
Intercession in Islam

1. Please define intercession for me?

Intercession is the act of asking an intermediary to carry one's request in front of another person or deity. Linguistically intercession means supplication. Hence if someone says "O Prophet, intercede for me", this is supplication (to the Prophet), and also a request for the Prophet to supplicate to Allah.

2. Do you reject the intercession of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)?

No, we affirm the intercession of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and we hope that he will intercede for us. However, we need to understand the reality of intercession. There are two types of intercession mentioned in the Quran.

3. What are the two types of intercession?

a) TYPE ONE: The Rejected intercession, as Allah mentions: "**O you who believe, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no ransom and no friendship and no intercession**" [Baqarah: 2:254]

The intercession which is rejected is that which contains shirk. This occurs when one seeks intercession from the dead. Those who call upon the pious saints and the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) asking for their intercession, do so with the excuse that they want to gain the intercession of the Prophet (sa). But this very action automatically disqualifies them from his intercession because it is shirk.

b) TYPE TWO: The Accepted intercession: There are two conditions for intercession to be accepted.

4. What are the two conditions for intercession to be accepted?

All intercession belongs to Allah and thus should be asked from Him. Allah said: '**Say: To Allah belongs all intercession**' [Zumar 39:44]. The two conditions are as follows:

CONDITION ONE: No one can intercede with Allah unless Allah gives him permission to do so.

Allah said: "**Who can intercede with Him except after His permission?**" [2:255]. No one has an automatic *right* to intercede with Allah, or to have his intercession accepted by Allah. Allah states in the Qur'an: "And those whom they call out to besides Him do not own (the right) of intercession" [43: 86].

CONDITION TWO: Allah must be pleased with the one being interceded for

Allah said: "**And they do not intercede except for the one with whom Allah is pleased**". [21:28].

Even the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) does not have independent control over intercession, rather he will only intercede for specific people, who are deserving of receiving this intercession.

5. What is the point of intercession, when Allah will decide who can intercede, and who can be interceded for?

Intercession is a means of honouring some people, by allowing them to intercede on behalf of others, and it is a means of showing mercy to others, by allowing certain people to intercede on their behalf. Therefore, when we understand that the intercession is totally dependent on Allah, we see the futility of asking it from other than Allah.

6. The Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) has been given the right of intercession on the Day of Judgement, so can I not ask him for something that Allah has given him?

No doubt the Prophet (sa) has been given the right of intercession by Allah, and He will intercede on behalf of his entire nation on the Day of Judgement. But at the same time Allah has prohibited us from asking the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) for it. Such a request falls under du'a, and making du'a to other than Allah is shirk. Allah states: "**Then do not call anyone besides Allah**" [Surah at-Jinn: 18].

Whenever intercession is sought from other than Him, it is an act of shirk. Allah states, "**And they worship besides Allah that which will not harm them nor benefit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors in front of Allah. Say: "Are you informing Allah of that which He does not know in the heavens and in the earth. How free from all imperfections and exalted is He above the shirk they commit!"**" [Surah: 18].

There are three noteworthy points about this verse:

a) Allah states that taking intercessors between Himself and His creation is an act of worship, as the verse begins by stating, 'and they worship besides Allah.'

b) This 'worship' is then explained as - seeking intercession from other objects.

c) The verse concludes by stating that Allah is exalted over the shirk that they do, thus equating this intercession with shirk.

7. Did Allah not order us to make waseelah in the Quran?

You are referring to the verse: "**O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. Seek the means of approach (al-waseelah) to Him, and strive hard in His Cause as much as you can. So that you may be successful**"

The famous tafseer scholar, at-Tabaree explains waseelah by the following statement: "And seek to draw near to Him by doing actions which are pleasing to Him." Thus Waseelah refers to the means by which one can achieve nearness with Allah. Tawassul and waseelah are almost identical in meaning. The tawassul which is proven by the Quran and Sunnah is of three types:

Through the beautiful names and attributes of Allah.

As Allah says: "**And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them**" [7:180].

By means of a righteous deed.

An example of this is mentioned in the Quran. "Those who say: "Our Lord! We have indeed believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire." [Aali Imraan: 3:6]. So the du'a for forgiveness is preceded by mentioning of a good deed – "We have indeed believed"

By the supplication of a living righteous person.

This particular type of waseelah is also known as shafaa'ah (intercession) and can only be done through a person who is *living* and *present*, by asking him to supplicate to Allah on your behalf. In the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, radiyallahu 'anbu, the people suffered from drought, so Umar asked al-'Abbaas ibn al-Muttalib to pray for rain for them. He said: "O Allah we used to request our Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) to supplicate to You for rain and You would bless us with rain. Now we ask the uncle of our Prophet to supplicate to You, so grant us rain." [Bukhari]

What Umar (radiyullah anhu) was saying was: We used to go to our Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) and ask him to supplicate for us when he was alive. Now that he (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) has died and it is not now possible for him to supplicate for us, we go instead to the uncle of our Prophet, al-'Abbaas, and ask him to supplicate for us.

So in this time of dire need, he did not think of going to the grave of the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam), and asking him to ask Allah. He and the rest of the Companions knew that the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) could not hear them or respond to them, and that it was not proper to ask him for anything. Rather they asked a living person, the uncle of the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam), to pray for them.

If tawassul with the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) after his death was like the tawassul during his lifetime, the Companions would have said: “why are we making tawassul with al-Abbaas, why don’t we make it with the Prophet who is the greatest of creation with Allaah?” However not one of them said this, proving that they knew that tawassul was only during the lifetime of the Prophet , and after his passing away, tawassul is with the du’a of the righteous living people.