him.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the betrayal. Greater than the wound of trust violated. Greater than the damage that the betrayer was able to inflict with the access the self gave them. The betrayal is a human event — a created being acting against another created being within the one power's governance. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every betrayal that has ever been committed. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ: mightier than the specific betrayal feared. Allah is mightier than what any betrayer can

do with what the self gave them. And Allah governs the account of every betrayal — what was done with the trust, and what the consequence is for the one who violated it.

Yusuf was sold into slavery by his own brothers. The betrayal was total and familial — from within the closest circle. He did not know, in the pit, what the Lord of the seven heavens was governing through the betrayal. The betrayal was within divine governance. And the one power's governance of it led Yusuf to a throne and eventually to a reunion in which he said: لا تُثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ — no blame upon you today. The betrayal that looked like destruction was the disclosure that led to everything. Ask the one who governed Yusuf's betrayal to govern this one.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its vulnerability to betrayal — the walls, the withheld trust, the refusal to let anyone close enough to betray — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's exposure to betrayal. The one power governs who is permitted access to the self's interior. He governs what is done with that access. He governs the outcome of every trust given and every trust violated. Whatever You will. The self was not made to live behind walls. It was made to trust — the one power first, and through that trust, extend carefully toward others. If they intend to deceive: Allah is sufficient.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Yusuf in the pit, sold by his brothers, was within divine pleasure. The brothers who sold him were within divine accountability. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within whatever betrayal comes — and within divine pleasure, also trustworthy companions, genuine closeness, the gift of being surrounded by those who keep their trust. Both. The full blessing: the pleasure and the companions who deserve it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the betrayal is within Your permission. Govern what the betrayer is permitted to do with what they were given. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَّيْنَتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Wakil: the Trustee, the one in whose trust everything can safely be placed. You are as You have praised Yourself. The only one who cannot betray what is entrusted to Him.

*If they intend to deceive you —
Allah is sufficient for you.
Yusuf was sold by his brothers.
No blame upon you today.
The betrayal was the disclosure
that led to everything.
Al-Wakil.
Place it in His trust.*

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

The Fear of Enemies

The one who wishes harm. Whose will is oriented against the self.

The Fear Named

An enemy is not merely someone who dislikes the self. An enemy is someone whose will is organised against the self's wellbeing — who wishes harm, who acts toward the self's diminishment, who uses their capacity to make the self's situation worse. The fear of enemies is the fear of that organised hostility: of the person or people who are actively working against the self, whose attention is focused on harm, whose relationship to the self is defined by opposition.

The fear is particularly consuming because the enemy's attention is continuous. Unlike a natural disaster, which is indifferent, the enemy's hostility is directed. It follows the self. It looks for vulnerabilities. It uses information against the self. It does not forget. The fear of enemies is the fear of sustained, intelligent, motivated hostility — of opposition that does not tire and does not stop.

And yet: who holds the enemy's heart? The Prophet was told: *فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ* — Allah will be sufficient against them. Not: here is how to manage the enemy. Allah will be sufficient. And the hearts of enemies are within the one power's governance. The Quran records one of history's most remarkable reversals: the people of Makkah who persecuted the Prophet for thirteen years entered Islam at the Conquest and the Prophet said: go, for you are free. The enemy's heart is a created heart within the one power's governance. He can turn it when He wills.

Hold the specific enemy. Their specific hostility. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose governance encompasses the enemy completely. The enemy's heart is within His governance. Their will is within His governance. Their capacity to act is within His permission. The enemy cannot move against the self except within the one power's permission. And the one power's permission can be withdrawn at any moment. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the enemy's hostility is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the one who governs the enemy from within — who holds the enemy's next action within the same permission that holds the stars. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who governs the enemy's heart is mightier than any defence the self can construct against the enemy's actions.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the enemy. Greater than the enemy's hostility, however sustained, however intelligent, however motivated. Greater than every resource the enemy can deploy against the self. The enemy is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every enemy who has ever been organised against any person. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ: mightier than the specific enemy feared. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the enemy within those heavens' shadow. Allah will be sufficient against them. That sufficiency is the sufficiency of the one who holds the seven heavens.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, on the night of the Hijra, was surrounded by men who came to kill him. He walked out among them while reciting Surah Ya-Sin and they did not see him. The enemy's intelligence and motivation and sustained hostility: completely bypassed. Not by the Prophet's strategy — by the one power's governance of what the enemy's eyes could see. Ask the one who governed the sight of those enemies to govern the capacity of this enemy.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of the enemy — the counter-strategy, the defensive manoeuvres, the anxiety about every possible move the enemy might make — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's situation in relation to this enemy. The enemy's capacity to harm is within Your governance. The enemy's heart is within Your governance. You can turn what is organised against the self into what serves the self — as the plot against Yusuf served Yusuf, as the persecution of the Prophet served the spread of Islam. Whatever You will. The enemy is within Your hand. Ask the one who holds the enemy to govern them.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the enemy's hostility is the condition of every prophet. Within divine anger, an enemy-free life purchased through compromise of what the one power asked for. The

prayer asks for divine pleasure within the enmity — and within divine pleasure, also its end: the enemy's heart turned, or their capacity neutralised, or the self delivered from their reach. All of it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the enemy's power is within Your permission. Withdraw the permission. Turn the heart. فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ — Allah will be sufficient against them. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Mani': the Preventer of harm. You are as You have praised Yourself.

Allah will be sufficient against them.

The enemy's heart is creation.

The Creator governs every heart.

The people of Makkah entered Islam.

Go — you are free.

Whatever the enemy wills

is within His permission.

Al-Mani'.

Ask Him.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

The Fear of Abandonment

The one who stays until they leave. The ground that holds until it doesn't.

The Fear Named

Abandonment is the wound of being left. Not rejected at the door — the rejection that happens before entry carries its own pain but not the specific pain of abandonment. Abandonment is the departure of someone who was already inside the self's world, who was relied upon, who had become part of the structure of the self's daily life and sense of safety — and then was gone. The fear of abandonment is the fear of that specific shape of loss: the leaving of the one who was staying.

The fear of abandonment is often the deepest relational fear because it is the one that rewrites history. When someone abandons, the self re-reads everything that preceded the leaving: all the signs it missed, all the ways it should have known, all the moments the other person was already leaving while the self was still trusting. The abandonment does not only hurt in the present. It retroactively poisons the past.

And yet: the one power never abandons. مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ — your Lord has not abandoned you, nor has He become displeased with you. This was revealed to the Prophet when the revelation paused and his enemies mocked: his Lord has abandoned him, his Lord hates him. And the one power's response was direct and tender: no. Not abandoned. Not displeased. Still here. The pause in revelation was not abandonment. The silence was within divine governance. The return of revelation confirmed: the one power does not leave. He cannot leave. Leaving requires the kind of changing relationship the one power does not have. He is with the self wherever the self is. He was with the self before anyone else arrived. He will be with the self after everyone has left.

Hold the specific fear: the specific person, the specific leaving that is dreaded. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who cannot abandon. Not because the self deserves the one power's continued presence — but because the one power's presence with the self is not conditional on what the self deserves. It precedes the self. The Lord of the seven heavens was present before the self was born, governing the conditions of its arrival. He is present now. He will be present when every human who currently surrounds the self has departed. His presence is structural to the self's existence, not a relationship that can be ended by one party's choice to leave.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The human abandonment feared is within divine permission. The one power permits people to leave. The protection from abandonment is not the guarantee that no one will leave. It is the presence of the one who never leaves, within every leaving. The neighbour-protector who is still present in the silence, in the space where the person used to be, in the restructured daily life after the departure. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection is the one who said: your Lord has not abandoned you. He said it directly, personally, to the one who most needed to hear it. He says it to every self that fears abandonment.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي حَاجًّا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the abandonment. Greater than the leaving. Greater than the space where the person used to be. Greater than the retroactive rewriting of the past that the fear of abandonment performs. The departure of a created being is a created event. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every departure that has ever occurred. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذِرُ: mightier than the specific leaving feared. The one who holds the seven heavens holds the self when what was holding the self from the human side departs. He holds what people cannot hold. He stays when people leave.

Hajar was left in a valley with no water. By divine command. The one who commanded the leaving was also the one who sent the water from the earth. The departure was within divine governance. The provision after the departure was within divine governance. The one power did not abandon Hajar when Ibrahim left. He was present in the leaving and present in the provision that followed it. Ask the one who provided for Hajar after Ibrahim's departure.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its vulnerability to abandonment — the clinging, the pre-emptive self-sufficiency, the refusal to depend so that departure cannot devastate — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for the people in this life and how long they stay. The one power governs the duration of every human presence in the

self's life. He governs who arrives and who departs and what comes after the departure. Whatever You will. The self's ground is not the people who are currently present. Its ground is the one power — who was present before they arrived and will be present after they leave. Whatever You will for the people. The ground remains.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, to be abandoned by people is Hajar in the valley — the one the water came for. Within divine anger, to be surrounded by people whose presence fills the space where the one power should be. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within whatever the human relational landscape looks like — and within divine pleasure, also the gift of people who stay. Genuine, faithful presence. Companions who do not leave. Both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the leaving is within Your permission. Be my ground within whatever Your permission allows to depart. مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَى — Your Lord has not abandoned you, nor become displeased. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Qayyum: the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting. The one who sustains everything and is Himself sustained by nothing. Who was before everyone and will be after everyone. Who does not leave.

*Your Lord has not abandoned you.
Nor has He become displeased with you.
The silence was within His governance.
Hajar was left in a valley.
The water came from the earth.
Al-Qayyum.*

He was before everyone.

He will be after everyone.

He does not leave.

The Fear of Loneliness

Not just the condition of being alone. The condition of being alone and it not ending.

The Fear Named

Loneliness is the experience of the self as unwitnessed. Not merely without company — one can be alone without loneliness and lonely in a crowd. Loneliness is the experience of having one's interior life unshared, unreceived, unseen by another human being. The fear of loneliness is not just the fear of an empty house. It is the fear of a life whose fullness has no witness, no one who knows the self from the inside, no one for whom the self's existence makes a particular difference.

The fear of loneliness is also the fear of its permanence. A temporary aloneness can be held as a season. The fear is of the season with no end: the life that was organised around another person and is now not, and does not know how to reorganise. The ageing person whose community has thinned. The one whose circumstances have made genuine closeness difficult. The person who does not know how to be known and fears they never will.

And yet: the one power is the one witness whose witnessing is complete. *وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ* — We are closer to him than his jugular vein. Not closer than a good friend. Closer than the self's own blood. The self's interior life — every thought, every feeling, every moment of the fullness that goes unwitnessed by other humans — is witnessed completely by the one power. Not observed from a distance. Present within it. Closer than the jugular vein. The loneliness that fears being unwitnessed is already witnessed. The interior that fears being unshared is already known. The existence that fears making no difference is already within the attention of the Lord of the seven heavens, to whom its existence is not incidental.

Hold the specific loneliness. Its specific texture. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who is already present within the loneliness. Not the one who will arrive when the loneliness is over. The one who is present within it now, closer than the jugular vein, witnessing everything the loneliness is experiencing. The Lord of the seven heavens is the companion within the empty room. He is the witness within the unwitnessed life. He is present in the specific quality of aloneness the self is experiencing and He knows it from within, not from outside. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the loneliness is within divine permission. Be my companion within it. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the companionship of the one power within loneliness is mightier than the most present human company.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the loneliness. Greater than its duration. Greater than the empty room and the unanswered message and the life that is full and unshared. The loneliness is a human experience within a human life that is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the specific experience of loneliness

the self is inhabiting. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of loneliness' permanence. The one who holds the seven heavens governs the duration of every season, including the season of aloneness. He can end the loneliness when He wills, through means the self cannot anticipate, in the same way that water came from the earth for Hajar in a valley where no water should have been.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, whose prayer, whose rising, whose walking, whose stillness were all within continuous divine presence — was never truly alone. Not because of isolation from people, but because the one power's presence with him was so complete, so constantly inhabited, that aloneness had no ground in which to take root. This is what the prayer is pointing toward: not the suppression of the desire for human company — that desire is real and its fulfilment is a gift — but the recognition that the deepest loneliness, the unwitnessed interior, is already addressed. Already witnessed. Already companioned by the one who is closer than the jugular vein.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its loneliness — the strategies for filling the empty space, the busyness that postpones the experience of aloneness, the relationships pursued out of fear of loneliness rather than genuine desire — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's relational life. The one power governs who is sent to the self and when. He governs the season of aloneness and its end. Whatever You will: the self inhabits the aloneness as the one who is already witnessed by the one power, and from that inhabited recognition, whatever the one power sends in human company is received as gift rather than survival.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, to be alone is the Prophet in the cave of Hira before revelation — the aloneness that preceded the address of the Lord of the worlds. Within divine anger, to be surrounded by companions is a gathering with no centre. Ask for divine pleasure within the aloneness — and within divine pleasure, also the gift of genuine human companionship: the friend who knows the self from the inside, the community that receives the self's fullness. Both. The witnessed interior life and the human witnesses to share it with. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the loneliness is within Your permission. End its season. Send the companion. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Wahhab: the Giver of gifts without expectation of return. Companionship is a gift. Give it.

*We are closer to him
than his jugular vein.
The unwitnessed interior
is already witnessed.
Closer than the jugular vein.
The loneliness that fears being unseen
is already seen.
Al-Wahhab.
Companionship is a gift. Give it.*

The Fear of Intimacy

The fear of being fully known by another person. And surviving the knowing.

The Fear Named

The fear of intimacy is the inverse of the fear of loneliness. Where loneliness fears the absence of closeness, the fear of intimacy fears closeness itself. It is the fear of being fully seen by another human being — not the partial, managed visibility of social life, but the complete exposure of genuine intimacy: the self's history, its shame, its failures, its needs, its specific texture of being, given to another person who will then make of it what they will. The fear of intimacy is the fear that what is seen at that depth will be found unacceptable.

It is also the fear of what intimacy requires: the lowering of the self's defences, the permission given to another person to matter, the exposure that makes betrayal and abandonment and loss possible in their most devastating forms. The fear of intimacy is the refusal of the vulnerability that genuine closeness requires — because the vulnerability is real, the risk is real, and the cost of genuine intimacy gone wrong is higher than the cost of never having had it.

And yet: the one power created the human being with the capacity and the need for intimacy. *وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً* — He placed between you love and mercy. Not the self's own construction. His placement. The capacity for love and mercy between human beings is something the one power put there — which means the one power governs it, sustains it, and knows what it is for. The fear of intimacy is the fear of entering the space the one power created and placed love in. Ask the one who placed the love to be the protection within the entering.

Hold the fear. Its specific texture. The specific closeness that is dreaded as much as it is desired. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who is already intimate with the self beyond any human intimacy. The one power knows the self's complete interior — its history, its shame, its failures, its needs, its specific texture of being — and has not withdrawn. Has not found it unacceptable. Has not left. The complete knowing of the self by the one power, which is total and has always been total, is the prior intimacy within which all human intimacy occurs. The self that fears being fully known by a human being is already fully known by the Lord of the seven heavens. And the Lord of the seven heavens is still here.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The vulnerability of intimacy — the lowered defences, the exposure, the permission given to another to matter — is within divine governance. The one power who placed love and mercy between human beings also governs what happens within the intimacy. The protection from the risk of intimacy is not the refusal of intimacy. It is the presence of the one power within the closeness — the neighbour-protector who is present within the exposure, who governs the other person's response, who holds the self together when the vulnerability is real. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ جَمًّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the risk of intimacy. Greater than the fear of being found unacceptable at depth. Greater than the cost of the vulnerability that genuine closeness requires. The risk of intimacy is a created risk within a created relational life. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every risk of every intimacy that has ever been entered. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ: mightier than the specific fear — the specific person, the specific depth, the specific exposure. Allah is mightier than what might happen if the self is fully seen. He placed love and mercy in the space between human beings. Ask the one who placed it to govern what happens within it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of intimacy — the controlled disclosure, the measured vulnerability, the closeness that is permitted only up to a certain depth and no further — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's capacity for closeness. The one power placed love and mercy between human beings. He governs who is given access to the self's interior and what they do with that access. Whatever You will: the self enters the vulnerability of genuine closeness, holding the one power as the protection within the entering — and trusting that the one who placed love in the space between human beings also governs what the love becomes.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the vulnerability of genuine intimacy is the Prophet's relationship with Khadijah — who knew him completely and received him completely and who was his first believer. Within divine anger, the defended self that never enters genuine closeness is a protection that becomes a prison. Ask for divine pleasure within the intimacy — and within divine pleasure, also the gift of genuine closeness: the person who knows the self fully and stays. The love and mercy He placed between human beings, realised in a specific relationship. Both: the pleasure and the closeness within it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the risk of intimacy is within Your governance. Be present within the exposure. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Wadud: the Loving. You are as You have praised Yourself. You placed love between human beings. You govern what it becomes.

*He placed between you love and mercy.
Not the self's construction. His placement.
The self is already fully known
by the one power.
And He has not withdrawn.
Al-Wadud.
He placed the love.
He governs what it becomes.
Enter.*

The Fear of Conflict

The confrontation that must happen but the self cannot make itself begin.

The Fear Named

The fear of conflict is not the fear of violence. It is the fear of the moment when two wills meet in opposition and one or both must be expressed directly. The conversation that needs to happen but keeps not happening. The boundary that needs to be stated but is swallowed. The disagreement that is carried silently for months or years because the self cannot bear the prospect of the confrontation. The fear of conflict is the fear of the relational rupture that direct expression might cause.

It is also, for many people, the fear of their own anger. The self that has been managing its responses in relationships — absorbing, accommodating, suppressing what it actually feels — has often lost confidence that it can express its position without the expression becoming uncontrolled. The fear of conflict is sometimes the fear of what might come out if the container is opened.

And yet: the Quran names the one who resolves between people as doing something of great good. *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ* — the believers are brothers, so make peace between your brothers. And the Prophet said: shall I not tell you of something better than fasting, prayer, and charity? Reconciliation between people. The resolution of conflict is among the highest acts in the tradition. Not the avoidance of conflict — its resolution. Which requires first that the conflict be named. The conversation that needs to happen: the one power governs its outcome when the self brings the first prayer to its beginning.

Hold the specific conflict avoided. The specific conversation not yet had. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who governs both sides of every conflict. The other person's heart is within His governance. The self's heart is within His governance. The outcome of the conversation — whether it ruptures or repairs — is within His governance. The Lord of the seven heavens governs the exchange before it begins. He governs the tone, the reception, the response. He governs what is said and what is heard. Ask the one who governs the conversation to be the protection within it before the first word is spoken. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the conflict and its outcome are within Your permission. Be my neighbour-protector within the speaking. عَرَّ جَارِكَ.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the conflict. Greater than what might rupture in the conversation. Greater than the other person's response. Greater than the fear of what comes out when the container is opened. The conflict is a human exchange between created beings within the governance of the Creator. The Creator is greater than the exchange and governs it from within. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ: mightier than the specific conversation feared, the specific rupture imagined. Allah is mightier than the worst

outcome the fear is rehearsing. And He governs the hearts on both sides of the exchange. Ask Him to soften both sides before the speaking begins.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The outcome of the conflict is returned entirely. The self speaks what needs to be spoken, states what needs to be stated, begins the conversation that needs to begin. And then: whatever You will for the outcome. The other person's response is within Your governance. The relationship's state after the speaking is within Your governance. Whether the conflict resolves into closeness or reveals an incompatibility that needed revealing: whatever You will. The speaking is the self's part. The outcome is His. Say what needs to be said. Then: whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the conflict named and worked through is the relationship that survives and deepens. Within divine anger, the avoided conflict is the relationship that slowly fills with what was never said until it collapses under the weight of the unsaid. Ask for divine pleasure within the speaking — and within divine pleasure, also resolution: the conversation that repairs, the relationship that survives the confrontation, the closeness that deepens through the difficulty of direct speech. Both. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the outcome of the conflict is within Your permission. Govern both hearts. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-

Muqsit: the Just, the Equitable. You are as You have praised Yourself. Govern the exchange with equity.

*Reconciliation between people —
better than fasting, prayer, and charity.
The conflict avoided fills with the unsaid.
The conflict named can be resolved.
Both hearts are within His governance.
Speak what needs to be spoken.
Whatever You will for the outcome.
Al-Muqsit.
Govern the exchange.*

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Fear of Dependency

The self that needs. And the fear that needing makes the self less.

The Fear Named

The fear of dependency is the fear of needing others. Of being the one who requires support, help, care, presence — and of what that requirement means about the self. In cultures that prize self-sufficiency and individual independence, dependency is framed as weakness. The self that needs is the self that has failed to be adequate on its own. The fear of dependency is therefore often the fear of inadequacy made visible through the act of needing.

It operates in practical forms: the refusal to ask for help, the performance of not needing, the management of one's situation in isolation rather than with support because support would reveal the situation's difficulty. And it operates in emotional forms: the self that cannot receive care, cannot accept comfort, cannot allow itself to be held — because being held would require admitting that the holding was needed.

And yet: complete independence is a fiction and a separation from reality. Every human being depends on others continuously — for food, language, knowledge, safety, the infrastructure of daily life, the emotional sustenance of being known. The pretence of independence is the refusal of this truth. And more than this: the tradition names the self's dependency on the one power not as weakness but as the correct relationship to the one who holds the seven heavens. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ — O people, you are the ones in need of Allah. The need is not the problem. The misdirection of the need is. The self needs. The question is only: toward whom.

Hold the specific dependency feared. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one upon whom all dependency is correctly placed. The one power is Al-Samad: the one upon whom all of creation depends, who Himself depends on nothing. The self's dependency on the one power is not weakness. It is the accurate description of the relationship between the created and the Creator. Every act of the self's existence — every breath, every heartbeat, every moment of cognition — is the one power sustaining the self's existence. The self has always been dependent. The question is whether that dependency is acknowledged. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the need is within Your governance. Be my protection within the needing. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who holds everything.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّيْلُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the self's need. Greater than the self's incapacity to be fully sufficient on its own. Greater than the fear of what needing reveals about the self. The need is a human condition — creation's inherent relationship to its Creator. The Creator is greater than the need and is the one toward whom the need is correctly directed. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of being seen as needing, mightier than the cost to the self's image that dependency represents. The one who holds

the seven heavens is the one in whom all dependency is rightly placed. The self that needs Him is not weak. It is accurate.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's performance of independence — the refusal of help, the management in isolation, the inability to receive care — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this self's relationship to need and to the human and divine provision of what is needed. The self needs You. This is the beginning. From that acknowledgement, the self can also accept what You provide through human means without shame. The need is real. The provision is His. Whether it comes through the self's own capacity or through another person or through an unanticipated route: whatever You will. The need is placed in the hands of the one who holds the seven heavens.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, to need and to receive is the human being in its correct relationship to both the one power and to others — dependent on Him, held by the community He placed around the self. Within divine anger, the self-sufficient performance that refuses all help is a pride masquerading as strength. Ask for divine pleasure within the needing — and within divine pleasure, also the provision of what is needed, through whatever means He chooses. Both. The need acknowledged and the need met. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the need is within Your governance.

Meet it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَبَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Samad: the one upon whom all things depend, who depends on nothing. O people, you are the ones in need of Allah. The need is real. He is Al-Samad.

O people, you are the ones in need of Allah.

Not a failure. An accurate description.

The self has always been dependent.

The question is only: toward whom.

Al-Samad.

The one upon whom all things depend.

Place the need correctly.

It will be met.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

The Fear of Loss of Love

The love that is present now and might not be. The ground that could shift.

The Fear Named

The fear of loss of love is the fear that what is most precious in the self's relational life is not permanent. The love that is present — received from the person whose love is the self's daily ground, given to the one the self has organised its life around — might end. The person might stop loving. The feeling might change. The relationship might transform into something in which the love that was its substance is no longer present. The fear is of that specific loss: not the loss of the person's presence necessarily, but the loss of their love.

This fear has a particular cruelty because it operates within the happiness it threatens. The person who loves and is loved fears losing the love while it is still present. The fear introduces anxiety into the joy. The self cannot fully inhabit the love because part of it is always watching for signs that the love is changing, always calculating the risk, always aware that the ground it is standing on could shift.

And yet: there is a love that does not change. *وَهُوَ الْعَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ* — He is the Forgiving, the Loving. Al-Wadud: the love of the one power for the self is not contingent on the self's performance, on the self's consistency, on the self's continued adequacy. It preceded the self and will outlast every human love the self has known. It does not change when the self is at its worst. It does not cool when the self fails repeatedly. It is the love of Al-Wadud, which is what love looks like when it is not limited by the limitations of the one who loves. The fear of loss of love, brought to this address, meets the love that cannot be lost.

Hold the specific love feared to lose. Its specific preciousness. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَنِي عَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose love is the ground beneath all other love. The human love the self fears losing is real and its preciousness is real. And it rests on a foundation that is more durable than itself: the one power's love for the self, which is permanent, unconditional, and the source from which all genuine love between human beings flows. The self that fears losing human love is not wrong to value it. It is only incomplete if it has not yet located the love that cannot be lost, within which all other love is held. كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ: the human love and its duration are within Your governance. Be my protection within the loving and within whatever change the loving undergoes. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: the protection of Al-Wadud is the protection of the only love that does not change.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّيْلُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the fear of love's loss. Greater than the anxiety that introduces itself into joy. Greater than the calculating part of the self that cannot fully inhabit the love because it is watching for signs of its ending. Human love is a created gift. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the specific love the self is afraid of losing. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of the love changing, cooling, ending.

The one who holds the seven heavens also holds the love — governs its continuation, its deepening, its form. Ask the one who governs love to govern this love.

The one power placed love and mercy between spouses. He placed love between parent and child. He placed love between the believer and those who are beloved to them. The love that is present in the self's life was placed there by the one power. What the one power places, He also governs. Ask the one who placed the love to preserve it, deepen it, and make it more than it currently is.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of the love — the strategies to maintain it, the anxiety about its continuation, the part of the self that cannot fully rest in the love because it is calculating its fragility — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this love and its duration. The love is within Your governance. Its continuation, its deepening, its form, and if it changes — what it changes into and what comes after. Whatever You will. The self inhabits the love fully, without the anxiety of loss, because the love is in Your hands and Your hands are the only ones that can hold it permanently. Whatever You will. The love is Yours to govern.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the love is held within the one who placed it. Within divine anger, even the most abundant love is hollow. Ask for divine pleasure within the love — and within divine pleasure, also the continuation and deepening of the specific human love the self fears losing. The love preserved. The love grown. The anxiety dissolved by the recognition that Al-Wadud holds the love more securely than the self's management of it ever could. Both: the pleasure and the love flourishing within it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the love's duration is within Your permission. Extend it. Deepen it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Wadud: the Loving. He is the Forgiving, the Loving. You placed this love. Hold it. You are as You have praised Yourself.

He is the Forgiving, the Loving.

Al-Wadud.

The love that does not change.

*The love that preceded the self
and will outlast every human love.*

*The love the self fears losing
rests on the love that cannot be lost.*

Place it there.

Whatever You will.

SECTION VII

Existential

Fear of death — Fear of the grave — Fear of the Day of Judgment
Fear of hellfire — Fear of divine anger — Fear of not being forgiven
Fear of wasted life — Fear of meaninglessness at the end

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

Every soul shall taste death.

It does not say: every soul shall fear death.

CHAPTER FIFTY

The Fear of Death

The last threshold. The one certainty the self cannot manage, postpone, or negotiate.

The Fear Named

Death is the one appointment that cannot be cancelled. Every other fear in this catalogue has some relationship to uncertainty — it might happen, it might not, it might be averted, it might be survived. Death has none of that uncertainty. It will arrive. For the self and for everyone the self loves. The fear of death is therefore not the fear of an unlikely outcome but of the certain one — the one that no amount of health, wealth, caution, or prayer changes into maybe.

The fear has several layers. There is the fear of the dying itself — the process, the pain, the loss of capacity and dignity that may precede the end. There is the fear of the unknown that follows — what death actually is, what it feels like, what the self will encounter on the other side of it. There is the fear of ceasing — of the self's perspective simply stopping, of the world continuing without the self's awareness of it. And there is the fear of what is left behind: the people who will grieve, the things unfinished, the words not yet said.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: none of you should wish for death because of a harm that has befallen you. But if you must, say: O Allah, give me life as long as life is good for me, and take my soul when death is good for me. And he said: make frequent remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures — meaning death. Not to make the self morbid but to make it awake. The remembrance of death is the remembrance of what is real. Everything else in the self's life is occurring within the frame of *كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ* — every soul shall taste death. The fear of death is the refusal of that frame. This prayer is the acceptance of it.

Hold it. The specific texture of the death fear. The dying or the death itself or what follows or what is left behind. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَاكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who governs death as completely as He governs life. The Lord of the seven heavens did not create life and then hand it to the self to manage. He creates it, sustains it, and at the moment of His choosing, ends it. Death is not the failure of life. It is the one power's governance of the life He gave. The timing is His. The form is His. The threshold is His to open. The self's death, when it comes, comes within the governance of the Lord of the Magnificent Throne — who knew its timing before the self was born.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The death is from within divine permission. The protection from the fear of it is asked from the one who governs it. Not: protect me from death itself, indefinitely — that is not the prayer. Be my neighbour-protector within the dying, within the threshold, within whatever the self encounters on the other side of the appointment it cannot cancel. The protection requested is not escape from death. It is the presence of the Lord of the seven heavens within it. عَرْجَاكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who is present at the threshold and on the other side of it.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, in the moment of his own dying, said: with the highest companion. الرَّفِيقَ الْأَعْلَى. Not: I fear what comes. With the highest companion. The dying is a going toward. The one who holds the seven heavens is on both sides of the threshold.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي حَارًّا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than death. This is the statement that the tradition places at every significant threshold. The call to prayer begins with it. The prayer itself repeats it. The dying person is encouraged to say it. Allah is greater than death. Death is creation — a created threshold within a created life. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the threshold He made. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ: mightier than the specific death feared. Mightier than the dying process, however it unfolds. Mightier than the unknown that follows. The one who holds the seven heavens is mightier than the threshold He placed at the end of the self's life.

The Quran does not describe death as an ending. It describes it as a return. إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ. رَاجِعُونَ — truly we belong to Allah and truly to Him we return. The self came from the one power. The self returns to the one power. The threshold is not an ending of the relationship. It is the relationship's next stage. Ask the one who is on both sides of the threshold.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The timing of death is returned entirely. Not the self's abandonment of life or its care for the life the one power gave — but the anxiety about the timing, the form, the circumstances. Whatever You will for the end of this life. The self was given life by the one power for a duration the one power determined before the self

existed. The duration is His. The threshold is His. Whatever You will: give me life as long as life is good for me, and take my soul when death is good for me. The one who governs the goodness of both knows which is which. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The death that is most feared is not the death of the body. The tradition's deepest concern is the death that meets divine anger — the soul that returns to the one power having not met Him, having not turned, having spent the life that was given without the recognition of the one who gave it. That is the death to fear. The death of the body within divine pleasure is not feared by those who have tasted what divine pleasure is. Ask for divine pleasure at the threshold. The body's death within divine pleasure is what the tradition calls حُسْنُ الْخَاتِمَةِ — the good ending. Ask for both: divine pleasure in the life and divine pleasure at its threshold. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the manner and timing of death are within Your permission. Make my death good for me. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Hayy: the Ever-Living. The one who does not die. The self returns to the Ever-Living. The return is not an ending.

With the highest companion.

The Prophet said this in the moment of his dying.

Not: I fear what comes.

With the highest companion.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

We belong to Allah.

To Him we return.

The threshold is not an ending.

It is the relationship's next stage.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

The Fear of the Grave

The narrowing. The aloneness that has no morning. The first station of the return.

The Fear Named

The grave is the first station of what the tradition calls the barzakh — the interval between this life and the next. The fear of the grave is among the most specific fears in this catalogue because the tradition itself speaks of it directly and with detail. The questioning of the angels Munkar and Nakir. The narrowing of the grave for the one whose record is bad. The darkness and the solitude. The tradition does not minimise the gravity of the grave as a station — it names it as one of the three things the Prophet regularly sought protection from: the trial of the grave, the punishment of the grave, the trial of the Dajjal.

The fear of the grave is therefore not an irrational dread. It is the correct sensitivity of a person who takes the tradition seriously. The question is not whether to take the grave seriously but whether to hold the gravity of it within the one power's governance, or to hold it as a terror that the self must face alone.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, regularly recited in the morning and evening: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ — O Allah, I seek refuge in You from the punishment of the grave. He sought protection from it regularly, not as a morbid preoccupation but as the correct orientation of a person who knows that the grave is real, its gravity is real, and the one power is the only protection within it. The four prayers are that same seeking of protection made explicit.

Hold the fear. The specific dread of the grave's station. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose governance does not end at the threshold of death. The Lord of the seven heavens governs the barzakh as He governs this life. The grave is within His governance. The questioning is within His governance. The comfort or the constriction is within His governance. The one power is the Lord of both the living and the dead, the Lord of what is before death and what is after it, the Lord of the interval as completely as He is the Lord of the present moment.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The trial of the grave is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the one who governs it. Not a charm or a formula — the presence of the Lord of the seven heavens within the grave itself, as the neighbour-protector in the station the self most fears. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who governs both sides of every threshold. The Prophet sought this protection every morning and evening. The prayer is the same seeking.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَغْرَبَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the grave. Greater than its trial, its questioning, its narrowing. Greater than the darkness of it and the solitude of it and the weight of what will be asked within it. The grave is creation — a station within the one power's governance of the soul's journey. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including every station

of that journey. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحَدَرُ.** mightier than the specific fear of the grave. The one who holds the seven heavens also holds the barzakh. He holds the grave as He holds the sky. Ask the one who holds it.

The tradition describes the grave of the believer as being expanded and illuminated — a garden from the gardens of paradise. The same ground that is feared as constriction becomes, within divine grace, expansion. The one power's governance of the grave is not fixed at constriction. It is fixed at whatever He wills. And what He wills for the one who returns to Him in His pleasure is the garden. Ask for the garden.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self cannot control what it will face in the grave. It can prepare through the life it lives. Beyond the preparation: whatever You will. The record the self takes to the grave is within Your governance — Your mercy can transform what the self fears will condemn it. The questioning is within Your governance. The narrowing or expansion is within Your governance. Whatever You will. The self places the grave in the hands of the one who governs it, and asks that those hands be the hands of mercy. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The grave within divine pleasure is the garden from the gardens of paradise — expanded, illuminated, visited by the angels with peace. The grave within divine anger is the constriction the tradition describes. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — in the life that precedes the grave, at the threshold of death, and within the grave itself. Divine pleasure is the answer to the fear of the grave. Ask for it specifically, for the grave specifically. *وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِكَ* — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The punishment of the grave is what the Prophet sought protection from every morning and evening. Seek it here too. And *أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ* — You are as You have praised Yourself. Al-Karim: the Generous. The grave within His generosity is a garden. Ask the Generous.

*O Allah, I seek refuge in You
from the punishment of the grave.
The Prophet said this every morning.
Every evening.
Not from fear. From correct orientation.
The grave is within His governance.
The garden is within His generosity.
Ask the Generous.*

The Fear of the Day of Judgment

The day when every account is settled. When nothing is hidden and nothing is approximate.

The Fear Named

The Day of Judgment is the tradition's most comprehensive statement about ultimate accountability. The day on which every soul's record is presented in full. The day on which the scales are set and the weight of a mustard seed is not missed. The day on which every person stands before the one power without intermediary, without advocate except His mercy, without anything between the self and the complete truth of its life. The fear of the Day of Judgment is the fear of that complete truth — of being known fully in the only setting where full knowing produces consequences.

The fear is sometimes confused with the fear of punishment — but they are distinct. The fear of the Day of Judgment precedes the fear of punishment. It is the fear of the accounting itself: of standing before the one power with the record of a life and having nothing with which to negotiate the reading of it. Every self that has ever acted against its own knowledge of what is right has this fear. It is the correct response to the tradition's account of what that day will be.

And yet the Quran speaks of those for whom the Day of Judgment holds no terror. **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ** — **آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ** — for those who believe and act rightly, glad tidings in this life and in the next. And: **لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ** — no fear upon them and they will not grieve. The Day of Judgment, for the one within divine pleasure, is not the reckoning to be dreaded. It is the meeting. The return. The moment when the self sees the one power face to face.

Hold the fear. Its specific weight. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who will conduct the accounting. Not as adversary. As Lord. The Lord of the seven heavens will be the judge on the Day of Judgment — and He is the same one being addressed now, in this prayer, in this moment. The one who holds the seven heavens today is the one who will hold the scales on that day. The relationship being built now in the prayer is the relationship that will determine how the self stands on that day. The Lord who is neighbour-protector now is the Lord who is judge then. Ask the judge to be the protector.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The accounting on that day is within divine permission. The one power permits the record to be read as it is. The protection from its severity is asked from the same one who conducts the accounting — whose mercy the tradition says exceeds His wrath, who said: I am as My servant thinks of Me, so let him think well of Me. The protection from the Day of Judgment is not the erasure of the record. It is the mercy of the one who reads it. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection of the one whose mercy said: I have written that My mercy precedes My wrath.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the Day of Judgment itself. Greater than the scales, the record, the accounting. Greater than the fear of what will be found in the record. The Day of Judgment is a created day within the one power's governance. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the greatest day of reckoning. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of the accounting. And here the most important thing: the one mightier than the accounting is the same one whose mercy the tradition names as the first and the final word. My mercy precedes My wrath. The accounting occurs within a mercy that precedes it. Ask the merciful to conduct the accounting with mercy.

The Quran describes the believers on that day: their light running before them and at their right hands, saying: our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us. They are asking even on the Day of Judgment. And the one power responds. The asking does not end at death. It continues. The prayer being said now is the practice of the asking that will continue then.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self cannot revise the record of its life retroactively. What was done was done. But the reading of the record is His to govern. The mercy applied to the record is His to apply. The weight placed on the scales is His to determine. Whatever You will for the reading of this self's record. The self asks for the reading to be conducted within Your mercy — which the tradition says is vast enough to cover what the self fears it cannot cover on its own. Whatever You will. I am as My servant thinks of Me. The self thinks well of You. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The one within divine pleasure on the Day of Judgment is the one who is given their record in their right hand and says: here, read my record! The one within divine anger is given it behind their back. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — in this life, at death, in the grave, and on the Day of Judgment. One continuous state of divine pleasure carried through every stage of the return. Ask for this. Ask for it by name, for every stage. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-‘Afuww: the Pardoner, the one who erases the record entirely as if it never was. You are as You have praised Yourself. Ask the Pardoner.

*My mercy precedes My wrath.
I am as My servant thinks of Me.
So think well of Me.
The accounting occurs within
a mercy that precedes it.
Al-‘Afuww.
The Pardoner erases the record
as if it never was.
Ask the Pardoner.*

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

The Fear of Hellfire

The consequence the self cannot stop thinking about. The fire that the tradition describes in full.

The Fear Named

The tradition does not soften its description of hellfire. The Quran speaks of it with a specificity and intensity that makes its avoidance one of the most consistent concerns of Islamic devotion. *قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا* — protect yourselves and your families from a fire. The fear of hellfire is therefore not an irrational fear to be dissolved. It is a rational fear to be met with the only adequate response: turning toward the one power with sufficient urgency that the life is lived in accordance with what avoids it.

And yet the fear of hellfire, when it becomes the primary relationship to the one power, produces something less than the tradition asks for. The person who avoids hellfire out of terror alone is in a different spiritual condition than the person who loves the one power and therefore wants nothing between them and His pleasure. The tradition describes three levels: the worship of the slave who worships out of fear of punishment; the worship of the merchant who worships for the reward; and the worship of the free person who worships because the one power is worthy of worship. The fear of hellfire is the beginning. It is not the destination.

And the protection from hellfire is available to any who sincerely ask for it. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: Allah has made the fire forbidden for the one who says: there is no god but Allah, seeking by that the face of Allah.

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَرَّمَ عَلَى النَّارِ مَنْ قَالَ: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، يَتَنَعَّى بِذَلِكَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ

Allah has made the fire forbidden for the one who says: there is no god but Allah, seeking by that the face of Allah.

The protection is not earned by accumulation. It is the direct consequence of the shahada said with its proper orientation — *يَبْتَغِي بِذَلِكَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ* — seeking by that the face of Allah. Not the formula without the seeking. Not the sound without the direction. The *la ilaha illallah* aimed at the face of Allah. That is the protection. Ask the one who made the prohibition to be the protection.

Hold the fear. Its full weight. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who created the fire and who governs who enters it and who does not. The Lord of the seven heavens is the one who said: protect yourselves from a fire. He is also the one who said: My mercy precedes My wrath. He is the one who has the authority to protect the self from what He created. The protection from hellfire is not found in the self's own merit — the tradition is explicit that no one enters paradise by their deeds alone, but by the mercy of the one power. Ask the one who governs the fire to be the protection between the self and it.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The fire is within divine governance. The protection from it is from the same source. *وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ* is already within the four prayers: I seek refuge in You from You. The protection from the fire is the protection of the one who governs the fire. Not a protection from outside the one power's governance — a protection within it, from the same one who has authority over the fire. *عَرْجَ جَارِكَ*: the protection of the Lord of the fire from the fire is the only protection that is complete.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاوُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the fire. This is the statement the tradition places between the self and every fear. The fire is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the fire He made. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of the fire. The one who commanded the fire to be cool and safe for Ibrahim commands the fire. The fire obeys the one power. Ask the one who commands the fire to command it away from the self.

Ibrahim was thrown into the fire and the fire was commanded to be cool and safe for him. The fire did not disobey. The one power's authority over the fire — over His own creation — is complete. The self's protection from the fire is not found by avoiding the fire's reach. It is found by being within the protection of the one whose command the fire obeys. Be Ibrahim: the one the fire cannot touch because the one power commanded it not to.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's fate with regard to the fire is within Your governance entirely. Not the self's merit, not the self's calculation of whether it has done enough, not the self's management of its own account. Whatever You will for this self. And then the specific asking: O Allah, make the fire forbidden for me. The one power said to certain servants: the fire is forbidden for you. That declaration is His to make, and He made it for

every servant who says la ilaha illallah seeking His face. Say it. Seek His face. Ask for the fire to be made forbidden. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعْفَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Divine anger is the path to the fire. Divine pleasure is the path to the garden. The prayer asks for the right thing directly: divine pleasure — and divine pleasure, held through the life, at the threshold of death, in the grave, on the Day of Judgment, is the protection from the fire. Not the avoidance of the fire from the outside but the approach to the garden from the inside. Ask for divine pleasure. The pleasure is the protection. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the fire is within Your governance. The command that protects from it is within Your authority. Command it away from me. Command it away from everyone I love. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — the fire said: cool and safe. You are as You have praised Yourself. You command the fire. The fire obeys.

Protect yourselves and your families from a fire.

*Allah has made the fire forbidden
for the one who says la ilaha illallah
seeking by that the face of Allah.*

Not the formula without the seeking.

The shahada aimed at His face.

That is the protection.

Say it. Seek His face.

Ask the one who made the prohibition.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

The Fear of Divine Anger

Not the fear of punishment. The fear of the relationship itself being broken.

The Fear Named

The fear of divine anger is different from the fear of hellfire. The fear of hellfire is the fear of consequence. The fear of divine anger is the fear of the state that produces the consequence: of being in a condition in which the one power's orientation toward the self is anger rather than pleasure. Of having done something — or many things, or a pattern of things — that has placed the self in the position of the one the one power is displeased with.

This fear, when it is grounded in genuine reflection on one's actions and their distance from what the one power asks, is healthy. It is the fear that produces tawbah — the turn. The tradition explicitly values the one who fears divine displeasure as among those most dear to the one power. The problem arises when the fear becomes a chronic state — the self that is always convinced it is within divine anger regardless of its actions, that cannot receive the assurance of the one power's mercy, that lives in a perpetual anxiety about its standing with the one power. That is a different condition.

The one power Himself addresses the fear directly: *قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا* — say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. The address is to those who have transgressed. The instruction is: do not despair. The mercy is: all sins. This is the one power speaking about the fear of His own anger. His answer to the fear of His anger is: do not despair of My mercy.

Hold the specific fear. The specific act or pattern that sits between the self and the sense of divine pleasure. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who said: do not despair of My mercy. The Lord of the seven heavens is not only the one whose anger is feared. He is the one whose first attribute in the Quran is الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ — the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Every surah except one begins with the name of His mercy. The Quran was sent down as a mercy. The Prophet was sent as a mercy to the worlds. The one power's first and most consistent self-presentation is mercy. The fear of divine anger, brought to this address, meets the one who said: My mercy precedes My wrath.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The divine anger, if it is present, is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the same one. Not from outside — from within. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the seven heavens is being asked to be the protection from His own anger. This is the prayer of the one who has nowhere else to turn. And the tradition says this is exactly the right prayer. I seek refuge in You from You. There is no protection from divine anger except divine mercy. Ask for the mercy directly.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأَخَذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعَنَّ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the fear of His own anger. Greater than the sin that produced the fear. Greater than the distance the self feels between itself and His pleasure. The sin is creation. The mercy is the Creator's own attribute — and the Creator is greater than all of His creation. The mercy is greater than the sin. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: when Allah created creation He wrote in a book that is with Him above the Throne: My mercy precedes My wrath. The mercy was written before the sin occurred. The mercy precedes the anger as a matter of the one power's own settled nature. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of divine anger. The one who is mightier is the one whose mercy precedes His wrath.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self cannot determine its own standing with the one power. That is His to determine. Whatever You will for this self's standing with You. And within whatever You will: the self turns. Turns now, in this prayer, toward the one power directly. Not through any intermediary. Not through a formula that earns a status. Directly: I have transgressed against myself. I do not despair of Your mercy. Your mercy precedes Your wrath. I turn toward You. Whatever You will. The turn is the tawbah. The tawbah is what the tradition says transforms the relationship. Whatever You will — and within whatever You will, receive the turn.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. This is the prayer of the one who has understood the stakes. Divine pleasure is the destination. Divine anger is what is being fled from. The prayer does not ask: assure me that I am not in Your anger. It asks for something active and positive: give me Your pleasure. Move me from the condition of the feared state into the condition of the desired one. Your pleasure: give it to me. وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ — and in Your pardon from Your punishment. The pardon that erases. The pardon that the tradition says is given when the servant turns. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَّيَبْتَ — Al-Tawwab: the One who continuously accepts the turn. You are as You have praised Yourself. Every turn is accepted. Turn now.

*O My servants who have transgressed
against themselves —*

do not despair of the mercy of Allah.

Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.

All sins.

My mercy precedes My wrath.

It was written above the Throne

before the sin occurred.

Turn. Al-Tawwab accepts the turn.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

The Fear of Not Being Forgiven

The specific sin. The weight that will not lift. The thing done that cannot be undone.

The Fear Named

The fear of not being forgiven is more specific than the fear of divine anger. It is the fear that a particular sin — this specific act, this pattern, this thing the self did or did not do — is beyond the reach of forgiveness. That the mercy the tradition promises is real but does not extend to this. That there is a category of action so severe, or a repetition so persistent, that the forgiveness the one power offers to others does not apply to the self's specific case.

This fear has its own spiritual danger. The tradition names despair of the mercy of Allah as among the gravest spiritual conditions. Not because the fear of not being forgiven is wrong — the gravity of sin is real — but because the conclusion that any sin is beyond the one power's mercy is a misunderstanding of who the one power is. It attributes to sin a magnitude greater than the one power's mercy. And the one power's mercy is infinite.

The Quran says: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ* — Allah does not forgive shirk, and He forgives everything below that for whom He wills. The scope of forgiveness is everything below shirk — which is not one specific act but a category of the relationship to the one power itself. Every sin of the self against itself, against others, against the one power's commands — all of it is within the scope of *يَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ* — He forgives what is below that. What is below that is everything the self is afraid it cannot be forgiven for.

Hold the specific sin feared unforgiven. Its weight. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one whose forgiveness is not limited by the magnitude of the sin. The Lord of the seven heavens forgives. Not selectively, not sparingly, not reluctantly — He is Al-Ghaffar: the Repeatedly Forgiving. The name is not Al-Ghafir — the one who forgives once. Al-Ghaffar: the one who forgives again and again, the forgiveness that is a continuous attribute of the one power's nature and not an occasional act. The specific sin feared unforgiven is within the scope of Al-Ghaffar. Ask Al-Ghaffar.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The weight of the unforgiven sin — the guilt, the shame, the sense of being separated from divine pleasure by what was done — is within divine governance. The protection from that weight is asked from the one whose forgiveness removes the weight entirely. Not reduces it. Al-'Afuww — the Pardoner — does not just reduce the debt. He erases it. The record of the erased sin is removed as if it never was. The neighbour-protector who pardons is the one whose protection leaves no trace of what was feared. عَزَّ جَارِكَ: mighty is the protection that erases.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأُحَدَّرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the sin. Greater than its magnitude, however severe. Greater than the pattern of it, however persistent. Greater than the specific act the self fears is beyond forgiveness. The sin is a human act within a created life. The Creator

is greater than all of His creation, including the worst of its acts. The mercy of Al-Ghaffar is greater than the sin of Al-Insan. *اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ*: mightier than the fear of this specific sin being unforgiven. The Quran is explicit: He forgives what is below shirk. The sin the self fears is below shirk. The forgiveness is available.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: if you did not sin and seek forgiveness, Allah would bring a people who sin and seek forgiveness and He would forgive them. The seeking of forgiveness is itself beloved to the one power. The act of turning to Him with the sin and asking for forgiveness is not a transaction that must be earned. It is a movement toward the one power that He receives. The one who turns with the sin is received. Ask to be received.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self cannot force its own forgiveness. It can turn, ask, and then: whatever You will. And the tradition's promise is that the turning is received. The one power said: whoever draws near to Me by a hand's length, I draw near to him by an arm's length. Whoever draws near to Me walking, I come to him running. The draw near is the self's part. The running is His. Whatever You will: receive this turning. The self draws near with the sin and with the fear and with the asking. Whatever You will. Al-Ghaffar forgives. Al-'Afuww pardons. Al-Tawwab receives the turn. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The forgiven self is the self within divine pleasure. The unforgiven sin, carried without turning, is the path toward divine anger. The prayer asks for the transition: from the weight of the unforgiven to the lightness of the forgiven. Divine pleasure received. The record erased. The self restored to the condition of the one the one power is pleased with. Ask for this specifically. Do not ask in the abstract. Ask for the specific sin to be forgiven, by name, right now. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: I seek refuge in You from You. The sin is within Your knowledge. The forgiveness is within Your authority. وَأَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Ghaffar, Al-'Afuww, Al-Tawwab. Forgive. Pardon. Receive the turn. You are as You have praised Yourself.

*If you did not sin and seek forgiveness,
Allah would bring a people who sin
and seek forgiveness
and He would forgive them.
Whoever draws near walking —
I come to him running.
The turning is the self's part.
The running is His.
Al-Ghaffar. Turn.*

The Fear of Wasted Life

The years that passed. The things not done. The self that did not become what it was given the capacity to become.

The Fear Named

The fear of wasted life is the fear that looks backward across the years and finds them insufficient. The years spent in ways that did not build toward anything the self values. The time given to what did not matter and withheld from what did. The capacity present and unused, the potential recognised too late, the life that was lived at a fraction of its possible depth. The fear of wasted life is the fear that the life the one power gave was not met with adequate seriousness.

It compounds in two directions. Looking backward: the years already gone, the account already set, the choices already made and not revisited. Looking forward: the fear that even knowing what was wasted, the self will waste what remains — that the pattern is too established, the habits too ingrained, the change too difficult to make real. The fear of wasted life is the fear of the gap between the life lived and the life possible, multiplied by the uncertainty of whether the gap will close.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: make use of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your occupation, and your life before your death. The tradition is honest about time's value. But the same tradition that names the five things to make use of also names the one power as Al-Tawwab — the one who continuously accepts the turn. And every moment of the remaining life, however much of the given life has been spent carelessly, is a moment from which the turn is possible. The fear of wasted life, brought to this prayer, meets the one who can make the remaining moments worth everything.

Hold the fear. The specific years. The specific capacity unused. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who gave the life. Every year the self fears was wasted was a year the one power gave, sustained, governed, and was present within. The life that looks wasted from inside the self's perspective was within the one power's governance at every point of its apparent waste. The one power does not waste. He governs. The years that seemed without purpose were within His governance — and His governance was not absent from them, even when the self's awareness of Him was.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The fear of wasted life is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the one who governs the remaining time. The neighbour-protector who holds the remaining years is also the one who can redeem what preceded them — not by rewriting the past, but by making the remaining time of such quality that the backward fear loses its grip. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who holds the remaining time is the protection of the one who can make a moment worth decades.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَنْعَثَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the wasted years. Greater than the gap between the life lived and the life possible. Greater than the pattern that the self fears it cannot break. The wasted time is creation — a human experience of mis-directed attention within a created life. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the specific years the self spent in what it now regrets. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحَدَرُ: mightier than the fear of the wasted life's continuation. The one who holds the seven heavens also holds the next moment. The next moment has not been wasted yet. Ask the one who holds it to govern it toward what matters.

The Quran speaks of the people of the Fire saying: رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا — Our Lord, take us out and we will act rightly. They ask for a return so they can do it differently. The answer given: did We not give you enough life for the one who would reflect to reflect? The life given was enough. The reflection was available. What was not used cannot be requested back. But the life that remains is still here. The reflection is still available. Use what remains.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will for the remaining time. The years that have passed: whatever was in them, within Your governance, within Your knowledge. The self cannot revise them. It can only turn in what remains. Whatever You will for the remaining life — its length, its quality, its direction. The self places the remaining time in the hands of the one who gave it. Whatever You will. And within whatever You will: make the remaining time count toward what You value. Not what the self's fear is measuring. What You value. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

The Fear of Meaninglessness at the End

That it added up to nothing. That the arc of the life did not point anywhere.

The Fear Named

The fear of meaninglessness at the end is the existential fear in its final form. Not the fear of the specific things that might happen — the illness, the poverty, the betrayal, the judgment. The fear that, when the self reaches the end and looks back across the whole arc of the life, what it sees is a line that pointed nowhere. A collection of events without accumulation, relationships without permanence, efforts without legacy. The fear that the life was sound and fury and nothing more.

It is also the fear that the tradition's promises will not be felt as true at the end. That the self will arrive at death not in the state of الرَّفِيقَ الْأَعْلَى — with the highest companion — but in a state of doubt, confusion, and the sense that the life did not cohere. That the recognition this entire book has been pointing toward was theoretical, read about, intellectually held, but not actually inhabited at the moment that matters most.

The Quran addresses this at the point of death directly. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً — O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing. This is what is said to the soul that is ready. Not the soul that accumulated the right worldly achievements. The soul that is tranquil — al-nafs al-mutma'inna. The soul that has come to rest. The soul that this entire book has been attempting to assist. The fear of meaninglessness at the end is the fear that this tranquility will not be achieved. The prayer is the beginning of its achievement.

Hold it. The fear that it will not cohere. That the arc will not have pointed anywhere. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرِّي جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who gives meaning to the life. Not the self's retrospective coherence-making. The one power's governance of the life from within. The Lord of the seven heavens was present in every year the self fears was wasted, in every relationship that did not last, in every effort that did not seem to bear fruit. His presence in the life is what gives it its actual meaning — not the self's narrative of it but the one power's governance within it. The life pointed toward Him. Not because the self always pointed it there. Because He was always there.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The fear of meaninglessness at the end is within divine permission. The protection from it is asked from the one who is the source of the meaning the self fears it will not find. The neighbour-protector at the end of the life is the one who receives the soul in its return. The one who says: O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing. The protection from meaninglessness is not a better narrative. It is the presence of the one power within every moment of the life that has occurred and every moment that remains. عَرِّي جَارِكَ: the protection is the presence of the one who was never absent.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرِّي جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my

protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the fear of meaninglessness. Greater than the gap between the life lived and the life the self imagined as meaningful. Greater than the self's judgment of its own life's value. The life is creation. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the specific life the self fears did not amount to enough. And the Creator's assessment of the life is not the self's assessment. The tradition describes people who thought little of their own acts — and those acts were the very things that entered them into paradise. The self is not the accurate judge of its own life's meaning. The one power is.

اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُحْذَرُ — mightier than the fear that it did not cohere, that the arc did not point anywhere. The one power governs the arc of every life from within. He is present in what the self calls the meaningless years with the same governance with which He is present in the years the self calls the meaningful ones. The arc pointed toward Him. It always pointed toward Him. Because there is nowhere else to point.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتِ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتِ — whatever You will for the meaning of this life. Not the meaning the self has constructed or failed to construct. The meaning You placed in it from the beginning — the meaning that the life already has within Your governance, whether the self can read it or not. Whatever You will. The self returns the accounting of its own life to the one who actually knows its value. Not the self's fearful backward glance. Your knowledge of what this life was and what it was for. Whatever You will. And within whatever You will: at the end, say to this soul: O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The life that ends within divine pleasure is not the meaningless life. It cannot be. Because the one power's pleasure is the meaning — the recognition for which the life was given, the recognition this entire book has been pointing toward, the recognition that transforms every fear in this catalogue into the same final question: did the self know who was holding it? And the answer of divine pleasure is: yes. It knew. It came to rest. It returned to its Lord, pleased and pleasing. Ask for this. Ask for it by name. At the end: the tranquil soul. The pleased and pleasing return. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the meaning of this life is within Your knowledge. Let me see what You see when You look at it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The life was pointing toward You from the beginning. It always was.

*O tranquil soul —
return to your Lord,
pleased and pleasing.
The life pointed toward Him.
It always pointed toward Him.
Because there is nowhere else to point.
Whatever You will.
At the end: the tranquil soul.
Pleased and pleasing.*

SECTION VIII

The Self

*Fear of one's own darkness — Fear of sin — Fear of hypocrisy
Fear of not being enough — Fear of one's own mind*

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا • فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا • قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ رَكَّاهَا • وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

And by a soul and He who proportioned it — then He inspired it its wickedness and its righteousness — he has succeeded, he whose soul He has purified — and he has failed, he whose soul He has buried.

He proportioned the soul. He inspired it. He purifies it. He buries it.

The self does not do any of this to itself.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

The Fear of One's Own Darkness

The interior that is not entirely known. The depths of the self that the self would rather not examine. But does not have to fix.

The Fear Named

The fear of one's own darkness is the fear that turns the self into an object of dread rather than a site of safety. Most fears in this catalogue are fears of what might arrive from outside: the illness, the poverty, the betrayal, the judgment. This fear is oriented inward. The self is afraid of what it finds when it looks closely at itself. The impulses that arise unbidden. The thoughts that come in the night. The parts of the interior that do not align with what the self believes about itself or wishes to be. The darkness that is not external threat but interior presence.

This fear has a particular quality of shame. Other fears can be named to others without too much cost. The fear of illness, the fear of poverty — these are intelligible and shareable. The fear of one's own darkness is harder to name because naming it requires admitting that the darkness is there. And the self that admits its darkness takes a risk: that the darkness confirms what the self fears about its own nature.

The Quran addresses the self's darkness in Surah Ash-Shams with something that completely dissolves the fear if read correctly.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا • فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا • قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ رَزَّاهَا • وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

And by a soul and He who proportioned it — then He inspired it its wickedness and its righteousness — he has succeeded, he whose soul He has purified — and he has failed, he whose soul He has buried.

The subject throughout is He. He proportioned the soul. He inspired it its wickedness and its righteousness. He has purified — he whose soul He has purified. He has buried — he whose soul He has buried. The pronoun does not shift to the self. The one power is the

one who places the darkness in the soul, and He is the one who purifies it or buries it. The self is not responsible for purifying its own darkness. The self cannot purify its own darkness. Purification is entirely within the one power's governance.

This does not mean the self is passive. It means the self's role is not purification but proximity — drawing near to the one who purifies. The fear of one's own darkness is the fear that the darkness makes the self unacceptable. But the darkness was placed there by the one power, and its purification is His act, not the self's achievement. Hold the darkness. Bring it to the one who placed it there. This is the prayer.

Hold the specific darkness. What is found when the self looks at itself honestly. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُغْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who proportioned the soul and inspired it its darkness. He placed the fujur there alongside the taqwa. He was not surprised by it. He knew exactly what He was fashioning. The darkness the self fears in itself is known to the one power more completely than the self knows it — He placed it there, He sees it from within, and He alone governs whether the soul is among those He purifies or those He buries. The self has no access to that governance except one: drawing near to the one who governs it.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The darkness is within divine governance. The protection from the darkness being buried rather than purified is asked from the one who does the purifying. Not: help me overcome myself. Purify what You placed in me. The neighbour-protector who is being asked is the one who already knows

the darkness completely and who holds the soul's purification entirely in His hands. عَزَّ: mighty is the protection of the one who holds the purification of the soul within His authority alone.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعَ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the darkness. Greater than the specific impulses and thoughts and depths that the self fears in itself. The darkness is His creation — the fujur He inspired in the soul alongside the taqwa. The Creator is greater than what He created, including the darkness within the self He created. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأُخْذِرُ: mightier than the specific darkness feared. And the one who is mightier than the darkness is the one who placed it there and who purifies the soul of those He wills. The fear of one's own darkness is the fear of something entirely within His governance. Ask the one who governs it.

The word for purification — زَكَّاهَا — uses the same root as zakat: the giving that purifies wealth. Just as zakat is a divine institution that purifies wealth through the act of giving, the purification of the soul is a divine act done to the soul by the one power. The soul does not zakat itself. It is purified by the one who commanded the zakat and who instituted purification as His own act throughout the Quran.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْت — whatever You will. The self's attempt to manage, suppress, or overcome its own darkness — the willpower directed inward, the self-improvement project, the exhausting effort to purify oneself through self-effort — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for the darkness that is in this self. You placed it there. You alone purify. You alone bury. Whatever You will: purify this soul. The self does not place itself on one side of the equation as the agent of its own purification. It places itself entirely in the hands of the one who purifies. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِعَافَاتِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the soul whose darkness He is purifying — not the soul that has already achieved purity, but the soul He is in the process of purifying, the soul that is near to the one who purifies. Within divine anger, the soul whose darkness is being buried. The prayer does not ask: make me already pure. It asks for divine pleasure — which is the condition of the soul whose purification is in His hands. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: You placed this darkness in this soul. You hold its purification. Purify it. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Quddus: the Pure. He who purifies is Himself pure. He who purifies the soul is the one being addressed. Ask the Pure.

He proportioned it.

He inspired it.

He purifies.

He buries.

The self does none of this to itself.
The darkness was placed by the one who purifies.
Al-Quddus.
Ask the Pure to purify.
Whatever You will.

The Fear of Sin

Not what sin does to the account. What it does to the proximity.

The Fear Named

The fear of sin in this section is distinguished from the fear of not being forgiven that appeared in Section VII. The fear of not being forgiven is about consequence — what the sin will produce in the accounting. The fear of sin that belongs here is something more immediate: what the sin does to the relationship between the self and the one power in this present moment. The distance that the sin introduces. The dimming of proximity. The sense that after the sin the self is not in the same place it was before.

This fear, when it is genuine, is among the most valuable things the self possesses. The Prophet, upon him be peace, described the believer's relationship to sin: the believer sees their sin as a mountain under which they fear being crushed, while the hypocrite sees their sin as a fly that lands on their nose and they wave it away. The weight given to sin is the measure of the seriousness with which the relationship to the one power is held. The fear of sin is the care for the relationship.

But the reading of Surah Ash-Shams reframes the fear of sin as completely as it reframes the fear of darkness. He inspired the soul its wickedness. The inclination toward sin is not a foreign contaminant in an otherwise pure self. It is part of what He placed in the soul alongside the taqwa. And the turning away from sin — like the purification of the soul — is not something the self achieves through adequate willpower. It is something that happens to the soul He is purifying. The self's part is not to win a battle with itself. The self's part is to draw near to the one who governs the battle's outcome.

Hold the specific sin feared. Its specific pull. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who inspired the soul its wickedness and its righteousness. Not as an accusation but as the most liberating possible recognition: the pull toward sin was placed in this soul by the Lord of the seven heavens, and the governance of that pull is His. The self is not fighting the pull alone. The self is bringing the pull to the one who created it, who knows it completely, and who alone governs whether the soul is purified away from it or buried beneath it.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The pull toward this sin is within Your governance. The protection from it is from You. Not: help me be stronger. Govern what You inspired. The neighbour-protector who is the Lord of the seven heavens is being asked to exercise the same governance over the soul's inclination toward this sin that He exercises over everything else within the soul He fashioned. عَرَّ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who governs the soul's inclinations reaches precisely where willpower cannot.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهْمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرَّ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the sin. Greater than its pull. Greater than the pattern of it, however established. The sin and its pull are creation — part of what He

inspired in the soul. The Creator is greater than what He inspired. He can decrease the pull He placed and increase the taqwa He placed alongside it. **اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَحَدَرُ**: mightier than the pull of this specific sin. The self is not left alone with what the one power inspired in it. He who inspired it also governs it. Ask the one who governs the inclination to govern it away from this sin.

The remembrance of the divine presence is the protection that operates at the moment of the sin's possibility. The self is not alone with the temptation. The Lord of the seven heavens is present within the moment of decision. The soul that draws near to Him in that moment is the soul He is purifying. The soul that turns away from Him in that moment is the soul whose darkness is being buried. Draw near. At the moment. Bring His name into the moment. That is the second prayer's work.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's management of its avoidance of sin — the willpower, the strategies, the anxiety about whether it will hold, the self-reproach when it does not — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this soul's relationship to this sin. You inspired the pull. You govern the outcome. Whatever You will: decrease what You inspired toward this sin and increase what You inspired toward taqwa. Make the path away from it easier than the path toward it. Not by the self's effort but by Your governance of what You placed in this soul. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Divine pleasure is the condition of the soul He is purifying. Divine anger is the condition of the soul whose darkness is being buried. The prayer asks for divine pleasure — not as a reward for successfully avoiding sin but as the condition that places the soul near the one who purifies it. Within divine pleasure, the pull of the sin is governed by the one who placed it. The soul He is purifying does not need to conquer itself. It needs to stay near Him. وَأَعُوذُ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَيْتَ بِكَ مِنْكَ: You inspired this soul its wickedness. Govern what You inspired. And عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Quddus, Al-Salam. Pure and Peace. The soul near You is the soul being purified.

He inspired the soul its wickedness.

He governs what He inspired.

The self is not fighting the pull alone.

The self is bringing the pull

to the one who created it.

He governs the battle's outcome.

Draw near at the moment.

Whatever You will.

The soul near You is the soul being purified.

The Fear of Hypocrisy

The gap between the exterior and the interior. But the closing of the gap is not the self's to do.

The Fear Named

The fear of hypocrisy — the fear of nifaq — is among the most serious fears a person can hold about themselves. The tradition is explicit about its severity. The Quran devotes more description to the hypocrites than to the outright disbelievers. The Prophet, upon him be peace, counted the qualities of the hypocrite: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, when he is entrusted he betrays the trust. The fear of hypocrisy is the fear that the self's outward practice has become disconnected from its inward reality. That the prayers are said without presence. That the words of belief are spoken without the heart's engagement.

The companions of the Prophet feared this. Hanzalah came to the Prophet in distress, saying: I have become a hypocrite. He said: when I am with you I am in a state; when I leave and return to my family I forget. The Prophet said: O Hanzalah, if you remained as you are when you are with me, the angels would shake hands with you in the streets. But a time for this and a time for that. The fluctuation between states is not hypocrisy. It is being human. And the companions feared hypocrisy. The fear of hypocrisy is itself a sign of its absence — the hypocrite does not fear being a hypocrite.

The reading of Surah Ash-Shams goes further. The taqwa — the inner righteous orientation — was placed in the soul by the one power alongside the fujur. And the alignment of the soul's exterior and interior is the one power's work of purification, not the self's achievement. The gap between exterior and interior is a condition the one power governs. He closes it. He buries it. The self's part is not to close the gap through effort. It is to remain near the one who closes it.

Hold the fear. The specific prayers said without presence. The specific gap. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who sees the interior directly and who governs what happens within it. The Lord of the seven heavens is not only the observer of the gap between exterior and interior. He is the one who placed the taqwa in the soul and who can bring that taqwa into alignment with the exterior practice. The exterior practice — the prayer, the word of belief, the visible act — is already a form of drawing near to the one power. He who inspired the taqwa alongside the fujur can make the taqwa rise to meet the exterior. Ask the one who governs the interior to bring what He placed there into the practice that is already happening.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The gap is within divine governance. The closing of the gap is asked from the one who governs both sides of it. The heart is called Al-Qalb — the turning thing. It turns because the one power turns it. The Prophet taught: O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon Your deen. يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ. The heart's firmness is not achieved by the self's effort. It is asked for from the Turner of hearts. عَزَّ جَارُكَ: mighty is the protection of the one who turns hearts.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأُحَدِّرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the gap. Greater than the pattern of exterior practice emptied of interior reality. Greater than the heart's fluctuation between presence and absence. The gap is a condition within a created soul that the Creator governs. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ: mightier than the fear of hypocrisy. The one who is mightier is the Turner of hearts. He can turn the heart toward what the exterior is already performing. He can make the prayer an actual meeting rather than a form. The self's part is to keep showing up — to keep praying even when the prayer feels empty, to keep drawing near even when the drawing near feels mechanical. He turns the heart. Ask the Turner.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's effort to be sincere — the monitoring of its own interior state, the anxiety about whether the prayer was genuinely meant, the self-examination that can itself become another performance — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for the state of this heart. The heart is in Your hands. You are its Turner. The self keeps showing up to the practice. You turn the heart toward what the practice points at. Whatever You will. The self prays. You make the prayer real. The taqwa You placed in this soul — bring it into what the exterior is already doing. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. The soul within divine pleasure is the soul the one power is purifying — the soul whose gap between exterior and interior He is closing from within. The soul within divine anger is the soul being buried. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within the practice, within the showing up, within the drawing near even when the drawing near feels like form. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the heart is within Your governance. You are the Turner. Turn this heart toward what it is already performing. Bring the interior into the exterior. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — You are as You have praised Yourself. The Turner of hearts. You have already turned countless hearts toward You. Turn this one.

O Hanzalah — a time for this and a time for that.

The fluctuation is being human.

The hypocrite does not fear being a hypocrite.

This fear is the sign.

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

O Turner of hearts —

the self keeps showing up.

You turn the heart.

He purifies. He buries. He turns.

The Fear of Not Being Enough

Not the fear of failing at a task. The fear that the self itself is insufficient. But sufficient for what? And by whose measure?

The Fear Named

The fear of not being enough is the deepest self-referential fear in this section. It is not the fear of a specific failure — the project not completed, the standard not met. It is the fear of a global verdict on the self: that the self, as it is, is simply not adequate. Not intelligent enough, not good enough, not spiritually developed enough, not strong enough. The specific standard varies but the structure is the same: there is a level the self is supposed to reach, and it falls short, and that falling short is not a performance failure but a capacity failure.

The fear of not being enough is also the fear that the one power finds the self insufficient. That the prayers are not eloquent enough, the worship not sincere enough, the understanding not deep enough, the effort not adequate enough to be received. That somewhere behind the mercy the tradition promises is a threshold of adequacy the self does not meet.

The reading of Surah Ash-Shams addresses this fear at its root. He proportioned the soul. The word is سَوَّاهَا — He made it balanced, complete, well-proportioned. The same root is used elsewhere in the Quran for the creation of the human being in the most beautiful form. The soul was not made deficient and then left to supplement itself. It was proportioned by the one power. Whatever the soul is — its specific capacities, its particular configuration of strength and limitation — is the proportioning of the Lord of the seven heavens. He did not make a soul that was supposed to be something else.

Hold the specific insufficiency feared. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who proportioned this soul. Not an approximation of what it should have been. Not a falling short of what was intended. The Lord of the seven heavens proportioned this specific soul with knowledge of what He was doing. The fear of not being enough assumes that the self was supposed to be something it is not, and has failed to become it. But the one who proportioned the soul proportioned it with intention. The question is not whether the soul is adequate by some abstract standard. The question is whether the soul is near to the one who made it.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The sense of insufficiency is within divine governance. The protection from it is asked from the one who proportioned the soul and who knows its actual nature — which is not defined by the fear's verdict but by His knowledge. The neighbour-protector who made the soul is the one who knows what the soul actually is, beyond the fear's distorting lens. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who knows the soul better than the soul knows itself.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَنْعَثَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّعْنَةُ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَعَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the insufficiency. Greater than the gap between what the self is and what the fear says it should be. Greater than the verdict the self has passed on its own adequacy. The self's verdict on itself is creation — a thought formed within a limited mind. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the self's own assessment of itself. اللهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَخَافُ وَأَخْذَرُ: mightier than the fear of not being enough. And the one who is mightier is the one who proportioned the soul and who purifies it — not the one who measures it against an external standard and finds it wanting.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: your Lord is not stingy with you. The divine generosity does not require the self to reach a threshold before it meets the self where it is. وَمَنْ تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ شِبْرًا تَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ ذِرَاعًا — whoever draws near to Me by a hand's length, I draw near to him by an arm's length. The soul that is insufficient draws near. He draws nearer. The soul that is not enough draws near. He proportioned it, He is purifying it, He draws near. Ask the Generous.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْتَ — whatever You will. The self's project of becoming adequate — the self-improvement, the exhausting effort to close the gap between what it is and what it fears it is supposed to be — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this soul. You proportioned it. You know what it is. You know what You made it for. The purification of the soul is Your act. The development of the soul is within Your governance. The self draws near to the one who proportioned it, and whatever it is when it draws near is what He receives and purifies. Whatever You will.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Divine pleasure is the only adequacy that matters — and divine pleasure is not conditioned on the self reaching a standard of its own making. The soul within divine pleasure is the soul He is purifying: the soul that draws near, whatever it is when it draws near. The soul whose drawing near He receives with an arm's length. Ask for divine pleasure. Not: make me adequate and then be pleased with me. Receive me as I draw near. You proportioned me. You know what You made. Be pleased with it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the soul's adequacy is in Your knowledge, not the fear's verdict. And أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ — Al-Karim: the Generous. Your Lord is not stingy with you. Draw near as you are.

He proportioned this soul.

Not an approximation of what it should have been.

His proportioning. His knowledge.

Whoever draws near by a hand's length —

I draw near by an arm's length.

The soul that is not enough draws near.

He draws nearer.

Al-Karim.

Draw near as you are.

The Fear of One's Own Mind

The instrument that cannot be stepped outside of. Also: the instrument He proportioned, inspired, and governs.

The Fear Named

The fear of one's own mind is in some ways the final fear — the fear that underlies and enables all the others. Every other fear in this catalogue is processed through the mind. The mind is the instrument that receives the threat, interprets it, amplifies it, rehearses it, and produces the fear response. And the fear of one's own mind is the recognition that this instrument is not fully reliable, not fully in the self's control, and not fully transparent to itself.

This fear takes several forms. The mind that produces intrusive thoughts the self does not endorse and cannot stop. The mind that spins into rumination it watches but cannot halt. The mind that catastrophises, that finds the darkest interpretation of ambiguous situations, that wakes at three in the morning with certainties that dissolve by daylight. The mind that the self cannot trust to give accurate reports on what is actually happening.

The reading of Surah Ash-Shams dissolves this fear at its foundation. He proportioned the soul. He inspired it its fujur and its taqwa. The mind's operations — including the intrusive thought, the catastrophic interpretation, the 3am certainty — are not foreign invasions of an otherwise pure self. They are within the soul that He proportioned and that He governs. The mind that fears its own operations is the mind that has not yet understood that those operations are within the governance of the one who proportioned the soul.

And the tradition is direct: the Prophet said, if any of you find in himself something he would be too ashamed to speak of — that is pure faith. The whisper that disturbs is the sign of a living relationship. The mind that does not care about what it thinks has no

whisper to trouble it. The whisper is not the enemy. It is the sign that He inspired the taqwa alongside the fujur — and the taqwa is recoiling from what it finds.

Hold the specific fear of the mind. The specific spiral, the specific intrusion, the specific unreliability. Bring the first prayer.

The First Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ أَنْ تُفْرِطَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ تَطْعَى عَرْجَ جَارِكَ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne, be my protector from Yourself — lest You overwhelm me or transgress against me. Mighty is Your protection, exalted is Your praise, and there is no god but You.

O Allah, Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. The prayer begins with the one who proportioned this mind. Not the mind's version of the one power — which is always partial, always filtered through the mind's own limitations and distortions. The actual Lord of the seven heavens, who is greater than the mind's capacity to represent Him, who knows the mind from the inside because He proportioned it and inspired it. The mind's intrusive thoughts, its ruminative spirals, its gam certainties: all within the soul He proportioned. All within His governance. The prayer does not begin with the mind's assessment of its own situation. It begins by addressing the one who made the mind and who governs it.

كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْكَ — be my neighbour-protector from Yourself. The mind's operations — including the ones the self cannot control — are within divine governance. The protection from the mind's unreliability is asked from the one who proportioned the mind and who governs its every movement. He is closer than the jugular vein. He is closer than the thought. The neighbour-protector within the mind's own operations is the one who inspired those operations and who alone governs their purification or burial. عَرْجَ جَارِكَ: the protection of the one who is inside the mind's operations is the only protection that reaches the place where the fear actually lives.

The Second Prayer

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ جَمِيعًا، اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ بِمَا أَحَافُ وَأُحَدِّرُ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ أَنْ يَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِي جَارًا مِنْ شَرِّكَ جَلَّ تَنَائُوكَ وَعَزَّ جَارُكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Allah is the Greatest. Allah is mightier than all of His creation. Allah is mightier than what I fear and what I dread. I seek refuge in Allah — there is no god but He — the One who holds the seven heavens lest they fall upon the earth except by His permission, from His evil. O Allah, be my protector from your evil. Exalted is Your praise, mighty is Your protection, blessed is Your name, and there is no god other than You.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ — Allah is the Greatest. Greater than the mind. Greater than the intrusive thought, the rumination loop, the gam certainty, the catastrophic interpretation. Greater than the mind's entire operation, including its unreliability. The mind is His creation — the instrument He proportioned. The Creator is greater than all of His creation, including the instrument through which the self experiences all other fears. اللَّهُ أَعَزُّ مِمَّا أَحَافُ وَأُحَدِّرُ: mightier than the fear of the mind itself. He can still what the self cannot still. He can bring rest to what cannot be rested by the self's own effort. Ask the one who proportioned the mind to govern what He proportioned.

The Quran's answer to the troubled mind is: أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ — is it not in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find rest? Not: is it not by managing the mind that hearts find rest. In the remembrance of Allah. The mind that is in remembrance of the one power is the mind oriented toward something larger than its own operations — toward the one who proportioned it and who alone can bring it to rest. The remembrance is not a technique for managing the mind. It is the return of the mind to the one who made it.

The Third Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِيكَ بِمَا شِئْتَ

O Allah, suffice me against You with whatever You will.

بِمَا شِئْت — whatever You will. The self's management of its own mind — the techniques, the suppression, the anxiety about the anxiety, the exhausting project of trying to govern what only You can govern — is returned entirely. Whatever You will for this mind. You proportioned it. You inspired it. You govern it. Whatever You will for the specific spiral, the specific intrusion, the specific unreliability. The self does not have to fix the mind. It has to bring the mind to the one who holds it. Whatever You will. The mind is Yours. Hold it.

The Fourth Prayer

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَبِمَعَاذِكَ مِنْ عُقُوبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise — You are as You have praised Yourself.

أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ — I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger. Within divine pleasure, the troubled mind is the mind of every prophet who prayed: my Lord, expand my chest. The troubled mind that turns toward the one power is within divine pleasure and on the path toward the expanded chest. Within divine anger, the mind that spirals without turning is alone in its spiral. The prayer asks for divine pleasure within the trouble — and within divine pleasure, also the expanded chest: the mind that has found its rest in the remembrance of the one who proportioned it. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ: the mind's operations are within Your governance. You proportioned what is troubled. Expand what You created to be expanded. And أَتَنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ — Al-Lateef: the Subtle, the one present within what cannot be seen. Closer than the thought. The mind fears itself. It has not yet found the one who is already within it.

*Is it not in the remembrance of Allah
that hearts find rest?*

Not: by managing the mind.

In His remembrance.

He proportioned it.

He governs it.

He can still what the self cannot still.

Al-Lateef.

Closer than the thought.

The mind has not yet found

the one who is already within it.

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