

Tawassul to the Ahl al-Bayt (A)

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In our previous discussion on *Struggle With The Self*, we discussed the importance of Seeking Refuge with the Noble Qur'an. Continuing on with this Jihad (struggle), we see that another stage in this inner battle is the Du'a – supplication. In order to overcome the Nafs al-Ammarah, we need to ask for help from Allah (SwT) by means of the many different and special supplications that we have been taught. However, we must keep in mind that one of the conditions for the acceptance of our supplications is "Tawassul to the Ahl al-Bayt (A)".

In fact, if one looks through Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi's (may Allah be pleased with him) which has been translated into at least four languages, one would hardly find any Du'a in which there is no form of Tawassul to the Ahl al-Bayt (A). The author of Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, Shaykh Hurr al-Amuli (may Allah be pleased with him), in the section on Tawassul, has narrated approximately 70 ahadith in which it is stated that the condition of acceptance of one's supplications is to employ Tawassul to the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

The Noble Qur'an even states in regards to Du'a that one must bring a Wasilah – or intermediary before one's prayers will be accepted. In Surah al-Maidah, verse 35, we are told:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"O you who believe! Have consciousness of Allah and seek a way to Him through a Wasilah (intermediary) and struggle in His way so that maybe you will be successful" .(5:35)

This verse of the Qur'an is telling those of us who have consciousness of Allah (Taqwa) that if we go to the house of Allah (SwT) (with a request) then we must go with a Wasilah; and if we want to achieve success and happiness from Allah (SwT) both in this world and in the next world, then we must have a Wasilah, and in order to get closer to Allah, we need to employ a Wasilah as well.

In many narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (A), we see them state that "نحن الوسيلة" meaning, "We are the Wasilah that the Qur'an has commanded the believers to go through" – meaning the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

Ziyarat al-Jamiah which is the most authentic and comprehensive Ziyarat that we have, was taught to us by the 10th Imam, 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Naqi (A) in response to a question that someone has posed to him. This Imam (A) was asked "How should the followers address you or perform your Ziyarat?" In

response, this comprehensive prayer was taught to the followers.

The entire Ziyarat which is so perfect and eloquent can be divided into two main categories: (1) Attributes of a true Shi'a (the authentic followers of the Prophet (S) and Ahl al-Bayt (A) and (2) Attributes or qualities of the infallible A'immah (A).

The aim of this Ziyarat is to create a true bond between us and the Ahl al-Bayt (A). It is also one of the three things that Imam az-Zaman (may Allah hasten his return) strongly advised and recommended Sayyid Rushti that the people should recite during the period of occultation of the Imam (the other two things recommended were the recitation of Ziyarat 'Ashura and Salat al-Layl; and this entire event has been narrated in Mafatihul Jinan by Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi).

In Ziyarat al-Jamiah, it says:

مَنْ أَرَادَ اللَّهَ بَدَأَ بِكُمْ وَمَنْ وَحَدَهُ قَبِلَ عَنْكُمْ وَمَنْ قَصَدَهُ تَوَجَّهَ بِكُمْ

"Whoever desires Allah must begin with you (Ahl al-Bayt) and whoever acknowledges His unity accepts it from you. Whoever aims (to find, reach) Him, must turn to you".

Every true believer's aim in life is to get closer to Allah (SwT) and this should be our only goal while we are alive, and the way to do this is by going through the Ahl al-Bayt (A). In other words, we must use them as our Wasilah (means) to get to Allah (SwT).

In another place in the same Ziyarat, it says:

بِكُمْ فَتَحَ اللَّهُ وَبِكُمْ يَخْتِمُ

This line simply means that if Allah (SwT) wants to open the doors of blessings for someone, it is because of the bounties (barakah) of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), and if He wants to close the door of trials, tribulations and misfortunes for someone, then that too is by the blessings of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). Therefore, all things are because of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) – both the blessings that come about and misfortunes that are repelled from us.

The concept of employing a Wasilah as mentioned in the Noble Qur'an is something that the Ahl al-Bayt (A) themselves even resorted to! It has been narrated that when the Prophet (S) used to pray from the beginning of the night until the morning, he used to implore Allah (SwT) through the person of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) by saying "O' Allah! By the sake of 'Ali."

When the other A'immah (A) used to pray, they too would ask Allah (SwT) through the five members who were part of the Ahl al-Kisa' (Prophet Muhammad (S), Imam 'Ali, Sayyidah Fatima, Imam Hasan

and Imam Husayn). Thus, the way of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) was such that even they used to resort to Tawassul whenever they supplicated to Allah (SwT).

It is very unfortunate to see many people these days ignorantly questioning or criticizing the aspect of Tawassul that we have in our beliefs or even trying to completely destroy it! Many people (both non-Shi'a and even so-called "Shi'a") state that the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) are performing Shirk (worshipping other than Allah) when we pray to Allah through one of the Infallible personalities!

Ayatullah Tawakkul, a renowned and educated scholar in Qum who gives lectures on Akhlaq, and self-building presents a beautiful example in his most recent book called The Concept of Wasilah which we mention below.

He mentions that when we switch on a lamp in our house and get light from it, we know that the basis of this light is the electric company that is supplying the power; however, there must be some way or means between the main source of power and the lamp – and this is the wire that serves as a connection between the two things. Without this connection (the wire from the lamp to the plug in the wall and the wires that stretch from the house to the power plant), we would not get the desired result as we have failed in providing one of the essential items needed to illuminate our house.

Similarly, in order to get our needs from Allah (SwT), the main source – we need the Ahl al-Bayt (A) as a means or way to serve as a connection between us and Allah (SwT). Thus, we must know that the One fulfilling our desires and answering our prayers is none other than the Almighty Creator, but we need to ask Him through the Ahl al-Bayt (A). The Shi'a are very fortunate to have these great personalities to pray through and it is unfortunate if we do not take advantage of them.

Ayatullah Mazaheri mentions in his book, Struggle with the Self (*Jihad ba Nafs*), that there is a narration from the Noble Prophet (S) that states, "In your life, you have many opportunities and chances and you have this mercy of Tawassul therefore be careful and make the most use of it. In addition, make use of your youth, because there are many people who will regret their state while in the grave, barzakh and Qiyamat that they were a Shi'a of the Ahl al-Bayt however they did not make use of the concept of Tawassul that was given to them."

One other way which is one of the best methods of using Wasilah to the Ahl al-Bayt is to recite Du'a al-Tawassul, with full understanding and sincerely asking Allah (SwT) through these fourteen noble personalities. It is especially recommended to be recited on Tuesday nights, but can be recited at any time one has any difficulty or desire that one needs fulfilled. It is sufficient for us to mention that this Du'a is commonly referred to as, "The Du'a for quick fulfilment of legitimate desires" and in this supplication, after we mention each Imam and their status and rank in the sight of Allah (SwT), we say:

يَا سَيِّدَنَا وَمَوْلَانَا إِنَّا تَوَجَّهْنَا وَاسْتَشْفَعْنَا وَتَوَسَّلْنَا بِكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدَّمْنَاكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ حَاجَاتِنَا يَا وَجِيهًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اشْفَعْ لَنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

"O' our chief, O' our master. Surely we turn towards you, seek your intercession and advocacy (Tawassul) before Allah. We put before you, our open needs. O' intimate friend of Allah, stand by us when Allah sits in judgement over us.

In conclusion, it can be seen that if one wants good in this world and in the next world; has prayers he needs accepted; wants help in the grave and on the Day of Judgement and basically anything at all – we must perform Tawassul to the Holy Ma'sumin.

There are also other noble personalities in history who were not among the 14 infallibles but even Tawassul to them is accepted by Allah (SwT). For example, Sayyidah Zainab, Abul Fadhl 'Abbas – his mother Umm al-Banin, Sayyidah Fatimah Ma'sumah, and others.

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