

Strategies for Dealing with Public Problems and Pandemic and Contagious Diseases from Viewpoint of Qur'ān and Narratives

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Abstract: The present study aimed to describe the Qur'ānic and narrative strategies for dealing with public problems and pandemic and contagious diseases. This descriptive-analytical study was done through library research and analyzing reliable Qur'ānic and hadith sources. The analysis of the hadith sources indicated that when public problems, particularly the pandemic and contagious diseases, occur, we are recommended to visit a physician, not to leave our homes and cities, and not to travel to the cities where the disease has spread. Moreover, we are advised to frequently, particularly during difficulties, pray to God Almighty. The findings of the study also showed that there was no inconsistency between the revelatory teachings, including Qur'ān Verses and narratives, and the reliable scientific findings regarding human health. However, the revelatory teachings have recommended us to constantly pray to God, and deemed it necessary.

Keywords: health, pandemic and contagious diseases, narratives, prayer

A. Introduction

The history of human life has been full of trials, events, hardships, and *fitna*. The efforts made by the elites and the compassionate to cure and relieve man's pain have led to the emergence of various sciences, including medical sciences, social medicine, psychology, etc., each of which has done its best to serve man. In different stages of their lives, humans have resorted to these sciences for their own salvation and peace. At some point in time, man has experienced public disasters or incurable and contagious pains, become disappointed with the material and worldly means, and resorted to the threshold of God. Accordingly, the present paper sought to explain the Islamic strategies which can be employed when physical problems and contagious diseases spread. Thus, the present study aimed at finding an answer to the following question: what are the views of Qur'ān and hadiths about the spread of public problems and Pandemic and contagious diseases?

Regarding the background of this article, there were some scattered hadiths published on the internet, which were translated subjectively. However, there is a scientific article entitled "*Lā 'Adway, its attribution and conceptualization*" by Mahmud Karimi, where he criticizes a hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) about the uncontagiousness of disease in Islam and considers it in contrast with the medical taken-for-granted fact and the contents of other hadiths.

Before delving into the main concern of the study, it is essential to clarify the meanings of some of the keywords based on Islamic teachings, including *fitna*, and prayer.

B. *Fitna* and Trial

The word *fitna* is derived from فَتْنُ *fatn* (*fa'*, *ta'*, and *nun*) which lexically means "to put into the fire" and "to melt precious metals like gold and silver in the fire to determine their purity".¹ *Fitna* also refers to testing, trial, and suffering. Gold and silver are melted in the fire to separate their pure materials from the impure materials).² Thus, *Fitna* means to distinguish the pure from the impure.³

The use of the word "*Fitna*" and its derivations in Qur'ān shows that the human being and the world were created such that are in hardships and travail: "certainly We created man in travail".⁴ Imam 'Ali (AS) considers the world as a house full of hardships and surrounded by and travail, saying, "The world is a house in which hardships prevail and is known for the betrayals occurring at it. Its condition is not stable and its inhabitants will not survive".⁵

A careful search in the universe and examining aspects of the creation, one can conclude that since the purpose of the creation of the world was to develop and nurture the talents, the Divine test, then, includes all the servants of God. All the people – from the laymen to the Prophets, Imams, and the Divine saints, are

¹ Sa'id Shartūnī, *Aqrab al-Wawarid* (Qom: Maktab al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, 1983), 902.

² Hussain ibn Muḥammad Raghīb Isfahani, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Tehran: Muḥammad Sayyid Kilani, 1953), 371.

³ Sayyid 'Ali Akbar Qarashī, *Q āmus-e Qur'ān* (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1993), 147.

⁴ *The Holy Qur'ān*, English translation by Sayyid 'Ali Qulī Qarā'ī. 90:4.

⁵ Imam 'Ali. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, translate by Muḥammad Dashti (Qom: Mashhur; 1999) Sermon 226.

tested in one way or another. Tests may differ in type and difficulty level, some are hard, some easy; some come along with bliss, while some others come along with disaster or illness. Yet, some may be in the form of committing sin and evil or any other way. What is certain is that the Divine test is definite and universal. Accordingly, Imam 'Ali (AS) considers the principle of the Divine test in the world as one of the certain acts of God.⁶

Someone asked Imam 'Ali (AS), " is possible that God does not test us?!" Imam replied, "None of you would say," O God! I seek refuge in You from Your test." Unless he is subject to the Divine test. However, if someone wants to seek refuge in God, he should seek refuge from the misleading *fitna*.⁷ That is, do not ask God not to test you since the Divine test is inevitable and universal. Rather, you must ask God to help you be successful in His test.

The tradition of testing and suffering has been mentioned in Qur'ān. For example, God stated, "Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say, 'We have faith,' and they will not be tested?"⁸ He also says, " We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; and give good news to the patient",⁹ in another verse, it is said, " Indeed We have made whatever is on the earth [trees, plants, animals, etc.] an adornment for it that We may test them [to see] which of them is best in conduct".¹⁰

Some people are ignorant of these Diving tests and suffering. Therefore, when they face hardship, they turn away from the path of servitude and forget the illuminating Truth and the philosophy of their creation: "When distress befalls man, he supplicates Us. Then, when We grant him a blessing from Us, he says, 'I was given it by virtue of [my] knowledge.' Indeed, it is a test, but most of them do not know".¹¹

Accordingly, one of the flowing traditions of God among people is the emergence of suffering and problems. People should attempt to find a way out of the problems. The present study aimed at presenting the viewpoint of Qur'ān and

⁶ Imam 'Ali. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 103.

⁷ Imam 'Ali. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 93.

⁸ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 29: 2.

⁹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 2: 155.

¹⁰ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 18: 7.

¹¹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 39: 49.

hadith about how to deal with such sufferings and problems, particularly the epidemic and contagious diseases.

Since God handles the affairs of the universe through means and mediums, the whole universe serves God in so doing, including water¹², wind¹³, rain [of stones]¹⁴, earthquake striking the people of *Shu'ayb*¹⁵, the cry and earthquake¹⁶, Plague (epidemic)¹⁷, Rats in the *Ma'rib* dam¹⁸, the earth to swallow those like *Korah*¹⁹, flocks of birds sent against the army of the elephants²⁰, the angles, wind, and storm²¹, which are the army of God on the earth.²²

The Qur'ānic and narrative teachings about the period of crisis and the spread of the epidemic and contagious disease are summarized in three principles.

C. Qur'ānic and Narrative Principles and Methods in Dealing with the Problems and Sufferings

Examining the verses and hadiths of the infallibles, the following principles and methods were determined to pass the tests and *fitna*, particularly the epidemic and contagious diseases, successfully.

1. To Rely on the Causes as a General Rule in the Flow of the Existence

According to Islamic teachings, the world is governed by the law of cause and effect. Nothing happens without cause and effect. As it is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (AS), God refuses the occurrence of things without providing the ground. So, He provides a cause and means for everything. He also establishes opening and

¹² *The Holy Qur'ān*, 7: 64.

¹³ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 54: 20.

¹⁴ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 7: 84.

¹⁵ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 7: 91.

¹⁶ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 7: 78.

¹⁷ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 2: 243.

¹⁸ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 7: 171.

¹⁹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 28: 81.

²⁰ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 105: 1.

²¹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 33: 10.

²² Muḥammad Ḥussain Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān* (Qom: Jāmi'ie Mudarrisīn, 1997), V.18, 262.

expansion for every cause".²³ Visiting the physician when one suffers from a physical disease can be a cause of health and relief from the pain. Just as the Holy Prophet (PBUH), after being selected, forbade such things as magic and divination while confirmed the medicine and visiting the physician. Hence, believing in God and its effect on the existence and realization of all events by the permission of God is not in conflict with relying on the material, everyday causes.

At the time of the Prophet (PBUH), a person got sick. The Messenger of God (PBUH) told, "Fetch a doctor". Some said, "Can a doctor help him?" The Messenger of God (PBUH) replied, "God sent down diseases and determined a cure for each. So heal yourself". This statement has been quoted in different forms to the extent that its spiritual frequency may be proved. There is a *Mutawatir* (successive) hadith which is narrated by both Shiites and Sunnis: "for every disease, there is a medicine".²⁴

It is narrated that a man got wounded. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) told, "Fetch a physician for him". Someone said, "When a Prophet is present here, is it useful for bring a doctor?" The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stated, "God has determined a cure for every disease that He has sent down".²⁵

In another hadith, Imam Reza (AS) stated, "God has not created any pain unless he has created its cure". Then he added, "For every group of the sufferings, there is a group of medicine".²⁶ That is, God has provided an appropriate cure for every pain.

One of the prophets sell sick and said, "I do not need any doctor. The One who has made me sick will heal me. God revealed to him, "I will not heal you until you cure yourself and I have the medicine and heal". The Holy Prophet (PBUH) frequently instructed people "to cure themselves, which indicates the Holy prophet had been also instructed to cure themselves."²⁷

²³ Muḥammad ibn Ya'yub Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-kitāb al-Islamiyya, 1987), V. 1, 183.

²⁴ Muslim Ibn Ḥujāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ-i Muslim* (Beirut: 'Iz ul-Din, 1978), 1729.

²⁵ Muḥammad Baqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār al-Jāmi'at la-Durr Akhbār al-A'immat al-Aṭhār* (Beirut: Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1971), V. 59, 72.

²⁶ Muḥammad Baqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, V. 59, 309.

²⁷ Muhsin Feiḍ-i Kāshānī, *al-Muḥajah al-Baiḍā* (Qom: Jāmi'ie Mudarrisin, 2005), v. 7, 43.

Once, Moses became sick. The children of Israel visited him and said, "Cure your illness with some herb". Moses said, "I am not going to take any medicine and wait for God to heal me without medicine". His illness didn't get well for a while until it was revealed to him by God, "I swear by my honor and glory! I will not heal you unless you cure yourself by taking the given medicine (herb)". Moses asked his visitors to bring him the herb. Moses took the medicine. It didn't take long that he got well. Moses was addressed by God, "O Moses! Do you intend to destroy your wisdom and the secrets of My creation by relying on Me. Who has made the roots of the plants to have such valuable benefits in but Me?"²⁸

In another narrative from the Holy Prophet (PBUH), it is quoted that "verily the Almighty God has sent the illness and treatment. For every pain, there a specific medicine. So treat yourself, but avoid treating yourself with what is forbidden."²⁸

Quoting from the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Jabir stated, "For every pain, there a medicine. If one identifies the medicine. His illness will be cured by the permission of God."²⁹

From the above discussion, it is clear that if there is pain, there definitely is a cure. We must attempt to find the desired cure and follow the prophetic way in referring to the physician, when necessary. Moreover, according to the hadiths of the infallibles (AS), bigoted interpretation and waiting for the divine healing without taking any action are rejected. This is also confirmed by rationality. The rule of repelling the probable harm is an instance of rational rules. According to rational, one should repel any harm. Therefore, if one feels something is harmful to him, it is rationally obligatory to repel it, no matter if it is related to the world or Hereafter.

Accordingly, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli stated, " of course a decisive and absolute intellect never make a mistake and there no conflict between him and the revelation. Do humans always reach this truth? If it was so, the men would never make a mistake in achieving absolute rationality, and there would be no

²⁸ Muhsin Feiḍ-i Kāshānī, *al-Muḥajjah al-Baiḍā*, v. 7, 76.

²⁹ Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan at-Tirmidhī wa Hu wal-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: 'Abd al-Wahāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 1983), 335

diversity in their ideas, their ideas are so various that some of them are even completely contradictory, and even in conflict.³⁰

2. Prohibition of Leaving Homes and Cities During the Epidemic of Infectious Diseases

These days, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most people spend their time at home and avoid unnecessary domestic traveling, sightseeing, and hiking. According to officials, it is necessary to stay at home to break the chain of disease transmission. Islamic teachings also provide ample instructions about health care.

According to the experts, the best strategy to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission is to stay at home and avoid presenting in society and traveling. This is in consistent with the instruction presented by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Bukhari narrated from the Messenger of God (PBUH), "when plague (or any other dangerous contagious disease) spreads, if people stay in their cities, wait for the sake of God and believe that they will face whatever God has destined for them, then the Almighty God will give them the same reward like that of the martyrs".³¹

There are dozens of hadiths from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) about the above strategy in dealing with the spread of contagious diseases. For example, "is a contagious disease occurs in a city, Do not leave the city".³² In another hadith, he stated, "if you heard that a contagious disease had spread in a place, do not go to that place".³³

Moreover, using unnecessary treatment is forbidden in some narratives. It is quoted from Imam Şadiq (AS), "I will ask God to hate whoever is healthy, but still unnecessarily treats himself with some medicine and dies (as a result of that treatment)".³⁴ Accordingly, if an epidemic and contagious disease spreads in a city or a place, believers should refrain from traveling there to break the chain of transmission.

³⁰ 'Abdollah Javadi Amoli, *The Relationship between the Religion and the World* (Qom: 'Irā, 2002), 47.

³¹ Muḥammad Ibn 'Ismā'īl Bukhārī, *Şaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī* (Istanbul: Muḥammad Dhahbī, 1981), Hadith No, 3747.

³² 'Ali Ibn Ḥisam al-Dīn Muttaqī-i Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ommāl fī sunan al-aqwal wal-Af'āl* (Beirut: Bīkrī Ḥayānī wa şafwat al-saqā, 1989), 75.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Muḥammad Ibn 'Ali Şaduq, *al-Khiṣāl* (Qom: Jāmi'ie Mudarrisīn, 1983), 26.

But, what if science fails to deal with the problem? Today, the spread of Covid-19 illustrates a picture of the man's life on Resurrection Day when "a man will evade his brother, his mother and his father, his spouse and his sons and each of them will have a task to keep him preoccupied on that day".³⁵ It is killing people so hostilely and it is not important for it whether its victim is poor or wealthy, employee or employer, and the boss or subordinate. The greatest stockholders and the richest people in the world tremble by hearing the name of Covid-19. Even the most developed and equipped private hospitals witness a number of deaths by Covid-19 each day. It has imprisoned everyone at his own home without any guard.

At present, we do not know exactly who has made this deadly virus, how they created it, and what their purpose is, but what we know for certain is that "No leaf falls without His knowing it"³⁶ similarly, Covid-19 cannot kill anyone without the permission of God. See how despaired the superpowers and the elites have got in dealing with this virus.

We can give a number of known and unknown reasons for the origin of the virus. One of the possible causes the man's suffering is that he forget God, God's authority and power, His grace. His observing His servants, etc. have we forgotten the casualty laws of the universe? "Whoever acts righteously, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its own detriment, then you will be brought back to your Lord." ³⁷ is not this situation- i.e. the spread of Covid-19- the result of our own disobedience? As God says, "Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people's hands, which He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they may come back."³⁸ All the oppression against humanity, all the sins, all being ingratitude, arrogant, and violation of human rights under the name of protecting human rights will definitely lead to suffering. As God says, "Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude, and landed their people in the house of ruin?"³⁹

³⁵ *The Holy Qur'an*, 80: 34-3.

³⁶ *The Holy Qur'an*, 6: 59.

³⁷ *The Holy Qur'an*, 45: 15.

³⁸ *The Holy Qur'an*, 30: 41.

³⁹ *The Holy Qur'an*, 14: 2.

Is this disease one of the armies of God, the aim of which is to remind us of our duties toward God, people, and ourselves so that we come to our senses, go back to Him, evaluate ourselves and correct our shortcomings? "Indeed Allah does not wrong people in the least; rather, it is people who wrong themselves."⁴⁰ Remember the day when we are to be accountable for our deeds.

In such a situation, man thinks if he denies using any medicine, treatment, technology, and the like, and when there is nothing to save him, then a ray of hope and a way out will emerge- and that is resorting to God the Origin of existence. "O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable."⁴¹ We are always in need of God. If a seemingly powerful, wise, and rich person gets despaired and resorts to the most Omnipotence in need, it is when his prayers will be fulfilled.

3. To Pray and to Take Refuge in the Lord and to Appeal to Transcendental Causes

The word *Du'ā* (prayer) is derived from دَعَا (*da', 'a', wa'*) which lexically means to call. In the religious sense, *Du'ā* (prayer) refers to "calling" God, desiring Him, and "connecting" to Him,⁴² and to make someone aware of one's presence by your voice and words.⁴³

Nowadays, praying means to ask God to fulfill one's needs- i.e., to solve one's problems, sufferings, and mental, physical, and financial problems- and to heal one's diseases, pains, etc.

3.1 Praying in Divine religions

The mission of the Divine religions is to make humans prosperous both in the world and Hereafter. This prosperity is only possible when one connects with the True Owner. Since praying is a means by which the servants communicate with their Lord, in all the Divine religions, prophets prayed to God and taught their

⁴⁰ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 10: 44.

⁴¹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 35: 15.

⁴² Muḥammad Ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣār, 1994), 257.

⁴³ Aḥmad Ibn Fāris Ibn Fāris, *Ma'jam Maghāyis al-Lughat* (Qom: Maktab al-'Alām al-Islāmiyya, 1984), V. 2, 279.

followers how to pray. In this section, we focus on praying in different religions and present some instances of prayer.

3.1.1 Some Examples of Prayers in Judaism

In Judaism, prayer and its functions, or *Berakhot*, is to request from, confess and praise to, and thank God. It is also called *Amidah* and *Tefilat*. In Jewish liturgy, the most common word for praying is *Tefilat*. It corresponds to the words "Hitpallel" (to think), to entreat, to judge, and to intercede.⁴⁴ *Amidah* meaning "to stand" refers to a Jewish prayer containing 18 benedictions. It is the central prayer used in three prayer services- i.e., *Shacharit* (morning), *Mincha* (afternoon), and *Ma'ariv* (evening). It is also called *Shemoneh Esreh* (meaning eighteen) or *Ha tefillah*, in Talmud sources. In the Holy Book, the concept of prayer implies that God exists, He can hear and reposed. That is, He is a personal God.⁴⁵ There have been 72 prayers in the lives of all the humans throughout history which are the essence and principle of the spiritual life of man, his relationship with the unseen world, and the manifestation of the man's need for the Divinity; it includes every form of talking to God, without any specific ritual or ceremony. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you and you will glorify me".⁴⁶ In general, according to the Holy Book, prayer is the link between man and his God. It is also a great means to reform and release man, which is even greater than Martyrdom and moral perfection.⁴⁷ Defining the prayer, Abraham Joshua Heschel stated, "Praying is to protect a Word, and to devote to a goal which leads to God, a strong and powerful words that stand at the highest point.... Prayer is not a motivation, it is insight, i.e., an insight about the secret of existence."⁴⁸ Moreover, Herman Wouk, a Jewish writer, argued that prayer, in the form of complete devotion to God, presents enlightening moments for man at an unknown times. These enlightening moments related man with the World of Light, purity and, Divinity. These enlightening moments are the reward of a lifetime praying, worshiping and

⁴⁴ John Bowker, *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 959.

⁴⁵ *Prayer*, 978.

⁴⁶ *Psalms*, 15:50

⁴⁷ *Prayer*, 978.

⁴⁸ *Between God and Man*, 213.

praising God.⁴⁹ According to the Holy Qur'ān, "But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection".⁵⁰

3.1.2 Some Examples of Prayers in Christianity

In Christianity, praying means to address God. It is considered more important than talking and communicating with God. According to the Bible, praying is not just a human activity. Rather, it is a personal conversation with the True and Living God. It is God Who starts praying, not man. God motivates the man to want and do whatever pleases Him.⁵¹ Therefore, praying is merely to submit to the call of God.⁵² As Jesus said, "our thoughts, desires, and wishes originate from our hearts. Praying helps us to open our hearts to God so that He heals and strengthens us through the Holy Spirit. God touches our hearts. If we live faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly, then, God will inhabit in our hearts".⁵³

In recent years, the fact that Christian theologians worship and pray was rediscovered. This worship and praying form their theological thinking. The expression "The way you worship determines what you believe in" shows the fact that theology and worship interact. The Christians' beliefs govern the way they pray and worship, and the way the Christians pray and worship affect their beliefs. Discussing two controversies in the early church- centered on Gnosticism and Aryanism- will indicate the importance of this point. Gnostics believed the matter is inherently evil. In rejecting this view, St. Irnaus pointed out that bread, wine, and water are used in Christian rites. While they have such an important place in Christian rites, how they can be evil?⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Abraham Cohen, *Treasure of Talmud*, translated by Amir Fereidun Gurgani (Tehran: Asatir, 2003), 106.

⁵⁰ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 20: 124.

⁵¹ Wayne R. Spear, *Talking to God: The theology of prayer* (USA: Crown & Covenant, 2002), 152.

⁵² Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* (USA: Covenant, 2005), 29.

⁵³ David Foster, *The Catholic Prayerbook: from Downside Abbey* (Scotland: Avid, 1999), 202.

⁵⁴ Ahmad Reza Mufattih, *The Catholic Church Teachings* (Qom: University of Religions Press, 2015), 643.

Jesus began by saying, "believe in God". According to the Gospels, having faith in Jesus and loving him makes us be God's children. Therefore, since God (Father) loves us and because Christ is present in our hearts through our faith in him, our prayers will be answered.⁵⁵ Hence, the life of prayer includes the habit of appearing before the Trinity and bonding with Him. It is always possible to bond with Him since we have united with Christ through baptism. Christian prayer continues throughout the church, which is the Body of Christ since it bonds with Christ.⁵⁶

On the other hand, Bible presents prayer as an inner act of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a comforter who accompanies the believers and reminds them of whatever Christ taught the apostles. Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Romans, the Holy Spirit is described as "He is within us and helps us to express the cries we can't express and to establish a close relationship with God by saying "Abba", just like what Jesus did"⁵⁷

3.1.3 Prayer in Islam

In Qur'ān and Hadith, praying as a means of communicating with God has been emphasized and is considered the best form of worship. The Almighty God commands people to pray and promises to answer it: "Pray to Me, and I will accept your prayers."⁵⁸ In this verse, praying is viewed as a kind of worship and those who are disdainful of praying are warned to enter hell in utter humiliation. Ṭabarsī considers this verse as an important verse of the Qur'ān since it presents the value of praying for God and the virtue of withdrawal from the creatures.⁵⁹ Based on this verse and the related hadiths, commentators consider praying as a kind of worship and argue that those who disdain to pray will be punished. Moreover, they view any kind of worship as praying.⁶⁰⁻⁶¹

⁵⁵ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, 126.

⁵⁶ Mehrab Sadeqi-nia & [Fateme](#) Ghorbani, "The Main Themes of Shiite and Christian Supplications", *RELIGIOUS RESEARCH* 6, no. 12(2018): 29-46.

⁵⁷ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, 126.

⁵⁸ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 40: 60.

⁵⁹ Ḥassan Ibn Faḍl Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Qom: Osveh, 2005), 823.

⁶⁰ Muḥammad Ḥussain Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān*, V.17, 343.

⁶¹ Muḥammad Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshur, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wal-Tanwīr* (Beirut: al-Tarīkh al-'Arabī, 2000), 227.

God stated in Qur'ān, "Say, 'Were it not for the sake of summoning you [to faith], what store my Lord would have set by you? But you impugned [me and my summons], so it will soon follow as a result."⁶² That is, if there were not any prayer, people would have no dignity. Therefore, the status and dignity of the man before God depend on the amount of his praying.⁶³ The content of this verse shows that God's care for people originates from prayer. In other words, praying means asking God to fulfill one's desires and God's care includes the provision of blessings, health, etc.

The Almighty God says, "Why did they not entreat when Our punishment overtook them! But their hearts had hardened".⁶⁴ In this verse, God warns that if the unbelievers had supplicated, He would have removed their hardships, sorrows, and sufferings.⁶⁵ Of course, suffering includes all types of physical and mental disorders and torment. Therefore, in this Holy verse, God implies that when people suffer from such problems as diseases, mental and physical problems, they should appeal to God and not forget to pray.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stated, "For whatever need you to have, even if it is a shoelace, make supplication to God. Since it will not be answered unless God makes it possible. Even when your shoelace is torn, ask God for help in fixing the problem".⁶⁶

On the other hand, believing in the Imams who are the manifestation of God and the typical examples of a complete human, and know God more than anyone else.⁶⁷ The more one knows God, the greater he will pray and supplicate. Accordingly, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the family of the Holy Prophet) of Islam) (AS) prayed the most such that Imam 'Ali (AS) was called *Da'ā* meaning the one who prays the most".⁶⁸ Since originating their pure hearts, the infallible Imams' (AS) prayers are too deep to be understood by an ordinary man. Therefore, their prayers are full of

⁶² *The Holy Qur'ān*, 25: 77.

⁶³ 'Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Tawus Ḥelli, *Falāḥ al-Sā'il wa nijāh al-masā'il* (Qom: Tablighāt Islāmī, 1986), 65.

⁶⁴ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 6: 43.

⁶⁵ 'Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Tawus Ḥelli, *Falāḥ al-Sā'il wa nijāh al-masā'il*, 66.

⁶⁶ Muḥammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, V. 93, 295.

⁶⁷ 'Abd al-Wāḥid Ibn Muḥammad Āmadi, *Ghirar al-ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalam* (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1990), Hadith no, 3260.

⁶⁸ Muḥammad ibn Ya'yub Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, V. 2, 467.

pure themes on all aspects needed by the man so that quench the thirsty person seeking knowledge. In another narrative, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "Do you want me to introduce you with a weapon you to a weapon which will free you from the enemies and increase your sustenance? They said, "Yes". The Prophet replied, "Call on your Lord day and night since praying is believers' weapon".⁶⁹

Therefore, according to the teachings of the Divine religions, particularly that of Qur'ān and hadith, one should always pray. Furthermore, at the time of epidemic sufferings and problems, one of the most effective factors in solving the problems is to pray and supplicate to God.

3.2 The place of praying in the scientific world

Prayer is one of the main elements of all religions and one of the most fundamental and important features of them, which has various functions. In all forms of religion, the men approach God, the holiest and most central element of religiosity, through praying. In fact, praying is a means by which man approaches God. If this connection was removed, there would be no other way to link this world to the eternal world.⁷⁰ Particularly, when the material world is explained by a creation which may lead to separation from the Divine or immaterial world, praying is a means by which this separation is removed even for a moment,⁷¹ and the material life of the man becomes deeply meaningful, Divine, and stable.

On the other hand, praying means renewing one's beliefs and restructure the pure mystical experiences. Based on these experiences, religion remains fresh and pure: "prayer is a mirror on which stated, feelings, and the religious and mystical experiences are reflected to the extent that it can be said that religion without prayer is not a religion".⁷²

The entangled spirit of the man gets pure by mystical experiences and acquires spiritual and divine qualities. Izutsu defines praying as "an oral bottom-up communication between the man and God, while revelation is an oral up-

⁶⁹ Muḥammad ibn Ya'yub Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, V. 2, 468.

⁷⁰ Sayyid Reza Baqirian Movahid & 'Ali Baqiri-far, *Prayer from Thinkers' viewpoint* (Tehran: Bushra, 2008), 415.

⁷¹ Hamid Bakhshandeh, called as a scene: evidence from Iran, *Haft Asman* 36, no. 6(2007): 237-256.

⁷² Gholam Reza Akrami, *Prayer and Supplication in Religions*, *Akhbar-i Adyan* 26(2008): 58-62.

down communication between God and the man".⁷³ For him, praying is the most intimate and personal conversation of the heart with God. It is a response to the Divine revelation and its acknowledgment. Furthermore, it reflects one's faith in God.⁷⁴

In Abrahamic religions, praying is more important. These religions consider praying as a means by which one can communicate with God, who is distinct and willful, commands benevolently and demands His servants to obey Him, waits to receive their requests and prayers, and is pleased to converse with His servants. In these religions, God is the source of goodness and evil, the means to reach salvation, since we cannot resist the temptations and deceptions and receive the Divine grace without the help of praying. Therefore, praying is an essential part of all stages of our lives. In fact, it is one of our duties and implies our piety.⁷⁵

In his book entitled "Prayer", Alexis Carrel defines the truth of praying as, "The highest religious state in a man. Its truth is the flight of man's soul toward God. In man's conscience, there is a blazing flame which occasionally points man's attention to his faults, misguidance and false thoughts".⁷⁶ He further adds, "While experiencing spiritual stated, the man sometimes feels the glory of forgiveness".⁷⁷

Carrel also stated, "we westerns consider the reason to be much important than love. We attempt to develop and strengthen our mental power, but our souls have disdained from developing. Among the spiritual forces, mystical feeling and religious feeling are the ones which have been forgotten the most. The mystical feeling is mostly manifested during praying. Praying is clearly a spiritual phenomenon. Now that the world of spirit is not accessible for science, how can we gain a definite and empirical understanding of praying? It seems that praying is a kind of attraction of the soul to the immaterial center of the world. This state does not originate from the mind. That is why the philosophers and people of reason consider it unacceptable. Those whose hearts are free of thought view God

⁷³ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Quran*, Translated by Ahmad Aram (Tehran: Sahami-i Ketabm 2002), 248.

⁷⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Quran*, 250

⁷⁵ Charles G. Herbermann, *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1913), 347.

⁷⁶ Alexis Carrel, *Prayer*, translated by Shari'ati (Tehran: Elham, 1998), 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

as the warmth of the sun or the fragrance of a flower. The God who relates such intimately to those who know how to love hides Himself from those who know nothing but understanding through reason.⁷⁸

Dele Carnegie, the famous western psychologist, stated, "In the United States, on average, one person commits suicide every 35 minutes, and one person gets insane every two minutes. If these people enjoyed the peace and relief resulted from religion and worship, most of these suicides and insanity would be prevented".⁷⁹

Thomas Hays Loop stated the most important point I have come across over the years of experience and experiment is that the best means to cure sleeplessness is to do *Salat* and pray. Being a doctor, I say prayer is the best means that has ever been known to develop one's confidence, relieve mental tension and bring about comfort and joy which eliminate insomnia. In precise words, the most important means to create mental relief is "doing *Salat*".⁸⁰

In sum, praying is inherent in every human. However, the more we get closer to pure theism, the higher our prayers reach. The school of Shiite is based on pure theism. Therefore, praying has a distinct and high place in this school compared to other religious schools. The rich, enlightening, and mystical contents of Islamic prayers and people's special tendency toward them is the best evidence confirming this claim.

3.3 Special Prayers for Illnesses

It is narrated that, once the Holy Prophet addressed his companions, "Which one of you wants to be healthy and never get sick?" his companions replied, "all of us. O Messenger of God". He said, "Do you want to be like the lost donkeys? Do not you want your sins to be forgiven via your sufferings? I swear by God in whose control is my life, there are some stages in heaven for everyone, but he will not reach that stage unless he practices patience at the time of suffering. The greater suffering, the greater the reward. Verily, since the Almighty God loves His servant, afflicts him with great suffering. Therefore, if the servant is pleased, God will be

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Dele Carnegie, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, translated by Mitra Shekari (Tehran: Qasedak, 2019), 154.

⁸⁰ Dele Carnegie, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, 249.

pleased with him. On the other hand, if the servant gets angry and upset, God will be angry at him.⁸¹ Accordingly, in Shiite sources of hadith, there are various prayers for the time one suffers from an illness some of them are as follows.

3.3.1 The Holy Prophet's (PBUH) Prayer

It is narrated from Imam Baqir (AS) that one day Imam 'Ali got ill. The Prophet visited him and recommended him to recite the following prayer: "O God! I ask you to help us regain our health hastily, to be patient in affliction and the Divine tests, and to get out of the sufferings for Your merci ".⁸²

I mean, God, I ask you to hasten your health, to be patient with your limbs and exams, and to get out of troubles towards your mercy

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had not met him for a while. When he visited the Prophet, he asked about the reason. The man said, "Sickness and poverty". The Prophet said, "Do you want me to teach you a prayer by reciting which God will keep you from sickness and poverty? The man agreed. The Prophet instructed him to recite the following prayer:

There is no power except by the Almighty Allah! I rely on a Living one who never dies. I praise the God who does not have any companion or offspring, the one who has no partner in ruling and does not ask for help due to humility. Consider Him very glorious.⁸³

According to the narrator, it did not take long when the man came before the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and informed him, "O the Messenger of God! God healed my sickness and removed poverty from me".

3.3.2 Imam 'Ali's (AS) Prayer

It is quoted from Imam 'Ali (AS) that when an illness outbreaks, put the following prayer at your home and recite it after morning *Salat* or early in the morning.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Hassan Ibn Muhammad Deilamī, *Irshād al-Qulub* (Qom: Sharīf Raḍī, 1992), 421.

⁸² Hassan Ibn Faḍl Ṭabarsī, *Makārim al-Akhlāq* (Tehran: Farahani, 1986), 418.

⁸³ Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn* (Qom: Maj'ma' al-'ālimi lii-Ahl al-Bayt, 1996), 24.

⁸⁴ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, V. 1, 224.

In the name of God, Most companionate, most Merciful
Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our master, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust.'⁸⁵
Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is no one to remove it except Him; and should He desire any good for you, none can stand in the way of His grace: He grants it to whomever He wishes of His servants, and He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.⁸⁶
There is no animal on the earth, but that its sustenance lies with Allah, and He knows its [enduring] abode and its temporary place of lodging. Everything is in a manifest Book.⁸⁷
How many an animal there is that does not carry its own provision. Allah provides them and you, and He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.⁸⁸
Whatever mercy Allah unfolds for the people, no one can withhold it; and whatever He withholds no one can release it except Him, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.⁸⁹
If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Have you considered what you invoke besides Allah? Should Allah desire some distress for me, can they remove the distress visited by Him? Or should He desire some mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?' Say, 'Allah is sufficient for me. In Him, let all the trusting put their trust.'⁹⁰
'Allah is sufficient for me. There is no god except Him. In Him I have put my trust and He is the Lord of the Great Throne.'⁹¹

Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrated from Ibn 'Abbas: once I was sitting next to Imam 'Ali (AS), a pale man came to him and said, "O *Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the faithful)! I am always sick and had a lot of pain. Teach a prayer to cure my diseases. Imam said, "I am going to teach you a prayer which God taught the Prophet (PBUH) when Hassan and Hussein were sick. The prayer is as follows:

⁸⁵ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 9: 51

⁸⁶ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 10: 107

⁸⁷ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 11: 6.

⁸⁸ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 29: 60.

⁸⁹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 35: 2.

⁹⁰ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 39: 38

⁹¹ *The Holy Qur'ān*, 9: 129

O my God! Whenever you bestowed me blessings, I could not thank you enough; whenever I faced suffering, I could not practice patience enough;

O the one whom although I could thank enough for His blessing and my patience in the suffering sent by Him was not sufficient, He did not leave me by myself

And O the one who saw me doing wrong, but did not decry me, saw me making mistake but did not punish me;

Send greetings to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his family, forgive my sin, and heal my illness. Verily you are all-powerful.⁹²

Ibn Abbas said, "I saw the same man after one year. He had a radiant complexion. He said, "I did not read this prayer for any pain unless I was healed. I did not visit the king of whom I was afraid unless the Almighty God kept me from his evil.

3.3.3 Hazrat-i Zahra's (SA) Prayer

Salman the Persian narrated, "I swear by God! From the day when Hazrat-i Zahra (AS) taught me this prayer, I have taught it to over a thousand people with severe fever in Mecca and Medina, and all of them recovered completely after reciting this prayer. The content of the prayer is as follows:

In the name of God, Most companionate, Most merciful; in the name of the God of Light; in the name of the God of the Light of Light; in the name of the God of the Light over the Light; in the name of the God, the Ruler of the affairs of men; in the name of the God who created Light from Light; Thank God for creating Light from Light and sending down light on mount Tur in a written book, in an open sheet, with suitable size, to an elegant prophet. Thank the God who is remembered with honor, is known for His Glory and is thanked both in happiness and misery. Peace be upon Muhammad and his holy family.⁹³

⁹² 'Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Tawus Ḥelli, *Falāḥ al-Sā'il wa nijāh al-masā'il*.

⁹³ Hassan Ibn Faḍl Ṭabarsi, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 418.

3.3.4 Imam Ṣadiq's (AS) Prayer

Imam Ṣadiq (AS) recommended people to recite this prayer when one gets sick: "O the one who sends down the healing and remove the pain send down healing for his pain"⁹⁴.

In another narrative, Imam Ṣadiq (AS) said whenever visiting a sick person. Put your hand on his head and recite the following prayer:

I take refuge from the winds and pains to the name of God, to God, from God, towards God and what God wants. There is no power except by the Almighty Allah, e Ibrahim is the friend of God. Moses was saved by God. Jesus is the Spirit of God, and Muhammad (PBUH) is the Messenger of God. In the name of God, in remembrance of God and with the help of God's plans, for (the name of the sick person) the son/daughter of (the name of his/her mother), I confess to no belief but being Muslim. I seek refuge in God by words. The letter by which Adam (PBUH) called on God so that He accepted his repentance. Verily, He is the one who kindly accepts repentance. O the pains, I will destroy you by the permission of God and the Holy words since there is no God but Him. Indeed, everything, every creation, is for Him. Appreciated is God the Creator of the worlds.

Then recite *Ayat al-Kursi* (the 255th verse of the 2nd surah of the Qur'ān) and *al-Fatiha* (Opening), *al-Falaq* (Daybreak), and *al-Nās* (Mankind) chapters. Afterward, recited the following prayer:

O God! Heal him with Your healing. Cure him with Your medicine, relieve him from his sufferings, and bestow him health. For the sack of Muhammad (PBUH) and his family.⁹⁵

D. Conclusion

Examining the Qur'ānic and hadith sources to find strategies to deal with sufferings and epidemic and contagious illnesses, it can be concluded that at the time of the spread of illnesses, we must cure them through using natural means

⁹⁴ Muḥammad ibn Ya'yub Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, V. 2, 567.

⁹⁵ Muḥammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, V. 59, 22a4.

available in the world and the treatments confirmed by the physicians and by referring to reliable and capable physicians. When an epidemic and contagious disease outbreaks, the Infallibles (As) have instructed people to stay at home and refuse to leave their cities or to travel to the infected cities. Moreover, the Divine religions, particularly Islam recommend people to always pray and supplicate to God both in happiness and misery. One of the best measures to be taken at the time of illnesses and difficulties is to pray and supplicate to the unique healer, the merciful God. One can pray in any form and language, although there are certain prayers recommended by the Infallibles (AS), which are more effective in curing illnesses.

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