

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tawassul Demystified

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Naba Cultural Organization

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Introduction

Given that during the Occultation of Imam Mahdi (AJ), one of the most important ways to increase one's *Ma'rifa*¹ and spiritual connection with the Imam is through *Tawassul* to his revered presence, we decided to present a concise discussion of *Tawassul* and its status in the Quran, Sunnah, and Narrations.

This work consists of seven lessons. In each lesson certain topics relating to *Tawassul* will be discussed. In the last two lessons, we will analyze some questions and potential sources of doubt relating to *Tawassul* and respond to them.

In the beginning of each lesson, a synopsis will be given. At the end, a number of questions about the

¹*Ma'rifa* refers to a deep understanding or recognition of someone or something.

contents of that lesson will be asked. Hopefully answering these questions will help the esteemed readers remember the contents of the lesson. Furthermore, in order to consolidate and make use of these teachings in our daily lives, a number of activities have been suggested as homework so that we can be blessed by this divine jewel in our own lives, *inshallah*.



Lesson 1

What is *Tawassul*?



In the current lesson we will examine the lexical and colloquial meaning of *Tawassul*. Then we will examine *Tawassul* from a rational perspective. Finally, we will discuss the individuals and beings that we can make *Tawassul* to.



The Lexical Meaning of *Wasīla* and *Tawassul*

The word *wasila* comes from the Arabic root *Wa Sa La*, which is defined as:

***Wasila* means rank, *wasila* means closeness.²**

Rank means having a high position.³ Thus the root of *wasila* relates to having a position or being close to something. This is why any means through which one can get close to another thing is called a *wasila*.⁴ The word *wasila* is not just limited to objects, but can also refer to deeds:

***Tawassul* to someone through a *wasila*, means getting close to them through a deed.⁵**

In short, a *wasila* is an object or deed through which one can get close to a thing or person. The act of doing this is called *tawassul*.

² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 11, p. 724.

³ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 2, p. 266.

⁴ “*Al-wasīla mā yutaqarrabu bihī ‘ilā al-ghayr*,” Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 11, p. 724.

⁵ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 11, p. 724.

In the current work, our focus will be on *tawassul* to the Fourteen Infallibles to get closer to God or to reach a specific goal.

***Tawassul* from a Rational Perspective**

Throughout the course of our daily routines, we frequently make use of *wasilas* without even realizing it. For example:

- Our *means*⁶ for traveling over long distances is making use of various vehicles.
- Our *means* for getting money and sustenance is work.
- Our *means* for reaching university is studying and getting help from a teacher.
- Our *means* for getting close to people that we like is doing things that make them happy.

It is a widely recognized principle that when seeking employment or a favor from a prominent individual, the chances of receiving a positive response significantly increase when approached through a mutual acquaintance whom they know and respect. In short, to get close to and

⁶ Going forward, the words ‘*wasila*’ and ‘means’ will be used interchangeably

reach any goal, we need to make use of its specific means. Making use of various *wasilas* in our daily lives to facilitate reaching our goals is something that is completely natural and accepted to the extent that we may not even be conscious that we are making use of a *wasila*.

We make use of means even in the most basic actions in our lives. For example, we make use of our legs to walk, our tongues to speak, our eyes to see, and our ears to hear. Without using means, our lives would either be impossible or unbearable.

Let's cite an example to shed more light on *tawassul*. Suppose you intend to travel from London to Mecca to perform *Hajj*. There are different ways to do this. You can walk barefoot, walk wearing shoes, run, bike, take a motorcycle, take your car, ride a bus, ride a train, fly by airplane, or make use of any combination of these methods. What factors determine which way you will choose to travel?

Even though all of these means will eventually bring a person to the destination, each has its own advantages and drawbacks. One requires an extraordinary amount of energy, another may be quicker, a third may be more expensive, and a different one may be safer. To choose the proper means for this journey, a person needs to seek the advice of someone that is aware of all aspects of this trip,

including its path and the easy and difficult parts of the way.

Similarly, there are also multiple ways to seek closeness to God. But what is the best method to traverse for this special path? We are in need of someone to show us. As God's created beings, we have inherent limitations that prevent us from being able to recognize the correct path to get close to Him. As such, based on reason, God Himself must also show us the means to get close to Him.

Thus, just as using a *wasila* is a natural and reasonable thing for our worldly affairs, reason dictates that we should also make use of a *wasila* in our spiritual affairs to get closer to God. What is critical is that in such spiritual affairs, the means of *tawassul* and *wasila* that are used must be determined by God Himself or His appointed representatives and not just our own personal speculation. This is just like how in our worldly affairs, there are legally permitted and prohibited means to make money. Similarly, in university, there are many means to getting a good grade, but cheating is not an acceptable one.

Characteristics of Things We Make *Tawassul* To

There are several factors which determine what things we can make *tawassul* to and which tasks we do this for. But

first, we must be certain that the thing we are making *tawassul* to is capable of solving our problem.

If we want to open a screw, we make *tawassul* to a screwdriver. Surely a pen does not have the capability of opening a screw. If we want to buy bread, we make *tawassul* to a baker. Naturally, going to a fruit seller is not the right choice for this. It would be illogical to make use of a shovel to plow a ten square mile field or use a clothesline to pull up a ten-ton weight.

For all our worldly and spiritual affairs, we must find a *wasila* that can meet our needs. Our *tawassul* to the Prophet and Imams, is because God has given them the ability to solve our worldly and spiritual needs and problems. In this regard, there are three important characteristics that have been given to the Divine *Hujjats* or Proofs:

First: God has bestowed them with the knowledge through which they can fulfill all of our needs for guidance.

Second: God has bestowed them with the power through which they can fulfill our other needs. This power is derived from knowledge of the *Ism al-A`zam* (the Greatest Name of God). It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him:

There were two letters [from *Ism al-Azam*] given to Jesus and through them he performed [miracles], there were four letters given to Moses, eight letters given to Abraham, fifteen letters given to Noah, and twenty five letters given to Adam. And God Almighty has bestowed all of the (aforementioned Names) to Muhammad (PBUH). Verily, *Ism al-A`zam* has seventy-three letters, of which seventy-two letters were given to Muhammad (PBUH) and one letter remained covered from him.⁷

That which the Shia and Sunni narrate about the miracles of the Holy Prophets and Imams, peace be upon them, are all through their knowledge of the letters of the *Ism al-A`zam*.

Third: God has given the Fourteen Infallibles such a high status that if we beseech God through them, or make them our intercessors, God will pay more attention to us.

⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 230:

«سَمِعْتُ أَبَاعَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع يَقُولُ: إِنَّ عَيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أُعْطِيَ حَرْفَيْنِ كَانَ يَعْمَلُ بِهِمَا، وَ أُعْطِيَ مُوسَى أَرْبَعَةَ أَحْرَفٍ، وَ أُعْطِيَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَحْرَفٍ، وَ أُعْطِيَ نُوحٌ خَمْسَةَ عَشَرَ حَرْفًا، وَ أُعْطِيَ آدَمُ خَمْسَةَ وَ عَشْرِينَ حَرْفًا، وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى جَمَعَ ذَلِكَ كُلَّهُ لِمُحَمَّدٍ، وَ إِنَّ اسْمَ اللَّهِ الْأَعْظَمَ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَ سَبْعُونَ حَرْفًا أُعْطِيَ مُحَمَّدٌ اثْنَيْنِ وَ سَبْعِينَ حَرْفًا وَ حُجِبَ عَنْهُ حَرْفٌ وَاحِدٌ.»

Questions:

1. What is the lexical meaning of *Tawassul*?
2. List a few examples of everyday things in which you make use of a *wasila* or make *tawassul* through a person or thing.
3. What characteristics has God granted to the Fourteen Infallibles which allows us to make *tawassul* through them?


Homework:

1. Find the Ziyarat of the Fourteen Infallibles for each day of the week in the book *Maḥāṭiḥ al-Jinān*. Throughout the week, recite the Ziyarat for each day with special attention and ask for your needs by making *Tawassul* through the respective Infallible for each day.




Lesson 2

***Tawassul*, an exemplification of worshipping God**



**In the current lesson
we will analyze the
place of *tawassul* in the
Divine Order and study
a few specific examples
of it.**



The Obligation to *Tawassul*

One of the most important verses of the Holy Quran that refers to *tawassul* is the following:

O you who believe! Be mindful of God (*taqwā*) and seek a means (*al-wasīla*) to approach him and strive in his path, so that you may prosper.⁸

In this verse, God Almighty orders us to three different things to prosper:

- Being mindful of Him (having *taqwā*)
- Seeking help through a *Wasila*
- Striving in the way of God

This verse not only endorses making use of a means to gain nearness to God in a broad sense and without specifying a particular case, but considers it one of the Divine Commands! Thus, no Muslim can bring any doubt in the permissibility of *tawassul* or that *tawassul* has been ordered by God. This verse makes it clear that not only is

⁸ Quran, 5:35.

tawassul permissible, but it is emphasized and even obligatory.

This verse states that having *taqwā*, *tawassul*, and striving in the way of God must happen side by side for us to become prosperous and none of these tasks must be put aside.

Furthermore, beyond just helping us reach our needs, making use of a *wasila* is also a fundamental part of serving and obeying God. Even if we do not have a specific need, we should still make use of a *wasila* because this is God's command. Actions like making Ziyarat of the grave of Imam Riḍā or the graves of the other Imams, regardless of our specific needs, are part of serving God and getting close to Him.

Examples of *Wasila*

In our sacred texts, many different examples of means to make *tawassul* to God have been cited. As was mentioned in the lexical discussion, there are two types of *wasilas*:

- Deeds and actions made in worship
- Things (including both living things, like the Divine Imams and nonliving things like the Kaaba and Holy Quran)

a– Actions Made in Worship

The individuals closest to a king are those who adhere most closely to his commands. Worship means following the orders of the king of the universe, God Almighty, and naturally will cause closeness to Him. Regarding this type of *wasila*, Imam Ali (AS) stated:

The greatest things that those that make *tawassul* to God seek in *tawassul* include belief in God and His prophet. *Jahad* in the way of God, which is the lofty peak of Islam. The word of *Ikhlāṣ* (testifying to the Oneness of God) which (agrees with) the human *fītra* (innate knowledge). Establishing prayers which is (the truth) of religion. Giving *Zakat* which is the obligatory duty. Fasting in the month of Ramadan which is a shield against Divine torment. The *Hajj* and *Umrah* of the House of God, which are the destroyer of poverty and cleanser of sins. Bonding with the relatives which causes an abundance of wealth and increase in lifespan. Charity (*ṣadaqa*) given in secret which is the atoner of sins. *Sadaqa* not given in secret which prevents

horrible deaths. And doing good deeds which prevents humiliating failures and defeats.⁹

These actions made in worship sometimes come from the heart, like belief, sometimes from the tongue, like reciting the *Kalima* of *Tawhid*, and in other cases are done by other parts of the body, like praying or giving charity. Higher than all these examples is absolute obedience of God, the Prophet, and Holy Imams, which encompasses all these actions made in worship. A hadith has been narrated from Muḥammad b.Fuḍāil that emphasizes this point:

I asked him (Imam Bāqir) about the greatest thing through which [by means of a *wasila*] the servants of God Almighty seek nearness to Him. He stated, “Obedience of God, obedience of His Prophet, and obedience of the *Auli l-Amr*[the Twelve Imams].”¹⁰

⁹ Sayyid al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, Sermon 110, p. 163:

«إِنَّ أَفْضَلَ مَا تَوَسَّلَ بِهِ الْمُتَوَسِّلُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ شُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى الْإِيمَانُ بِهِ وَبِرَسُولِهِ وَالْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَإِنَّهُ ذُرْوَةُ الْإِسْلَامِ وَ كَلِمَةُ الْإِخْلَاصِ فَإِنَّهَا الْفِطْرَةُ وَ إِقَامُ الصَّلَاةِ فَإِنَّهَا الْجَمَلَةُ وَ إِتَاءُ الرِّكَاتِ فَإِنَّهَا فَرِيضَةٌ وَاجِبَةٌ وَ صَوْمُ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ فَإِنَّهُ جَنَّةٌ مِنَ الْعِقَابِ وَ حَجُّ الْبَيْتِ وَ اعْتِمَادُهُ فَإِنَّهُمَا بُنْيَانِ الْفَقْرِ وَ يَرْحَضَانِ الدَّنْبَ وَ صِلَةُ الرَّحِمِ فَإِنَّهَا مَثْرَاءٌ فِي الْمَالِ وَ مَنْسَأَةٌ فِي الْأَخْلِ وَ صَدَقَةُ السَّرِّ فَإِنَّهَا تُكْفِّرُ الْخَطِيئَةَ وَ صَدَقَةُ الْعَلَانِيَةِ فَإِنَّهَا تَدْفَعُ مِثَّةَ السُّوءِ وَ صَنَائِعُ الْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنَّهَا تَقِي مَصَارِعَ الْمَوَانِ»

¹⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 187:

«عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْمُضَيْلِ قَالَ سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَفْضَلِ مَا يَتَّقَرَّبُ بِهِ الْعِبَادُ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ قَالَ أَفْضَلُ مَا يَتَّقَرَّبُ بِهِ الْعِبَادُ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ طَاعَةُ اللَّهِ وَ طَاعَةُ رَسُولِهِ وَ طَاعَةُ أَوْلِي الْأَمْرِ»

Thus, the more diligent we are in performing actions in worship and the more *ma`rifa* we have about them, the closer we will be to God.

b- The Fourteen Infallibles

The Fourteen Infallibles can be *wasilas* in several different ways:

- Sometimes we call upon God by the Fourteen Infallibles so that He fulfills our needs or answer our prayers.
- Sometimes we ask the Fourteen Infallibles to intercede to God on our behalf.
- Sometimes we directly ask them to fulfill our needs.
- And above all, we can reach the highest level of nearness to God by serving the Fourteen Infallibles.

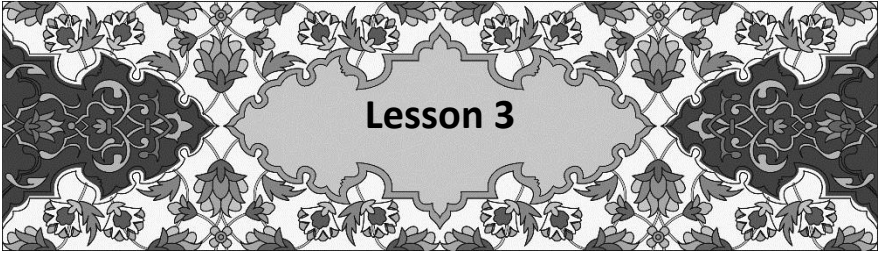
In the next lessons we will give different proofs for the examples above. These proofs will be limited to verses and narrations that directly speak about *tawassul*. Cases in which *tawassul* is discussed indirectly will not be referred to (such as *Ziyārat Jami`a al-Kabīra*).

Questions:

1. Cite a verse from the Holy Quran which shows the status of *tawassul* to God.
2. In what ways do we put the Fourteen Infallibles as intercessors between us and God?

Homework:

1. Find other verses from the Holy Quran which refer to *tawassul*.



Examples of *Tawassul* in the Holy Quran



In the current lesson
we will seek out
examples of *tawassul*
in verses of the Holy
Quran.



Throughout history, the followers of each Prophet made *tawassul* to their Prophets and their successors to ask for their needs from God. In some cases, the Prophets themselves also made *tawassul* to individuals that were closer than them to God. There was no negative connotation associated with these incidents. In fact, God specifically mentions several examples of this type of *tawassul* in the Holy Quran. We will refer to some of these below.

Adam

When Prophet Adam left heaven, he was full of regret and looking for a way to repent. It has been mentioned in the Quran that God inspired him with some words:

Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance; He is the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful.¹¹

¹¹ Quran, 2:37.

By making *tawassul* through these words, Adam repented to God and was forgiven. In some narrations, it has been said:

He asked God [for repentance] for the sake of Muhammad, Ali, Hassan, Husayn, and Fatimah, may God's blessings be upon them.¹²

Some Sunni exegetes have also cited a similar narration from the Prophet about this verse:

When Adam committed the sin, he raised his head towards the heavens and said, "I asked you to forgive me for the sake of Muhammad."¹³

This narration shows that making *tawassul* to the Fourteen Infallibles does not require them to be living.¹⁴

¹² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 304:

«سَأَلَهُ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلِيِّ وَالحُسَيْنِ وَالحُسَيْنِ وَ فَاطِمَةَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِمْ»

¹³ Al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī tafsīr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 58:

«لَمَّا أَذْنَبَ آدَمُ الذَّنْبَ الَّذِي أَذْنَبَهُ رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَقَالَ أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ إِلَّا عَفَرْتُ لِي»

Suyūfī narrates this narration through several major Sunni Scholars. Even though some Sunni scholars try to weaken this narration, Ḥākim al-Neysābūrī clarifies that the *asnād* (chain of narrators) of this narration are *Sahih* (authentic/credible).

¹⁴ One of the most common doubts raised by Wahhabis is that *tawassul* to individuals that are not alive is shirk.

Prophet Ya`qūb (Jacob) and the Brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph)

After the brothers of Yūsuf realized their mistake, they went to their father Ya`qūb and asked him to be a *wasila* through which their repentance could be accepted by God,

They said, “Oh our father! Ask for the forgiveness of our sins.”¹⁵

Ya`qūb, who was more aware of the Divine Sunnah than them, did not protest against this or ask them to ask God directly themselves. Instead, he promised them that he will ask for their forgiveness from God Almighty:

Soon I will ask my Lord for forgiveness for you, for indeed He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful¹⁶

The Children of Israel and *Tawassul* to Moses

On several occasions, the Children of Israel would come to Moses, to make him a *wasila* to state their needs to God. When they were wandering in the desert and God sent them food, they made *tawassul* to Moses for a greater variety of food:

¹⁵ Quran, 12:97.

¹⁶ Quran, 12:98.

And [remember] when you said, “Oh Moses! We cannot endure the same meal. So call upon your Lord, so He will bring forth for us some of what the earth produces.”¹⁷

In the story of the cow which God ordered to be sacrificed, they repeatedly made Moses a means between themselves and God:

They said, “Beseech on our behalf your Lord to make clear to us what it is”. He said, “[God] says, ‘It is a cow which is neither too old nor too young, but between those. So, do what you are commanded.’”¹⁸

They said, “Beseech on our behalf your Lord to show us what is its color.”¹⁹

They said, “Beseech on our behalf your Lord to make clear to us what it is. Indeed, [all] cows look alike to us.”²⁰

It wasn't only the Children of Israel who pleaded with Moses to intercede on their behalf. The followers of the

¹⁷ Quran, 2:61.

¹⁸ Quran, 2:68.

¹⁹ Quran, 2:69.

²⁰ Quran, 2:70.

Pharaoh also made *tawassul* to Prophet Moses and God did not condemn them for doing so:

Whenever the punishment fell upon them, they said, “Oh Moses! Call on your Lord for us, because of what He has pledged you. If you can remove the punishment from us, we will surely believe in you, and we shall send away the Children of Israel with you.”²¹

Solomon

Tawassul is not limited to ordinary people. Even Prophets would make *tawassul* to others to get their needs fulfilled. Prophet Solomon asked those around him for help to get a hold of the throne of Bilqis [the Queen of Sheba] and the esteemed `Āṣif b. Barkhiyā did this faster than the blink of an eye.²² Based on both Shia and Sunni narrations, `Āṣif b. Barkhiyā accomplished this by using the Greatest Name of God. Imam Hadi states:

**God’s Greatest Name has seventy-three letters
and Asif had only one of them and spoke it by**

²¹Quran, 7:134.

²² See Quran, 27:38-40. This request from Solomon was not out of need and lack of ability, but rather for proving the successorship of the esteemed `Āṣif. In any case, it shows the permissibility of using *tawassul* to reach a goal. It also shows the extraordinary abilities of the successors to the Prophets.

his tongue ... and brought the throne of Bilqis to Solomon. And with us are seventy-two letters and God has kept one letter exclusive for himself in His Knowledge of the Unseen.²³

Suyūfī, the Sunni scholar, writes in his commentary on the Holy Quran:

That individual was Asif b. Barkhiya and was a truthful individual that knew God's Greatest Name.²⁴

The People of the Book Who Lived in Hejaz Before the Advent of the Prophet of Islam

As stated by both Shia and Sunni traditions, a group of the People of the Book²⁵ migrated to Arabia before the advent of the Prophet of Islam and were waiting for him to appear. Occasionally, conflicts and wars would occur between these individuals and the Arabs living in the

²³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 230:

«اسْمُ اللَّهِ الْأَعْظَمُ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَ سَبْعُونَ حَرْفًا كَانَ عِنْدَ آصَفَ حَرْفٌ فَتَكَلَّمَ بِهِ فَأَخْرَجَتْ لَهُ الْأَرْضُ فِيمَا بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ سَبْيَا فَتَنَاولَ عَرْشَ بَلْقَيْسَ حَتَّى صَيَّرَهُ إِلَى سُلَيْمَانَ ثُمَّ انْبَسَطَتِ الْأَرْضُ فِي أَقْلٍ مِنْ طَرْفَةِ عَيْنٍ وَ عِنْدَنَا مِنْهُ اثْنَانِ وَ سَبْعُونَ حَرْفًا وَ حَرْفٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مُسْتَأْتَرٌ بِهِ فِي عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ»

²⁴ Al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī tafsīr al-manthūr*, vol. 5, p. 109:

«هُوَ آصَفُ بْنُ بَرْحِيَا وَ كَانَ صَدِيقًا يَعْلَمُ الْاسْمَ الْأَعْظَمَ»

²⁵ Jews and Christians.

Arabian Peninsula. During these wars, the People of the Book²⁶ would call upon God by the Prophet of Islam (even though he had not even been born yet) and would defeat the Arabs. These people were essentially making the Prophet who had not been born yet a means for getting their prayers answered and becoming victorious over their enemies. The Holy Quran narrates this event as such:

And when there comes to them a Book from God, confirming what is with them – although they had previously been seeking victory over those who disbelieve – when what they recognized came to them, they disbelieved in it. So, the curse of God is on the disbelievers.²⁷

It has been narrated from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, about this verse that:

God Almighty ordered the Jews during the time of Moses and after to call upon God for the sake of Muhammad and his pure Ahl al-Bayt whenever a matter distressed them and ask for victory through them. The Jews would continuously do this until ten years before the Mission of the Prophet of Islam started when

²⁶ Many individuals from this same group refused to believe in the Prophet after he began his mission.

²⁷ Quran, 2:89.

the tribes of Asad and Ghatafān and a group of the polytheists rose in enmity of the Jews of Medina and started harassing them. The Jews called upon God by the Prophet of Islam and his pure Ahl al-Bayt and the evil and calamity was neutralized. This continued until the tribes of Asad and Ghatafān, along with three thousand people, attacked the Jews who lived on the outskirts of Medina while the Jews had only three hundred riders. So the Jews called upon God by the sake of Muhammad and His Family and became victorious over the Arabs and scattered them.²⁸

The Sunni commentator of the Holy Quran, al-Suyūfī, has mentioned several narrations with the same meaning in his Commentary of the Holy Quran, including:

²⁸ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 91, p. 10:

«كَانَ اللَّهُ أَمَرَ الْيَهُودَ فِي أَيَّامِ مُوسَى وَ بَعْدَهُ إِذَا دَهَمَهُمْ أَمْرٌ وَ دَهَمَتْهُمُ دَاهِيَةٌ أَنْ يَدْعُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ وَ أَنْ يَسْتَنْصِرُوا بِهِمْ وَ كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ذَلِكَ حَتَّى كَانَتِ الْيَهُودُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ قَبْلَ ظُهُورِ مُحَمَّدٍ النَّبِيِّ بِعَشْرِ سِنِينَ يُعَادِيهِمْ أَسَدٌ وَ غَطَفَانٌ وَ قَوْمٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَ يَتَّصِلُونَ أَدَاهِمَ يَسْتَنْدِفِعُونَ شُرُورَهُمْ وَ بَلَاءَهُمْ بِسُؤَالِهِمْ رَبَّهُمْ بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ حَتَّى قَصَدَهُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَوْقَاتِ أَسَدٌ وَ غَطَفَانٌ فِي ثَلَاثَةِ آفَافٍ إِلَى بَعْضِ الْيَهُودِ حَوْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ فَتَلَقَّاهُمُ الْيَهُودُ وَ هُمْ ثَلَاثُمِائَةِ فَارِسٍ وَ دَعَا اللَّهَ بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ فَهَزَمُوهُمْ وَ قَطَعُوهُمْ»

The Jews of Banī Naḍīr and Banī Qurayẓa asked God for help against the disbelievers before the Prophethood of Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family. They said, “Oh God! We ask you by the right of the Unlettered Prophet to make us victorious over them,” and they became victorious. Then when what they recognized – meaning Muhammad– came, they denied him even though they had no doubts about him²⁹.

Before the start of the Prophethood of the Prophet [of Islam], whenever the Jews of Medina fought the Arabs such as the tribes of Asad, Ghatafān, Juhayna, and Udhra they would ask God for victory over them and would be victorious. They would call on God by the name of the Prophet of God and say, “Oh God! Our Lord! Make us victorious by the name of your Prophet and the book that you will reveal to him, and the promise of his

²⁹Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī tafsīr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 88:

«كانت يهود بنى قريظة والنضير من قبل ان يبعث محمد صلى الله عليه و سلم يَسْتَفْتِيحُونَ الله يدعون عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا و يقولون اللهم انا نستنصرك بحق النبي الأمي الا نصرتنا عليهم فينصرون فلما جاءهم ما عرفوا يريد محمدا و لم يشكوا فيه كفروا به.»

appearance in the End of Days that you gave us.”³⁰

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH)

God made the Prophet Muhammad, who is like the kind father of the entire *Ummah*, a means for the sinners of the *Ummah* to take refuge in and make *tawassul* to him to gain forgiveness:

Had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from God, and had the Messenger prayed for their forgiveness, they would certainly have found God Most-Relenting and Very-Merciful.³¹

Based on this verse, one of the ways of getting repentance accepted, is making the Prophet a *wasila*. Of course, God will only accept this repentance from the Prophet if the individual asking for forgiveness is truly regretful for their actions.

³⁰Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī tafsīr al-manthūr*, vol. 1, p. 88:

«كان يهود أهل المدينة قبل قدوم النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم إذا قاتلوا من يليهم من مشركي العرب من أسد و غطفان و جهينة و عذرة يستفتحون عليهم و يستنصرون يدعون عليهم باسم نبي الله فيقولون اللهم ربنا انصرنا عليهم باسم نبيك و بكتابك الذي تنزل عليه الذي وعدتنا انك باعته في آخر الزمان»

³¹ Quran, 4:64.

The Beautiful Names (Asmā' al-Ḥusnā) of God

God states in the Holy Quran:

For Allah are the most beautiful names. So, call Him by them.³²

This command from God manifests itself in the most beautiful way in various supplications. Many of the supplications that have been narrated from the Infallible Imams include requests from God using His Names. This is to the extent that the entirety or vast majority of certain supplications, like *Dua Jushan al-Kabīr* and *Dua Mujīr* are composed of the Names of God.

Therefore, in the language of the Quran, one of the ways to make *tawassul* to God is using His Names. In Shia narrations another aspect of these Names has been revealed to us. It has been narrated from the eighth Imam that:

Whenever hardships and difficulties come to you ask God for help using us as a *wasila* and this is what God Almighty meant when He stated, “For Allah there are the most beautiful Names. So, call Him by them.”³³

³² Quran, 7:180.

³³ Al-'Ayyāshī, *al-Taḥfīr*, vol. 2, p. 42:

According to this and other narrations,³⁴ the fourteen infallibles are the beautiful Names of God through whom we must call upon Him. Thus, based on this verse and the interpretation of the true interpreters of the Quran, not only must we make *tawassul* to God through His Names, but are also obligated to make *tawassul* to the Ahl al-Bayt and should call God through them.

Questions:

1. List two verses of the Quran that state the permissibility of *tawassul* to the Fourteen Infallibles.
2. Give an example of making *tawassul* to individuals that are no longer alive, but can still influence this world.
3. Give an example from the Holy Quran of a Prophet making *tawassul* to someone that was not a Prophet.

«إِذَا نَزَلَتْ بِكُمْ شَائِدَةٌ فَاسْتَعِينُوا بِمَا عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَ لِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا»

³⁴ Imam Sadiq stated regarding this same verse, “I swear to God we are the beautiful names that God does not accept any actions from His servants except through our *ma`rifa*,” al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 143.

Homework:


1. Study Surah al-Kahf and find all the verses in which something other than God is made *tawassul* to or making *tawassul* to something other than God is implicitly referred to.
2. By making use of a narration based *tafsir*³⁵ (such as *Tafsīr al-burhān*), study the *tafsir* of Verse 2:60. To whom does Prophet Moses make *tawassul* to?

³⁵ A commentary on the Quran.




Lesson 4

***Tawassul* in Shia and Sunni Narrations**



Numerous narrations have been cited in Shia and Sunni books about *tawassul*. In this lesson we will cite a few examples of these narrations.



In our daily lives, we refer to various people for some of our tasks and ask them for help. Sometimes, it is difficult to access the person that we need, or, for whatever reason, they are not willing to see us. In such situations, we make *tawassul* to those close to this person. The more that the person that we make *tawassul* to is close to the person that we need, the higher the probability that our need will be met, or we will reach our goal. This principle is why most companies are several times more likely to hire a person that approaches them through a referral. It is also why, when emailing an important person, getting introduced by someone they know and trust makes it much more likely that they will respond. So, who are the closest individuals to God so that we can make *tawassul* through?

The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are the closest *Wasila* to God

In the story of *Mubāhila*, the Prophet appeared before the Christians along with the Ahl al-Bayt. The Christians asked: “Are you going to challenge us along with these individuals?” The Prophet replied:

Yes! These are the most dignified individuals to God on the earth after me and the closest wasila to Him.³⁶

In a Hadith Qudsi,³⁷ God asks us, His insignificant servants, to make *tawassul* to Him through the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt. It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

God Almighty states, “Oh my servants! Is it not such that whoever asks you for a big need, you will not pay attention to them unless they ask you by means of the most beloved individuals to you? You will fulfill their request out of respect for that individual that they have made their intercessor. Be aware! The most respected of creation and most worthy of them to Me are Muhammad and his brother Ali and after him the Imams that are the *wasilas* to God. Whoever has a need that will benefit (from it being fulfilled) or is in sorrow from a difficult calamity and wants to remove it, so if they call Me by the right of

³⁶ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 21, p. 533:

«نَعَمْ، هَؤُلَاءِ أَوْجُهُ مَنْ عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ بَعْدِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَجْهَةً وَ أَقْرَبُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَسَبِيلَهُ»

³⁷ A Qudsi hadith is a hadith where the Prophet directly narrates from God Almighty.

Muhammad and his pure and pious family, I will fulfill it in the best manner.³⁸

The Ahl al-Bayt, the *Wasila* of God's Great Prophets

The status and place of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet of Islam is so high that even the Greatest Prophets made *tawassul* to these individuals for their major problems. Imam Sadiq narrates from Prophet Muhammad that:

- **When Adam made the mistake, his repentance was that he said, “Oh God! I ask you by the sake of Muhammad and His Family that you forgive me”. Then God forgave him.**
- **When Noah boarded the ark and was fearful of drowning, he said, “Oh God! I ask you by the**

³⁸ Al-`Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol. 7, p. 101:

«عَنْ سَلْمَانَ الْفَارِسِيِّ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ مُحَمَّدًا ص يَقُولُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ يَقُولُ يَا عِبَادِي أَوْ لَيْسَ مِنْ لَهَ إِلَيْكُمْ حَوَائِجَ كِبَارًا لَا تُجُودُونَ بِهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَّخِمْ عَلَيْكُمْ بِأَحَبِّ الْخَلْقِ إِلَيْكُمْ تَمْضُونَهَا كِرَامَةً لِتُفَيْعِيَهُمْ أَلَا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَكْرَمَ الْخَلْقِ عَلَيَّ وَ أَفْضَلُهُمْ لَدَيَّ مُحَمَّدٌ وَ أَخُوهُ عَلِيٌّ وَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ الْأَيْمَةُ الَّذِينَ هُمْ الْوَسَائِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَدْعُنِي مَنْ هَمَّتْهُ حَاجَةٌ يُرِيدُ نَفْعَهَا أَوْ دَهَمَتْهُ دَاهِيَةٌ يُرِيدُ كَشْفَ ضَرِّهَا بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَ إِلَيْهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ أَفْضَلُهَا لَهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا يَقْضِيهَا مِنْ (تَسْتَشْفِعُونَ لَهُ) بِأَعَزِّ الْخَلْقِ إِلَيْهِ»

This same meaning is repeated in hadith no. 102 with slightly different wordings.

sake of Muhammad and His Family to save me from drowning”. Then God saved him.

- When Abraham was thrown into the fire, he said, “Oh God! I ask you that you save me by the sake of Muhammad and His Family”. So God made that [fire] cold and safe for him.
- When Moses threw his staff, he felt insecurity in his self, so he said, “Oh God! I ask you to keep me safe by the sake of Muhammad and His Family”. So God Almighty told him, “Do not fear, for you are superior.”³⁹

***Tawassul* to Prophet Muhammad after His Martyrdom Based on Sunni narrations**

Even though Ibn Taymiyya was strongly opposed to *tawassul*, he inadvertently confirmed *tawassul* to the Prophet in one of his books. In the book *al-Kalim al-*

³⁹ Al-`Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 100:

«إِنَّ آدَمَ لَمَّا أَصَابَ الْحَطِيبَةَ كَانَتْ تَوْبُهُ أَنْ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَمَّا عَفَرْتُ لِي فَعَفَرْنَا لَهُ وَ إِنَّ نُوحًا لَمَّا رَكِبَ السَّفِينَةَ وَ خَافَ الْعَرَقَ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَمَّا أُجِيتَنِي مِنَ الْعَرَقِ فَأُنَجَّاهُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَمَّا أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَمَّا أُجِيتَنِي مِنْهَا فَجَعَلَهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ بَرْدًا وَ سَلَامًا وَ إِنَّ مُوسَى لَمَّا أُلْقِيَ عَصَاهُ وَ أُوجِسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ حَيْفَةً قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَمَّا آمَنْتَنِي فَقَالَ لَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى»

ṭayyib, he narrates from Haitham b. Ḥanash, one of the Tabi'ūn⁴⁰ that:

I was with Abdullah b. Umar when his leg started to cramp (or became numb). A man told him, “Mention the most beloved person to you”. So he said, “Oh Muhammad!” And it was as if he was freed from dilemma (meaning that he immediately got better).⁴¹

This incident happened while the Prophet was no longer alive and is a clear example of a Sunni source in which making *tawassul* to someone that has left this world has been permitted.

Qāḍī`Ayyāḍ, a prominent Sunni scholar, narrates a discussion between Mālik⁴² and Maṣṣūr (the Abbasid Caliph) about *tawassul*. In this discussion, Malik explicitly states that even though the Prophet has left this world, he can still directly affect it:

Abu Jafar (Mansur the Abbasid Caliph) was engaged in discussion with Malik in Maṣṣid al-

⁴⁰ Lit. followers. This term is used to refer to a group of people who had not seen the Prophet but knew at least one of the Sahaba (companions).

⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Kalim al-ṭayyib*, p. 96 (chapter about *Ḥijāma*):

«عن الهيثم بن حنش قال: كنا عند عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما، فحدرت رجله فقال له رجل: اذكر أحب الناس إليك، فقال: يا محمد، فكأنما نشط من عقال»

⁴²Mālik b. Anas, the founder of the Mālikī school of Sunni law.

Nabi.⁴³ Malik told him, “Oh Commander of the Faithful! Do not raise your voice in this Masjid. God condemned a group and stated, ‘Do not raise your voice above the voice of the Prophet’⁴⁴ and praised a group and stated, ‘Those that lowered their voices before the Messenger of God, those are the ones who God has tested their hearts for righteousness.’⁴⁵ He has disapproved of some and said, ‘Most of those who call out to you from behind the chambers, do not use reason.’⁴⁶ Truly the sanctity of the Prophet after his death is like his sanctity during his life.”

Abu Jafar (Mansur) showed flexibility towards these words and stated, “Oh Abū Abdullah (meaning Malik)! Should I supplicate towards the Qibla or towards the [Tomb] of the Messenger of God?” Malik responded to him, “Why should you turn away from him while he is your *wasila* and the *wasila* of your father Adam towards God on

⁴³ The Grand Mosque in Medina

⁴⁴ Quran, 49:2.

⁴⁵ Quran, 49:3.

⁴⁶ Quran, 49:4.

the Day of Resurrection?! Face him and ask him for intercession, for God has made him the intercessor. God states, ‘When they were unjust to themselves, if only they had come to you and asked for God’s forgiveness and the Messenger had asked for forgiveness for them, they would have found God accepting of repentance and merciful.’^{47,48}

Based on this Sunni narration not only will the Messenger of God hear our voice, prayers, and requests for our needs, but in return for our requests, will make intercession with God and from the other world, cause the knots to be opened in our affairs, and our sins to be forgiven. The sanctity of the Prophet is so high that we are

⁴⁷ Quran, 4:64.

⁴⁸ Qādī `Ayyād, *al-Shifā`*, vol. 2, chap. 9, pp. 201-206:

«ناظر أبو جعفر أمير المؤمنين مالكا في مسجد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال له مالك يا أمير المؤمنين لا ترفع صوتك في هذا المسجد فإن الله تعالى أدب قوما فقال «يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا ترفعوا أصواتكم فوق صوت النبي» ومدح قوما فقال «إن الذين يعصون أصواتهم عند رسول الله أولئك الذين امتحن الله قلوبهم للتقوى هم مغفورة وأجر عظيم» و ذم قوما فقال «إن الذين ينادونك من وراء الحجرات أكثرهم لا يعقلون» و إن حرمة ميتا كحرمة حيا. فاستكان لها أبو جعفر و قال يا أبا عبدالله أستقبل القبلة و أدعو أم أستقبل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم؟ فقال و لم تصرف وجهك عنه و هو وسيلتك و وسيلة أبيك آدم عليه السلام إلى الله تعالى يوم القيامة؟ بل استقبله و استشفع به فيشفعه الله قال الله تعالى «و لو أنهم إذ ظلموا أنفسهم جاؤك فاستغفروا الله و استغفر لهم الرسول لوجدوا الله توابا رحيماً»

allowed to face the grave of the Prophet instead of the Qibla and ask him for our needs.

Tawassul to the Ahl al-Bayt from Afar

A person wrote a letter to Imam Hadi and stated that they wished that their Imam could also hear their supplications to God. The Imam responded:

If you have a wish move your lips; then the response will come to you.⁴⁹

During the time of the Occultation of our master, Imam Mahdi, in which we are deprived of physical visits to the Imam, this instruction is one of the simplest ways of making *tawassul* to him and telling him our problems and asking for our wants. It is suitable that a person asks everything from their least valuable to most valuable needs from God and the guiding Imam.

⁴⁹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 50, p. 155:

«إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَ حَاجَةٌ فَحَرِّكْ شَفَتَيْكَ فَإِنَّ الْجَوَابَ يَأْتِيكَ»

Questions:

1. Is there any logical reason to make *tawassul* to the Infallibles? If so, please explain.
2. State a Sunni narration in which asking for one's needs from the Prophet after his martyrdom is considered permissible.
3. State a Shia narration in which asking for one's needs from the Divine Proofs is authenticated.

Homework:

Make *tawassul* to Imam Mahdi every day this week, while keeping in mind Imam Hadi's instructions and ask him for your needs, particularly guidance.



Tawassul in supplications and *ziyārats*⁵⁰



**In this lesson we will analyze several
supplications and *ziyārats* through
which we can make *tawassul* to the
Ahl al-Bayt**



⁵⁰*Ziyārat* is a religious act in which a pilgrim visits the shrine of a Prophet or Imam. Certain *ziyārat* texts (also called *ziyārats*) have been handed down to us from the Infallibles and contain salutations to particular individuals as well as religious teachings. Some *ziyārats* are restricted to a specific time or place, while others can be recited from afar and at any time.

***Tawassul* in Supplications**

In almost every supplication from the Infallibles, there are passages directly and indirectly related to *tawassul*. In this section we will refer to a few examples of statements in supplications that directly make use of the word *tawassul* or practically bring about *tawassul*.

Dua Nudba

In Dua Nudba, after stating a few examples of the virtues and traits of the chosen ones of God, this passage is read:

**And You sent down Your angels upon them,
honored them with Your revelation, You
bestowed on them from Your knowledge, and
You made them *wasilas (al-dharī`a)*⁵¹ towards
Yourself and Your satisfaction.⁵²**

⁵¹*Al-dharī`a* has the same meaning as *wasila* (see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`Arab*).

⁵² A passage from the beginning of Dua Nudba:

«وَأَهْبَطْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَلَائِكَتَكَ وَكَرَّمْتُهُمْ بِوَحْيِكَ وَرَفَدْتُهُمْ بِعِلْمِكَ وَجَعَلْتَهُمُ الدَّرَائِعَ إِلَيْكَ وَالْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَى رِضْوَانِكَ»

In the rest of this supplication, some of these individuals, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Holy Imams are referred to. The supplication closes with some phrases that make *tawassul* to Imam Mahdi:

(Oh Lord) accept our prayers because of him. Forgive our sins because of him. Make our prayers granted because of him. Increase our sustenance because of him. Fix our problems because of him. Bring about our wishes because of him and turn Your benevolent face towards us and accept our seeking closeness to You.⁵³

The former excerpt is a concrete example of introducing the individuals we should make *tawassul* to and the latter excerpt is a practical example that teaches us how and in what matters to make *tawassul* to the Ahl al-Bayt and Imam Mahdi.

The Supplication of Imam Sajjad on the Day of Arafa

⁵³ The closing passages of Dua Nudba:

«و اجعل صَلَاتِنَا بِهِ مَقْبُولَةً وَ دُئُوبِنَا بِهِ مَغْفُورَةً وَ دُعَائِنَا بِهِ مُسْتَجَاباً وَ اجعلْ أَرْزَاقَنَا بِهِ مَبْسُوطَةً وَ هُمُومَنَا بِهِ مَكْفِيَةً وَ حَوَائِجِنَا بِهِ مَمْضِيَةً وَ أَقْبِلْ إِلَيْنَا بِوَجْهِكَ الْكَرِيمِ وَ اقْبَلْ تَعَرُّفَنَا إِلَيْكَ»

Imam Sajjad lists the merits of the Ahl al-bayt in this supplication, then states:

You placed them as a *wasila* towards Yourself and a path towards Heaven.⁵⁴

Later in the supplication, Imam Sajjad makes *tawassul* to Prophet Muhammad and states:

(Oh Lord) by the right of that person that You chose among Your servants and made pure for Yourself ... by the right of the person whose obedience You made equivalent to Your own obedience and whose disobedience You made equivalent to Your own disobedience ... engulf me in this moment (in Your Mercy).⁵⁵

Supplications from Sunni Sources

Various Sunni sources have narrated an incident from Uthmān b. Ḥunayf in which a blind individual came to the

⁵⁴*Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*, no. 47:

«وَجَعَلْتَهُمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَيْكَ، وَ الْمَسْلَكَ إِلَى جَنَّتِكَ»

⁵⁵*Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*, no. 47:

«بِحَقِّ مَنْ انْتَجَبْتَ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ، وَ بَيْنِ اصْطِفَائِيَّتِهِ لِنَفْسِكَ... بِحَقِّ مَنْ وَصَلْتَ طَاعَتَهُ بِطَاعَتِكَ، وَ مَنْ جَعَلْتَ مَعْصِيَتَهُ كَمَعْصِيَتِكَ، بِحَقِّ مَنْ قَرَنْتَ مُوَالَاتَهُ بِمُوَالَاتِكَ... تَعَمَّدِي فِي يَوْمِي هَذَا»

Prophet and the Prophet taught him the following supplication so that he would gain his vision:

Oh Lord I supplicate to You and pay attention to You through Your Prophet Muhammad, may Divine Blessings be upon him, who is the Prophet of Mercy. Oh Muhammad! I pay attention to my Lord through you regarding my need.⁵⁶

That man read this supplication a few times and regained his vision. After Hākim narrates this hadith in *al-Mustadrak*, he states that its chain of narrators is authentic.

Another group of Sunni scholars have narrated that Uthmān b. Ḥunayf taught this supplication to an individual during the time of the third Caliph - when the Prophet had left this world - and when that individual read this supplication, they received their need.⁵⁷ The important point in this supplication is the direct request from the Prophet even though he is no longer alive in this world.

⁵⁶ Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 138; Hākim al-Neysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 1, p. 519 & p. 526; and al-Nisā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 169:

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ وَ أَتَوَجَّهُ إِلَيْكَ بِنَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ نَبِيِّ الرَّحْمَةِ يَا مُحَمَّدُ إِنِّي أَتَوَجَّهُ بِكَ إِلَى رَبِّي فِي حَاجَتِي هَذِهِ»

⁵⁷ Al-Haythamī, *Majma` al-zawā'id*, vol. 2, p. 279 & al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Du`a*, p. 320.

Tawassul in *Ziyārats*

The *ziyārats* that have been narrated in Shia scripture provide a rich source of knowledge to us that is less frequently brought to attention. In various passages from these *ziyārats*, the issue that the Purified Imams are *wasilas* towards God is referred to. In this section we will refer to just a few such examples.

Supplication of Permission of Entry⁵⁸ to the Shrine of Imam Ali

In the Supplication of Permission of Entry to Imam Ali's shrine we state:

Oh my master! Oh Commander of the Faithful! Your servant, the child of your servants has come to you and takes refuge in your security. He has set out for your shrine and is paying attention towards your status. He has made *tawassul* to God Almighty through you. Should I enter, O my Master? Should I enter, O Commander of the Faithful? Should I enter, O God's Proof?⁵⁹

⁵⁸A short statement recited before entering the shrine of the Imams where we ask God and the Imam permission to enter his shrine.

⁵⁹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 97, p. 283:

With these words, we directly call upon Imam Ali and refer to him as a *wasila* while he is no longer alive in this world. This action shows that the status and importance of the Ahl al-Bayt with God is independent of their material life in this world, and it is possible to make *tawassul* to any Imam in any time, regardless of whether that Imam is alive or not.

The Ziyārat of the Imams of Baqī

In the *Ziyārat* of the Imams of Baqī,⁶⁰ we read:

Oh children of the Prophet of God! Your servant ... is taking refuge in you, is seeking nearness to your position, and is making *tawassul* to God through you ... I am your servant that is taking refuge to you and is making *tawassul* to God through you in order for his request to be reached, his problem

« يَا مَوْلَايَ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ وَابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ جَاءَكَ مُسْتَجِيرًا بِذِمَّتِكَ قَاصِدًا إِلَى حَرَمِكَ مُتَوَجِّهًا إِلَى مَقَامِكَ مُتَوَسِّلًا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى بِكَ أَأَدْخُلُ يَا مَوْلَايَ أَمْ أَأَدْخُلُ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمْ أَأَدْخُلُ يَا حُجَّةَ اللَّهِ ... »

⁶⁰ The Imams of Baqī are Imam Hasan, Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, and Imam Sadiq that are buried in the Baqī cemetery in Medina in close proximity to the Shrine of Prophet Muhammad.

solved, his supplication answered, and his sins forgiven.⁶¹

The Ziyārat of Imam Husayn

Ibn Qūlawayh narrates the following words in one of the *ziyārats* of Imam Husayn in his very authentic book *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*:

O son of the Messenger of God! I have come to you. I make *tawassul* to God for all my worldly and spiritual needs through you [because] those that make *tawassul* for their needs make *tawassul* to God through you.⁶²

Based on this excerpt, we must make *tawassul* to the Fourteen Infallibles for all our material and spiritual

⁶¹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 97, p. 211:

«يَا أَبْنَاءَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ عَبْدُكُمْ وَ ابْنُ أُمَّتِكُمْ الدَّلِيلُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَ الْمُضْعِفُ فِي عُلُوِّ قَدْرِكُمْ وَ الْمُعْتَرِفُ بِحَقِّكُمْ خَاءَكُمْ مُسْتَجِيرًا بِكُمْ فَاصِدًا إِلَى حَرَمِكُمْ مُتَقَرَّبًا إِلَى مَقَامِكُمْ مُتَوَسِّلًا بِكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ... أَنَا عَبْدُكُمْ وَ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَ زَائِرُكُمْ اللَّامِذُ بِكُمْ أَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي نَجْحِ طَلِبَتِي وَ كَشْفِ كُرْبَتِي وَ إِجَابَةِ دَعْوَتِي وَ عُفْرَانِ حَوَّتِي»

⁶² Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 216:

«جِئْتُكَ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَافِدًا إِلَيْكَ وَ أَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ بِكَ فِي جَمِيعِ حَوَائِجِي مِنْ أَمْرِ دُنْيَايَ وَ آخِرَتِي وَ بِكَ يَتَوَسَّلُ الْمُتَوَسِّلُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي حَوَائِجِهِمْ»

Very similar passages can be found on pages 194 and 237 of the same book. The word ‘وافدا’ in this passage means going to a king or someone with a position of authority (Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 3, p. 464).

needs. This can be done in the presence of a living and present Imam, in the presence of the graves of the Fourteen Infallibles, or from afar by paying attention to one of these exalted individuals.

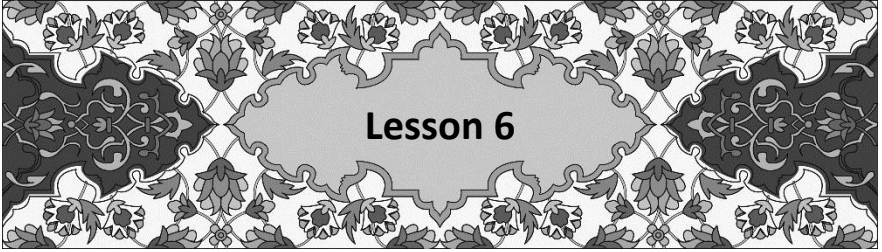
Up to this point we have shown numerous evidence based on reason, the Holy Quran, Shia and Sunni narrations, supplications, and *ziyārats* that not only show that making *tawassul* is permissible, but that in some cases it is compulsory. This evidence shows that when making *tawassul* to an individual, whether they are physically alive is not relevant. This is why no Muslim, whether Shia or Sunni, can deny the permissibility of making *tawassul* to the Fourteen Infallibles – whether they are alive or not - or call this *shirk* (polytheism or associating others with God).

Questions:

1. In Dua Nudba, how do we make *tawassul* to Imam Mahdi?
2. Based on the *ziyārat* of Imam Husayn which was cited in this lesson, in what affairs should we make *tawassul* to the Ahl al-Bayt?
3. Is it permissible to make *tawassul* to the Ahl al-Bayt at their shrines? Provide a piece of evidence for this.

Homework:

1. Study *ziyārat al-Jāmi`a al-Kabīra* and find the phrases related to *tawassul* in it.



Answering Some Questions – Part 1



In this lesson we will
answer some common
questions about
tawassul



Question 1: Why do we seek other individuals and make *tawassul* to them instead of asking God directly?

Answer: As we mentioned in the previous lessons, making *tawassul* to things other than God is done by God's own command. When we make *tawassul* to things other than God we are in fact carrying out God's commands. We must worship God the way that He wants, not the way that we want.

Satan also brought forth various excuses in response to God's command to prostrate before Adam. He claimed that he was already serving God and didn't need to prostrate before Adam. This resulted in Divine Wrath:

So Satan said, "Oh my Lord! Excuse me from prostrating to Adam and I will worship you in such a manner that no archangel or high ranking Prophet has ever worshipped you." God responded, "I do not need your worship!"

I am to be worshipped the way that I want, not the way that you want.⁶³

According to the Quran, someone that acts like this has chosen his desires as his deity⁶⁴ because he has preferred his own desire over God's will. For this reason, insisting on not making *tawassul* and only referring to God, is stepping in the footsteps of Satan.

Additionally, we only make *tawassul* to those individuals that God has appointed for us. We cannot make *tawassul* to anyone that we want.

It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq that:

A learned man from the learned men of Israel worshipped God so much that he became stiff and thin like a stick. Then God Almighty sent revelation through the Prophet of that era to tell that scholar, "I truly swear by My Honor, Glory, and Might, if you worship me until you melt like butter in a hot pan (worship me in a way that nothing remains from you) I will not

⁶³ Ali b. Ibrāhīm al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 42 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 11, p. 141:

«فَقَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَا رَبِّ اغْفِنِي مِنَ السُّجُودِ لِأَدَمَ وَ أَنَا أُعْبُدُكَ عِبَادَةً لَمْ يُعْبُدْكَهَا مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَ لَا نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ فَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا حَاجَةَ لِي إِلَى عِبَادَتِكَ إِنَّمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُعْبَدَ مِنْ حَيْثُ أُرِيدُ لَا مِنْ حَيْثُ تُرِيدُ»

⁶⁴ Quran, 45:23.

accept it from you until you come to me
through the gate which I have ordered.⁶⁵

Given God's own command and the evidence we have presented in this text, the person that asks this question must answer why, despite God's own emphasis on *tawassul* and seeking *wasilas*, they insist on acting against God's orders?

Question 2: Is *tawassul* a form of *shirk*?

Answer: If, while we make *tawassul* to something other than God, we believe that that thing or person is independent of God or has certain attributes that can solve our problem or bring us closer to God outside of God's own influence, then this is *shirk*. But when we follow God's own command and make use of the *wasila* that He has determined for us to make *tawassul* through, then not only have we not committed *shirk*, but are in complete submission to God.

⁶⁵ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 27, p. 176 & with slightly different wording, al-Barghī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 97:

«عَبَدَ اللَّهُ جَبْرًا مِنْ أَحْبَابِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ حَتَّى صَارَ مِثْلَ الْحَالِالِ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِلَى نَبِيِّ زَمَانِهِ فُلَّ لَهُ وَ عَزَّي وَ جَلَّالِي وَ جَبْرًا لَوْ أَنَّكَ عَبَدْتَنِي حَتَّى تَدُوبَ كَمَا تَدُوبُ الْأَلِيَّةُ فِي الْقَدْرِ مَا قَبِلْتُ مِنْكَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَنِي مِنَ الْبَابِ الَّذِي أَمَرْتُكَ بِهِ»

Question 3: What should we do if we are sick? Should we make *tawassul* to God or should we refer to a doctor?

Answer: While we are sick, we simultaneously ask God to heal us, make *tawassul* to the Infallibles, and refer to a doctor. For, on the one hand, there are numerous supplications in which we ask God to heal us:

Oh God! Heal me with Your Healing and treat me with Your Medicine.⁶⁶

And on the other hand, Imam Sadiq has narrated that:

A Prophet from among the Prophets got sick and said, “I will not treat myself until He who has made me sick heals me.” Then God sent him revelation, “Your healing is in My hands, but I will not heal you unless you seek treatment.”⁶⁷

In times of sickness, we should know that God is the true granter of healing, and ask for Him to give us healing. Yet we still need to take action. Part of that is making *tawassul*

⁶⁶ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 565:

«اللَّهُمَّ اشْفِنِي بِشِفَائِكَ وَ دَاوِنِي بِدَوَائِكَ»

⁶⁷ Al-`Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol. 2, p. 410.

«إِنَّ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مَرِضَ فَقَالَ لَا أَتَدَاوَى حَتَّى يَكُونَ الَّذِي أَمْرَضَنِي هُوَ الَّذِي يَشْفِينِي فَأُوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ لَا أَشْفِيكَ حَتَّى تَتَدَاوَى فَإِنَّ الشِّفَاءَ مِنِّي»

to God through the Infallibles. And part of that is seeking medicine and treatment. Of course, there are some occasions in which God heals the sick by the hands of the Imams without seeking medical treatment. However, this is not God's usual way of doing things and such situations happen a minority of the time.

Question 4: If a person makes *tawassul* and receives what they asked for, does this mean they are a good person or that the rest of their actions are affirmed?

Answer: No. One good action does not affirm the rest of our actions and beliefs. The Imams act similarly in *tawassul* as they did in giving refuge. During their lives, they gave protection to whoever took refuge to them, even the worst individuals (such as Imam Sajjad, giving refuge to the family of Marwan before the incident of Ḥarra).⁶⁸ Many non-Muslims have a special respect for Imam Husayn and Abbas due to getting their needs fulfilled from them but are not willing to convert to Islam. The way of the Imams is goodness to all people, whether they are pious or obscene. Imam Kadhim narrates that his father (Imam Sadiq) held his hand and said that this father (Imam

⁶⁸Sayyid Muḥsin Amīn, *A`yān al-Shī`a*, p. 636.

Baqir) held his hand and said that his father Imam Sajjad held his hand and said:

“Oh my child! Whoever asks you for good give them goodness. If they deserve it, then you have rightfully used goodness where it should be used. And if they do not deserve it, you are worthy of it (giving goodness).”⁶⁹

The Ahl al-Bayt are the source of goodness and generosity. This trait of theirs does not necessarily mean that those that receive their kindness and favors are themselves good or deserving individuals.

Question 5: If we say, “Ya Ali!”, “Ya Husayn!”, or “Ya Mahdi!” have we become *Mushriks*?

Answer: There is no problem in seeking help from an Imam or Imams with these phrases. This is considered a clear and accepted matter in Shia narrations and ziyārats and some examples have been cited. We also mentioned examples from Sunni sources such as Ibn Omar calling the Prophet while his foot was injured (at a time when the

⁶⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 9, p. 152:

«يا بنى افعَلِ الحَيْرِ إِلَى كُلِّ مَنْ طَلَبَهُ مِنْكَ فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ فَقَدْ أَصَبْتَ مَوْضِعَهُ وَ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ كُنْتَ أَنْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ»

Prophet had left this world) and his foot was healed. Ibn Kathīr, one of the most important students of Ibn Taymiyya and promoter of his ideas, states that during the wars that happened after the martyrdom of the Prophet, the Muslims would shout out, “O Muhammad!” to overcome their enemies and with this slogan, they would become victorious over all their enemies:

**On that day their slogan was “O Muhammad”
(*Yā Muḥammadā*) and they did not go towards
anyone for combat except that they killed
him.⁷⁰**

Both Shia and Sunni agree on the permissibility of using these words, despite it being a bitter pill for the Wahabbis to swallow.

⁷⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyawa l-nihāya*, vol. 6, p. 257. This narration has also been recorded by other Sunni Scholars in their books, such as: al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tārikh*, vol. 2, p. 513 & Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tarīkh*, vol. 2, p. 364:

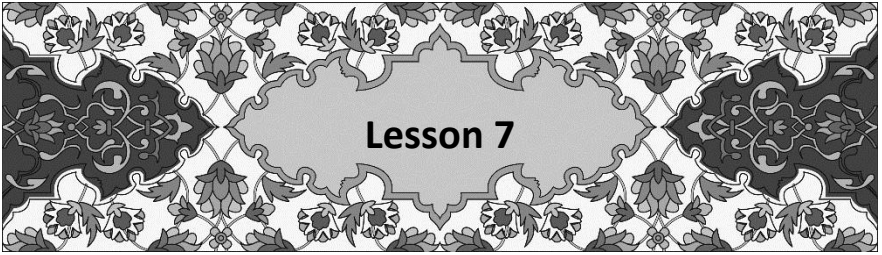
«كَانَ شِعَارُهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَا مُحَمَّدَاهُ - وَ جَعَلَ لَا يَبْرُزُ هُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا قَتَلَهُ»

Questions:

1. Why do we refer to other individuals and make *tawassul* to them instead of asking God directly?
2. Is *tawassul* a form of *shirk*?
3. What should we do if we are sick? Should we make *tawassul* to God or should we refer to a doctor?
4. If a person makes *tawassul* and receives what they asked for, are they a good person? Are the rest of their actions affirmed?
5. If we say, “Ya Ali!”, “Ya Husayn!”, or “Ya Mahdi!”, have we become *mushriks*?

Homework:

1. Research about Ahmad Zaynī Dahlān al-Shafī`ī (the former Mufti of Mecca) and his struggles against Wahhabism. Read out a part of his words about the crimes of the Wahabis and his reasoning against them.



Answering Some Questions – Part 2



In this lesson we will
analyze and answer
additional common
questions about
tawassul



Question Six: How can a dead individual do anything or help us solve any problems?⁷¹ If the dead don't even hear our voices, how can they fulfill our wishes?

Answer: Just as we can be the source of effects on people that have left this world through good deeds and prayers, God has the power to grant the position of being a *wasila* towards Himself to someone that has left this world or even to someone who has not been born yet.

In the previous lessons, we showed several Shia and Sunni narrations that bore witness to this. *Tawassul* to the Prophet before his birth and after his martyrdom testify to this. So, no Muslim, whether Shia or Sunni, can claim that a dead person cannot be a *wasila*. Rather, a person that has left this world has simply gone from one realm to another.

⁷¹ One of the former Muftis of Mecca named Ahmad Zaynī Dahlan al-Shāfi'ī, states the followers of Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab would insult the Prophet as such, "One of the followers (of Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab) would say that my cane is better than Muhammad. For I can use it to kill snakes and things like it, but Mohammad is dead and cannot help me in any way. He was merely a messenger, and his time is over". Zaynī Dahlan al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Durar al-Saniyya fī l-radd `alā l-Wahhabiyya*, p. 110:

«ان بعض اتباعه كان يقول: عصاى هذه خير من محمد لانها ينتفع فى قتل الحية و نحوها و محمد قد مات و لم يبق فيه نفع اصلاً و انما هو طارش و قد مضى»

Just because I do not, for now, have permission to enter that realm does not mean that the Fourteen Infallibles do not have permission to affect this one.

Not only do Shia narrations confirm this issue, but some narrations explicitly state that the Prophet and the Imams can even return to this world after their martyrdom. Abān b. Taghlib narrates from Imam Sadiq that:

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali, met with Abu Bakr and protested to him (for usurping his rights). Then he said, “Will you be satisfied that the Messenger of God [judge] between you and I?” Abu Bakr said, “How would such a thing be possible?” Then the Commander of the Faithful held his hand and took him to Masjid Qubā and they found the Messenger of God there. Then the Messenger of God judged against Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr returned filled with fear, met with Omar, and told him the story. Omar said to him, “What has happened to you?! Do you not know about the magic of Banī Hāshim?”⁷²

⁷² Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 29, p. 20:

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali, a group of the Shia came to Imam Hassan and asked him a question. Imam Hassan told them, “If you see the Commander of the Faithful (Ali) will you recognize him?” They said yes. So, the Imam ordered them to pull aside the curtain. They found Imam Ali behind it and they did not deny him. Then, Imam Ali said:

“Whoever dies from us, dies while they are not dead and whoever remains is the Proof upon you.”⁷³

In any case, what the narrations state is that there is no difference between a living Imam and one who has left this world in terms of the effect they can have, and, by God’s will, they continue to have the ability to directly impact this world.⁷⁴

«لَقِيَ أَبَا بَكْرٍ فَأَحْتَجَّ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَمَا تَرْضَى بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص بَيْتِي وَبَيْتِكَ قَالَ وَكَيْفَ لِي بِهِ فَأَخَذَ يَدَيْهِ وَ أَتَى مَسْجِدَ قُبَا فِإِذْهُ رَسُوْلُ اللَّهِ ص فِيهِ فَقَضَى عَلَى أَبِي بَكْرٍ فَرَجَعَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ مَدْعُورًا فَلَقِيَ عُمَرَ فَأَخْبَرَهُ فَقَالَ مَا لَكَ أَمَا عَلِمْتَ سِخْرَ بَيْتِي هَاهُنَا»

⁷³ Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 27, p. 303:

«أَتَى قَوْمٌ مِنَ الشَّيْعَةِ الْحَسَنَ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ ع بَعْدَ قَتْلِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع فَسَأَلُوهُ فَقَالَ تَعْرِفُونَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُ قَالُوا نَعَمْ قَالَ فَارْتَفِعُوا السِّتْرَ فَرَفَعُوهُ فِإِذَا هُمْ بِأَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع لَا يُنْكِرُونَهُ وَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَمُوتُ مِنْ مَاتَ مِنَّا وَ لَيْسَ بِمَيِّتٍ وَ يُبْقَى مِنْ بَقِيَ مِنَّا حُجَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ»

⁷⁴ For more information, see *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 27, chap. 7 (Those that Appear After their Death) and al-Şaffār, *Başā'ir al-darajāt*, p. 274, chap. “The Imams Go to Visit the Dead and the Dead Come to Visit Them.”

Furthermore, the claim that the dead cannot hear our voices is not true. From the Shia perspective, this issue is clear. In addition to the passages we cited in previous lessons in which the Prophet was directly addressed for granting wishes after his martyrdom, there are other narrations from Sunni sources that testify to how even the ordinary dead can hear our voices. For example, in Sahih Bukhari, there is a section called “The Dead Hear our Footsteps.”⁷⁵ This matter is so obvious, that even Ibn Taymiyya affirms it.⁷⁶

Question Seven: Do the graves of the Imams have a special significance? Do these locations have an impact on whether supplications are accepted?

Answer: Not only do the Shia believe that the graves of the Fourteen Infallibles have special effects, but so do Sunnis. We will start off citing a few Shia narrations.

⁷⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, p. 92:

«باب الميت يسمع خفق النعال»

⁷⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwa l-kubrā*, vol. 3, p. 24.

Based on the following words in *Ziyārat Jāmi`a al-Kabīra*, the graves of the Imams are places of refuge⁷⁷ for all creation:

I have come to visit you and have taken refuge to your grave.⁷⁸

It has been narrated from Imam Ali that he said to Prophet Muhammad:

O Messenger of God! What is the reward for those who make *Ziyarat* to visit our graves, make them prosperous, and take care of them?”

The Prophet replied:

O Abul-Hasan! God has made your grave and those of your children a monument from the monuments of heaven and a courtyard from its courtyards. God has made the hearts of the noble ones among His creation and the chosen ones of His servants inclined towards you. In your way, they will tolerate abjection and harassment. They will make your graves

⁷⁷ The story of the deer taking refuge to the grave of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is famous. See al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, vol. 1, p. 25.

⁷⁸ Al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 2, p. 275:

«زَائِرٌ لَكُمْ لَا يَبْدُ عَائِدٌ بِشُورِكُمْ»

prosperous and will visit them numerous times as a means (wasila) to gain nearness to God, because of the great amount of affection they have to His prophet. O Ali! I will make my intercession specially for them. They will enter my pond, and in heaven, they will be my visitors. O Ali! Whoever makes your graves prosperous and goes to see them, it is as if they have helped Solomon in building his Temple. And whoever visits your graves, it is equal to seventy Hajj pilgrimages they have done after their obligatory Hajj. And once they return from visiting you, their sins will be purged like the day they were born from their mother. I give glad tidings to you and give glad tidings to those who love you of the blessings and that which lights up the eyes, of things that neither the eyes have seen, nor the ears heard, nor reached anyone's minds. But a group of thugs will attempt to shame those who come to visit your graves to visit you like those who disgrace an adulterer for their adultery! They are the worst from my nation. They will not

attain my intercession and will not enter my pond.”⁷⁹

Many prominent Sunni scholars have mentioned narrations and have put forward arguments in favor of visiting graves and have frequently visited graves themselves. We will cite a few examples here. Al-Dārimī narrates that:

The people of Medina were afflicted with a severe famine and complained about the issue to Aisha. Aisha said, “Go to the grave of the Prophet and make openings in the roof, so there will be no barrier between the Prophet’s grave and the sky.” The people did this, and it rained to such an extent that the plants grew out and the camels became plump and full of

⁷⁹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 6, p. 22:

«يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا لِمَنْ زَارَ قُبُورَنَا وَ عَمَرَهَا وَ تَعَاهَدَهَا فَقَالَ لِي يَا أبا الحُسَيْنِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ قَبْرَكَ وَ قَبْرَ
وَأُذُنَكَ بِقَاعاً مِنْ بَقَاعِ الْجَنَّةِ وَ عَرِضَةً مِنْ عَرِضَاتِهَا وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ قُلُوبَ نُجَبَاءِ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ وَ صَفْوَتِهِ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ تُحِبُّ إِيَّاكُمْ وَ تَحْتَمِلُ الْمَذَلَّةَ وَ الْأَذَى فِيكُمْ فَيُعْمَرُونَ قُبُورَكُمْ وَ يُكْتَبُونَ زِيَارَتَهَا تَقَرُّباً مِنْهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ
مَوَدَّةً مِنْهُمْ لِرَسُولِهِ أَوْلِيكَ يَا عَلِيُّ الْمَخْضُوضُونَ بِشَفَاعَتِي وَ الْوَارِثُونَ حَوْضِي وَ هُمْ زُورِي عِدَا فِي الْجَنَّةِ
يَا عَلِيُّ مَنْ عَمَرَ قُبُورَكُمْ وَ تَعَاهَدَهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَعَانَ سُلَيْمَانَ بِنَ دَاوُدَ عَلَى بِنَاءِ بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ وَ مَنْ زَارَ
قُبُورَكُمْ عَدَلَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ ثَوَابٌ سَبْعِينَ حَجَّةً بَعْدَ حَجَّةِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَ خَرَجَ مِنْ دُنُوبِهِ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ مِنْ زِيَارَتِكُمْ
كَيَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ فَأَبْشِرْ وَ بَشِّرْ أَوْلِيَاءَكَ وَ مُحِبِّبِكَ مِنَ النَّعِيمِ وَ قُرَّةَ الْعَيْنِ بِمَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَ لَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ
وَ لَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبٍ بَشَرٍ وَ لَكِنَّ خُثَالَهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ يُعْتَبُونَ زُورَ قُبُورِكُمْ بِزِيَارَتِكُمْ كَمَا تُعْتَبَرُ الرَّائِيَةُ بِرِنَائِهَا
أَوْلِيكَ شِرَارُ أُمَّتِي لَا نَالَتْهُمْ شَفَاعَتِي وَ لَا يَرُدُّونَ حَوْضِي»

fat. So that year was named the year of fattening.⁸⁰

It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

Whoever visits my grave my intercession will be obligatory for them.

Whoever visits me after my death, it is like they visited me while I was alive.⁸¹

Thus, whatever effect that Prophet Muhammad had during his lifetime (like being a wasila or intercessor on our behalf), will also continue after his death by visiting him. Ibn Farhūn al-Maliki narrates about the customs of the Cemetery of Baqī`:

It has been narrated from Malik⁸² that over ten thousand of the Companions are buried in Baqī` ... so it is suitable that you send

⁸⁰ Al-Dārimī, *al-Sunan*, vol. 1, pp. 43-44:

«قحط أهل المدينة قحطاً شديداً فشكوا إلى عائشة فقالت انظروا قبر النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فاجعلوا منه كوى إلى السماء حتى لا يكون بينه وبين السماء سقف قال ففعلوا فمطرنا مطراً حتى نبت العشب وسمعت الإبل حتى تفتقت من الشحم فسمي عام الفتق»

⁸¹ Al-Amīnī cites the names of dozens of Sunni Scholars who narrated these two narrations (and similar ones) in the book *al-Ghadir*, vol. 5, pp. 93-109:

«من زار قبري وَجَبَتْ لَهُ شَفَاعَتِي»
«من زارني بعد موتي فكأنما زارني في حياتي»

⁸² The head of the Maliki School of Thought.

salutations to them, pray for them, and make *tawassul* to God through them.⁸³

Based on this Sunni narration, *tawassul* can also be made through the companions of the Prophet that have left this world. Based on what has been said it is clear that the graves of the Prophet and the Fourteen Infallibles (and even *Sahaba*) contain a special status in the context of *ziyārat*, performing good deeds, and having certain effects. Furthermore, they are the place of making *tawassul*, seeking intercession, and nearness to God.

Question Eight: How can inanimate objects and the dead, which lack any sort of effect on the external world, have the capability to heal us?

Answer: The Holy Quran testifies against this claim. In Surah Yusuf, God states that Prophet Yusuf's shirt healed Prophet Yaqūb's blind eyes:

Take this shirt of mine and cast it over my father's face [so] he will regain his vision. And bring me your family, all together.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibrahim b. Farḥūn al-Malikī, *Irshād al-sālik ilā af'āl al-manāsik* (edited by Muhammad b. Hādī Abu l-Ajfan), vol. 2, p. 562:

«ذَكَرَ عَنْ مَالِكٍ أَنَّ فِي الْبَقِيعِ مِنَ الصَّحَابَةِ عَشْرَةَ آلَافٍ... فَيَسْتَبْغِي السَّلَامَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالدُّعَاءَ لَهُمْ وَالتَّوَسُّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى»

So when the bearer of good tidings arrived, he cast [that shirt] on his face, so he regained his sight and said, “Did I not tell you that I truly know from God that which you do not know?”⁸⁵

In this Quranic story, we see that, by God’s permission and will, the shirt that Prophet Yusuf sent to his father was able to heal his father’s blind eyes, even though it appeared to be nothing more than an inanimate object.

A similar event can be seen in the Quranic story of Bani Israel when they were trying to find a murderer. They asked Moses to show them a way to find the true murderer so they could identify him. God ordered them to find a cow and sacrifice it:

So We said, “Strike it [the dead body] with a piece of it (the cow that was slaughtered) [so that it comes alive]”. This is how God brings the dead to life, showing you His signs so that you may understand.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Quran, 12:93.

⁸⁵ Quran, 12:96.

⁸⁶ Quran 2:73.

They then stroke the murdered man with the tail of the cow, and he became resurrected and informed them about the person who had murdered him.⁸⁷

So, by God's Almighty's power, will, and permission, a part of the body of a dead animal can bring another dead thing back to life. This shows that if God wills, He can make anything or any person capable of extraordinary effects. Whether they are a human being or an animal, dead or alive, an inanimate object or something else.

⁸⁷ Quran, 2:67-73.

Questions:

- 1- How can a dead individual do anything or help solve our problems? If the dead don't even hear our voices, how can they fulfill our wishes?
- 2- Do the graves of the Imams have any special significance? Do these locations have an impact on whether supplications are accepted or not?
- 3- How can inanimate objects and the dead, which lack any sort of effect on the external world, have the capability to heal us?