

Seeking Assistance from other than ALLAH

Certain Muslims argue that one can only ask Allah directly for help, and if people were to ask help from other than Allah, then he or she would be committing shirk. The scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah have always maintained that all help is ultimately sought from Allah. However, if an individual seeks help from the Prophets or Allah-conscious people with the intention that they are only a means of achieving help then the person asking is not committing shirk. To illustrate this point, take the example of an ill person being cured by medicine. Metaphorically, the person would say that he was cured by the medicine, but in reality, the actual cure is from Allah.

The Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa also say that help offered by the awliya is only by the will of Allah. No one can be of help to anyone if Allah has not willed it so. Indeed, it is a great blessing from Allah that He has given the anbiya and awliya the ability to help those seeking help. The reason why Allah has given this ability to the pious is to show their status of purity amongst the people, and it indicates their relationship with their Creator.

The argument can be summarised as thus:

Help should only be asked from Allah.

The type of help asked from a pious person should be the help that is within the sphere of human influence.

Seeking help from a pious individual who is physically not present or has passed away is kufr.

We will prove, insha'Allah, that the pious can help in ways that are beyond normal human capability and that even if they are not present and have passed away, help can still be sought.

Belief of Ahl al- Sunnah wa'l- Jamaa regarding Seeking Help through the Awliya

'Allama Sa'eedi and 'Allama 'Abd al-Hakim Sharf Qadri write:

“It is better that help is sought directly from Allah, most High, and through the waseela of the anbiya or awliya. If an individual seeks help from the anbiya or awliya by means of achieving help from Allah, most High, the person is not committing kufr.”

[Sharh Muslim, ‘Allama Sa’idi, Nidaa-e-Ya Muhammad, page 30 by ‘Allama Sharf Qadri]

Shaykh al-‘Alawi al-Maliki, the mufti of Makka writes:

“When we ask help from the anbiya and awliya, as a means, it is through their supplication (du’a) that they help us. Take for example the Day of Judgment when the umma will benefit from our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). This is called asking for help through the anbiya and awliya and likewise to ask them to make du'a for us can be called help or istishfah or tawasul.

[Ziyarat of the Grave, page 213, by the mufti of Makka, ‘Allama Shaykh Muhammad al-‘Alawi al-Maliki al-Makki]

The Permissibility of Seeking Help from the Pious

Hafidhh ibn Taymiyya and Qadi Shawkani quote the following hadith:

‘Abd Allah bin Mas’ud, may Allah be pleased with Him, reported that our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), stated: “If you ever find yourselves stranded alone in a desolate place or jungle, then say, ‘O servants of Allah! Help me, Allah have mercy on you.’”

[Al-Kalim al-Tayyib, page 69, by Hafidhh ibn Taymiyya, and Qadi Shawkani in Tufhat ad-Dhakireen, page 130. Ibn Sunni, Imam Bazaar, Hafidhh al Hasamim and Imam Nawawi all quote this hadith also in their various books.]

This hadith, demonstrates that one can ask help from those who one cannot see, like the angels, the friends of Allah, the jinn, and that it cannot be said that it is a wrong act.

Mullah ‘Ali Qari writes that our Prophet Muhammad, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), said that:

If you are in the jungle alone say, "O servants of Allah! Help me." The servants of Allah are the angels, Muslims, jinn, or 'abdal. This hadith is useful for travellers.

[Al Hirzu al-ThAmin, page 378, by Mullah 'Ali Qari]

The Awliya's Provision of Help beyond Human Capability

The Prophet Sulaiman, peace be upon him, asked his companions who could bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba to his court. Allah says, describing this in the Holy Qur'an:

An ifreet of the jinn said,

'I will bring it to you before you get up from your seat.

I am strong and trustworthy enough to do it.'

He who had knowledge of the Book said,

'I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you.'

And when he saw it standing firmly in his presence,

he said, 'This is part of my Lord's favour to me to test me

to see if I will give thanks or show ingratitude'.

[Surah Al-Naml, verse 39-40]

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes concerning this verse that the man who brought the throne was called Asif bin Barkhiyah.

[Tafsir Ibn Kathir]

There was a companion named Salamah bin Akwa, may Allah be pleased with Him, who was injured so severely on his shin that people began to fear that he would die a martyr. Salamah, may Allah be pleased with Him, states: "I went to the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and told him about my wound, whereupon he proceeded to blow on it three times and I was cured instantly."

[Mishkat, chapter on Virtues of Sayyid al-Mursalin]

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes:

"During the khilafah of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, there appeared a fire in the desert. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, asked Tamim al-Dari, may Allah be pleased with Him, to assist him. They approached the area of the fire and Tamim al-Dari, may Allah be pleased with Him, began to gather the fire with his hands and started shoving the fire into a hole in the ground. This was a karamah of Tamim al-Dari, may Allah be pleased with Him."

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, Vol. 6, chapter on Miracles, and Sirat un-Nabi, Ibn Kathir, chapter on Mu'jizat]

Elsewhere, Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes:

During the khilafah of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, the governor of Egypt wrote to 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, asking for help as the river Nile had failed to flood. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, wrote a letter in return and addressed the river itself. This was then placed in the Nile, and no sooner as this was done, the Nile's water began to flood.

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, volumes 1 and 8, chapter on Rivers and chapter on Khilafah of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him.]

The above narrations prove that certain categories of humans, even though they are not Prophets, are capable of doing acts that are normally impossible. Secondly, the narrations prove that one can ask for these supernatural acts from humans. If this were not the case, why would the Prophet Sulaiman, peace be upon him, ask Asif bin Barkhiyah to bring the throne of Bilqees (Queen of Sheeba)? Why would 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, ask Tamim al-Dari to quench the raging fire? Why would Salamah bin Akwa, may Allah be pleased with Him, ask the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to miraculously cure his wound? And why would the governor of Egypt ask 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, to make the Nile flood? So, in summary, it is permissible to request a person to do something impossible under 'normal' circumstances.

Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab writes that the people who claim that it is permissible to seek help from the pious cite the following evidence in support of their argument:

When Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was thrown into the fire, Jibreel peace be upon him, offered his help to free him. If seeking help from other than Allah is shirk, then why did Jibril offer his assistance to Ibrahim? The answer is that the help which was being offered, was within his capability given by Allah, most High, and therefore not shirk.

[Kitab Kasfh al Shubhat, page 23]

The help that is sought from the anbiya or awliya is within their capability. For example, it is permissible for one to request a deceased person to make a du'a, as it has already been proved that the deceased can make du'a. This means that asking help from another which is out of their capacity is not shirk.

Hafidhh ibn al-Qayyim explained in his book Kitab al-Ruh.

The Pious can Help from Far

Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab writes:

“One night, the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), was in his house and was heard to proclaim ‘I am here!’ three times and ‘You have been granted help’ also three times. Umm al-Mu'minin, Maymunah, may Allah be well pleased with her, asked the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), whom he had been talking to since there was no one present. He, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), replied, ‘I was talking to a person called Rajiz from the tribe of Bani Ka'ab. He asked for help from me against the Quraysh.’ Umm al-Mu'minin, Maymunah, may Allah be well pleased with her, said that when she finished reading the fajr prayer the next morning, she heard Rajiz calling out the following in the streets of Madina: “Ya Rasul Allah! Help us and call the servants of Allah to help us.”

[Mukhtasar Sirat ar- Rasul, chapter on the Conquest of Makka]

This narration shows that the Sahaba would seek help from the Messenger of Allah from afar and He, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), would answer their calls for help. When Rajiz asked

the Prophet the following morning for help, the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), did not stop him from asking for this help. The Messenger of Allah was at some distance, yet he still assisted.

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes:

‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, whilst delivering a Friday sermon in Madinah called out and said, ‘Ya Sariah! The mountain.’ That very moment, Sariah, may Allah be pleased with Him, was in a place in Persia called Nahawand, engaged in a battle with the enemy.

What ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, meant by his call was: O Sariah! Seek protection behind the mountain. Sariah, may Allah be pleased with Him, heard this and was subsequently saved. When the people heard these words during the Friday they were surprised. After winning the battle, Sariah came to Madinah. He told about how they had been under attack by the enemy. Suddenly they had heard ‘Umar’s voice and hid behind the mountain and were saved.

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, chapter on the Khilafah of ‘Umar]

This narration demonstrates that the pious can help people who are not present with them. Also, this is why proclaiming ‘Ya Rasul Allah’, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), is not an act of shirk, because he, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), is aware of our call. It could be that the salutations are conveyed through the angels or that he listens to them himself. As Hafidhh Ibn al-Qayyim wrote:

The Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), has said that when you send salutations to him from wherever you might be, he can hear your voice.

[Jal ul Afhaam, page 100, by Hafidhh Ibn al-Qayyim]

Another question that is raised is why, if it is possible to seek help and advice from the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), after he had passed away, the Sahaba didn’t go to his blessed grave and ask for help when there was any dispute amongst themselves?

This is only scepticism. The reality is that there was no need for the Companions to go and seek help and advice from the blessed grave of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), as the

Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) had already foretold the dispute of his Companions and who would be right or wrong, therefore there was no need for the Sahaba to ask again.

Also, the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), did help the Companions on various occasions. Here are some examples from Tarikh Ibn Kathir:

Bilal bin Harith asked the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), for help during the famine in Madina during the khilafah of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him. The Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), gave water to 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with Him, from a window when he was being surrounded by his enemies and, furthermore, even comforted him by giving the news that he would be martyred and would be breaking his fast with him in paradise the next day. The Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), gave advice to Imam Hussayn, may Allah be pleased with Him, regarding the battle of Karbala -when he was departing for Kufa and then later, on the night before his death. The Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), gave news that they would meet the next day in Paradise.

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, chapter on Khilafa of 'Umar; chapter on Death of 'Uthman, and the chapter on Karbala]

It is not wajib to seek help from the pious, it is merely permissible. However, we do not encourage people to ask help from the pious and especially those who are cannot differentiate between help and Istishfah.

Those who argue that once the pious have passed away, they are unable to help, also include the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), in this reference. However, it is very strange that this does not apply to scholars whom they hold in high esteem. As Hafidhh Ibn al Qayyim states:

Many people saw Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyyah after his death in their dreams and asked him many difficult questions on issues of Fiqh Masaa'il and he replied to all their questions. Only those people can reject this who are ignorant of the status of the spirits (Arwah)

[Kitab-ar-Ruh, end of chapter 3., Hafidhh Ibn al-Qayyim]

If Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya can answer questions after passing away, and solve complex fiqh issues, then why is it not possible for our Prophet Muhammad, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to assist his Umma?

Whatever we have written above some of the narrations involve people's dreams – and to this, people might argue that this is not a credible proof in Islam. The answer to this is that the narrations we have written are not all from dreams, and even if the narrations we used are dreams, the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), has said: 'A Shaytan cannot form my image.' So all the dreams are true about him, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). Also, Hafidhh Ibn al Qayyim mentions that:

When numerous people have the same type of dream and what they have seen in their dreams actually happens - to call these kinds of dreams as only dreams, this is said by the people that have no sense

[Kitab al Ruh, Chapter, 3., Hafidhh Ibn Qayyim]

The pious can help, even after their death

When the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), went on the Mi'raj, fifty prayers a day were initially ordered. On return Prophet Musa, peace be upon him, requested the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to return to Allah and ask for a reduction in prayers. He did so and by doing this, the number of times was reduced to five prayers a day.

[Muslim and Bukhari chapter Miraj]

Prophet Musa, peace be upon him, helped the Umma of the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), even after he had passed away.

Some further evidence:

· Hafidhh Ibn Khathir writes that:

'Uthman Ghani, may Allah be pleased with Him, said that when the enemy surrounded his house and stopped the household from receiving water, they were thirsty for many days. 'Uthman said: One day I saw that the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), give me some

water from my window. Some days later my roof parted, and the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) accompanied by Aby Bakr and Umar (May Allah be pleased with them, entered and gave me some water to drink, and enquired: You will break your fast with us tomorrow

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, Chapter on the death of 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with Him]

· Imam al Waqdi writes that:

Abu Ubaidah, may Allah be pleased with Him, was the leader of the army of Damascus and was in Jihad. In his dream he saw the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), inform him that ' Tomorrow Damascus will be defeated,' and He, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), departed quickly'. I asked the Prophet ' Why are you returning so hastily?' He replied ' Abu Bakr has died and I am going to attend his Janaza' (funeral)

[Futuh as sham, Allama Waqdi]

· Imam al Waqdi writes;

In the battle of Damascus, a kafir became a Muslim, and began to speak Arabic in an instant. Abu Ubaidah asked him ' you do not know Arabic, how is it that you speak so fluently? He replied 'Last night I saw the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), in my dream. I asked him, if you are the messenger of Allah, then supplicate for me that I may speak Arabic. When I woke up in the morning I found that I could speak Arabic'.

[Futuh as Sham, Chapter on Fath ad Dimishk, Allama Waqdi]

· Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes that

In the 18th year of the Hijra during the Khilafa of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him, there was a famine. 'Umar and Bilal, May Allah be well pleased with them, went to the blessed grave of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and said 'Ya Rasul Allah! Your Umma is dying (from hunger), pray for us that Allah sends us rain'. Later, Bilal, may Allah be pleased with Him, had a dream in which the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), told Bilal to go to 'Umar, and convey his salaam, and to inform him that there will be rain and that he should perform Salaah Istisqa'. This is a very authentic narration.

[Tarikh Ibn Kathir, chapter Khilafa of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with Him]

· Hafidhh ibn Taymiyya says that:

In the time of a drought, a person came to our Prophet's grave and complained about the drought. He then saw our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), who said go to 'Umar and tell him to perform the Salaah of Istisqah. There are numerous true narrations similar to this.

[Iqtisa Sirat al Mustaqim, page 373, Also Imam Bukhari has mentioned about this in his book, Tarikh al Kabir, biography of Malik al dar]

· Hafidhh Ibn Hajar al Asqalani writes:

A person came to the grave said: 'Your Umma is dying; supplicate to Allah to send rain. Sayf says: The person who made this supplication to the Messenger of Allah, his name was Bilal Ibn al- Harith, may Allah be pleased with Him. This narration is authentic.

[Fath al Bari, Chapter on al Istisqa, Hafidhh Asqalani]

· The Scholar of Masjid an Nabawi, Shaykh Al-Jazari writes:

The narration of Bilal bin Harith concerning going to the grave and asking our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to supplicate for the rain, is also recorded by Imam Bukhari in his book of Tarikh. Also, Hafidhh Asqalani recorded this in Fath al Bari; Imam al Bayhaqi included it in his Dala'il al -Nabuwat, and it also appears in the Musnaf of Ibn Abi Shayba, Ibn Abi Khusayama and in Ibn Abd al Barr - this narration has really surprised me.

[Waja a-Yarkudun, page32 by Abu Bakr al-Jazari]

If Abu Bakr Al-Jazari knew that Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyyah and Hafidhh Ibn Kathir wrote this narration, he would not have been so bewildered.

A clarification

After reading Hafidhh Ibn Kathir's, Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya's and Hafidhh Asqalani's verifications, there is no need to discuss any further about this narration, of Bilal, may Allah be pleased with Him. However, there is a possibility that there are some Muslims who would then question the narrator

of this hadith – whether he was considered weak or authentic. Lets now look at the narrators of this narration.

The narrators of this narration are:

Abu Mu'awiya

Imam A'mash

Abu Salih Abd al Rahman bin Sa'eed

Malik bin Ayyad al-Dar

The first two narrators are considered as great narrators of Hadith - all the great scholars of Hadith have taken their narrations including Imam Muslim and Imam Bukhari, so there is no doubt about their authenticity. The third and fourth narrators will be discussed now. The third narrator is Abd al Rahman bin Sa'eed al-Makhzumi.

Hafidhh Ibn Hajar al Asqalani writes:

Imam Bukhari took a narration from him in his book Juz Raf-al-yadain. Imam Abu Dawud also took a narration from him. He was a student of 'Uthman bin Affaan, the third Caliph of Islam and he took narrations from Malik Aldar, and he in turn, learned the knowledge of Hadith from his Father (i.e. Ayyad). Imam Ibn Abu Sa'eed said 'He was an authentic narrator'. Imam Ibn Hibban also listed him in the list of authentic scholars of Hadith. Imam Ibn al-Madani, who was the teacher of Imam Muslim and Imam Bukhari also made the same remarks about him.

[Tahzib-ut-Tahzib, biography of Sa'eed bin Abd al Rahman, Hafidhh Asqalani]

The fourth narrator of this Hadith is Malik bin Ayyaz Aldar.

Imam Bukhari writes:

Malik bin Ayyaz Aldar narrated that: 'Umar said 'O Allah, I am only lacking when I am powerless'. Abu Salih also narrated this from Malik Aldar.

[Tarikh al-Kabir, biography of Malik Aldar by Imam Bukhari]

Imam Ibn Abi Hatim writes:

Malik bin Ayyaz Aldar was a slave of 'Umar and he was freed by him. He narrated from Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He was a taba'ee and Abu Salih also narrated from him - and he was famous'.

[Al-jar-hu-wal-ta'deel., biography of Malik Aldar by Imam Ibn Abi Hatim]

Imam Ibn Abi Saad writes:

Malik Aldar was a freed slave of 'Umar, and he narrated Hadith from Abu Bakr and 'Umar [May Allah be well pleased with them all] and he was a famous man'.

[Tabaqat Ibn Sa'ad, biography of Malik Aldar by Imam Ibn Sa'ad]

After these references it can be seen that the third and fourth narrators of Hadith are famous, authentic and not unknown and no one can assume these narrators are weak.

· Imam al Qurtabi writes:

One Arab went to the grave of our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and recited the verse from the Holy Qur'an:

'We sent not a messenger, but to be obeyed in accordance with the leave of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them they would have found Allah indeed oft-returning, most merciful.'

[Surah An-Nisa' verse 6]

He then began to cry and say how sinful he was, and requested to the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to supplicate for him. A voice then came from our Prophet's [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] grave, saying that Allah has forgiven your sins.

[Tafsir al Qurtabi, under Ayat 64 Surah Nisa]

· Hafidhh Ibn Kathir also recorded this event, he writes;

When an Arab came to our Prophet's grave and said "I repent from my sins through you and ask for forgiveness, I would give my life for you". Afterwards our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), appeared in the dream of Utba', may Allah be pleased with Him, and informed him to go to the Arab and convey the message that there is a good news for him that Allah had forgiven his sins.

[Tafsir Ibn Kathir, under verse 64 Surah Nisa]

· Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya writes:

A person came to the blessed grave of the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and requested food from the Prophet and sat down. After a while a Hashmi [a member of the Prophet's (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) family came to him. He had with him a tray of food, and said, "this food has been sent by the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and with it he gave a message: eat it and leave from here because whoever loves us does not make this kind of desire".

[Iqtida as Sirat al Mustaqim, page 290 by Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya]

· Hafidhh Ibn Kathir and Hafidhh Ibn Hajar al Asqalani both write:

Imam Bukhari had lost his sight in his days as a youth, and his mother used to pray to Allah vigorously for the return of her son's sight. One night in her dream, she saw the Prophet Ibrahim, upon whom be peace, who told her that Allah had accepted her prayers because of her tears in them in front of Allah and her son's sight would be return'. When Imam Bukhari awoke in the morning, his eyesight had returned.

[Tahrikh Ibn Kathir, under biography of Imam Bukhari, and Muqadimah Fath al Bari, biography of Imam Bukhari]

Imam Daarmi writes:

· When Yazid bin Mu'awiya attacked Madinah, there was no adhan or Jam'at in Masjid an-Nabawi for three days. Sa'eed bin Musayab states, 'I stayed in Masjid an-Nabawi for the three days and pretended to be Majnun, (mad) and for every prayer, I heard the adhan from the blessed grave of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

[Daarmi, chapter on Fada'il e-Nabi]

· Hafidhh Ibn-e-Taymiyya writes that:

Ibn Musayab's listening of the adhan from the Prophet's grave or the returning of salaam from the graves of the Awliya, is haqq and we believe in it.

[Iqtida as Sirat al-Mustaqim, page 373]

· Hafidhh Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani writes:

Abd al-Wajid says that I saw the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), in a dream with his companions waiting at this place, like they were waiting for someone. I said, "As Salaam 'alaykum," after the reply to the salaam I asked "what or who are you waiting for?" The reply was we are waiting for Imam Bukhari, and that was the day Imam Bukhari passed away.

[Fath al Bari, chapter on the death of Imam Bukhari, and Tarikh Baghdad by Hafidhh Asqalani, and Khatib al Baghdadi]

· Hafidhh Asqalani writes:

Hafidhh Marwazi says that I was in the Ka'ba and I fell asleep. I then had a dream and in that dream I saw the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). Our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), said that you have read Imam Shafi's book and why not mine? I asked which one is yours and the reply was Imam Bukhari's book is my book.

[Fath al Bari, Hafidhh Asqalani under Biography of Imam Bukhari]

Imam Dhahabi writes that the famous Tabi'i, Simaq bin Harb said that;

My sight was gone and I was completely blind. I prayed a lot and one night when I was sleeping, I saw in my dream Ibrahim, peace be upon him. I said to Ibrahim, 'my sight is gone and what should I do?' Ibrahim said 'go to the river Forat and wash your face in the river and your sight should return'. When I washed my face in the river, my sight returned and I saw 80 companions of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), with that sight.

[Mizan al Ta'dil, biography of Simaq Dhahabi]

From all the above narrations, it should be sufficient proof that to do Istishfah (to make a request) from the Pious is permissible. They are able to help us and they are fully aware of matters that occur on the earthly plain, and this includes the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). From the above examples, we have proof of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace)

Asking for forgiveness on the behalf of others; informing of an impending victory; consoling 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with Him, at the time of great suffering, and many others.

Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya writes:

Some people came to the grave of our Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), and requested something, and their needs were fulfilled. In the like manner, the pious people can also fulfill the needs of people - and we do not deny this

[Iqtida as Sirat al-Mustaqim, - page 373, Hafidhh Ibn Taymiyya]

Hafidhh Ibn al Qayyim writes:

After dying, the Ruh (Spirit) can do those things that it cannot do when the person is alive in the dunya, (world) just as one or two Ruhs defeated a large army. Many companions relate that they saw the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), Abu Bakr and 'Umar, May Allah be well pleased with them, in their dreams at night fighting with them against the kuffar and winning the battle. Then it became a reality: on the following day a small army of Muslims defeated an army of many, many kafirs.

[Kitab ar-Ruh, chapter 15, Hafidhh Ibn al Qayyim]

From the above statements, they prove that the pious are able to help after their death. Their spiritual powers increase after their death.

Q: Why do we see some people asking the pious for help, rather than asking them to make dua on their behalf?

A: The meaning for this is that they say metaphorically to the pious but really they are asking the pious to make Dua for them. The companions of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), used to do this as well. This has been mentioned in Hadith.

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim quote the following hadith:

The Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), was on his way to the battle of Khaybar with his companions and asked 'Amir, may Allah be pleased with Him, to recite a poem. 'Amir then recited the following:

Oh Prophet of Allah!

Allah is our Witness.

Without you we would not have had guidance.

Nor would we pray nor give zakah.

You forgive us and we sacrifice ourselves for you.

Send blessings on us and make us stand firm when fighting the enemy

[Bukhari & Muslim Chapter. - Battle of Khaybar]

Hafidhh Ibn Hajar al Asqalani and Hafidhh al Asqalani have commented upon this Hadith that

The poem's verses are addressed to the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), because the word "sacrifice" cannot be used to Allah. This is because scholars have said the word 'sacrifice' (fida) is used in situations when one takes the place of another who is in difficulty, to remove the harm from another and take it upon oneself. This of course cannot apply to Allah - most High. The word "forgive" means that if we have gone astray obeying you, then bring us back on to the straight path. The objection to this may come from the first line of the poem - "Oh Allah!" The word 'Allahumma' is used to take Allah's oath to the following verses and the poet used the word 'Allahuma' in the beginning for baraka (blessing) and he wants to start with the word of Allah - most High. The objection to the opinion that the verses are addressed to the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), may come from the phrases - "bless us" and "make us stand firm". The answer to this question lies in the fact that the Prophet makes Dua to Allah for blessings to be sent to the people

[See Fath-al-Bari/Irshad-as-sari, Chapter on Khaybar by Hafidhh Asqalani & Qastalani]

Hafidhh ibn Kathir and Ibn Athir have said that 'Amir has said these verses in the praise of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

[Sirat an- Nabi and Usd al-Ghaba, Chapter on Khaybar and the Biography of 'Amir bin Akwah by Hafidhh ibn Kathir & Hafidhh ibn Athir]

Also, if the poetry were addressed to Allah, it would not make sense at all. The reason being that the words of the poem state, 'without you we would not have had guidance. Nor would we pray nor give zakah'. If Allah did not exist (Which is a stupid thing to say, as what Allah is implies that He is), nothing else would exist, not only guidance, prayers, and zakah, not even 'nothingness' would exist, as Allah has created all. So by assuming the poem is addressed to Allah, they are not those words which would be expected of a Muslim, let alone in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). The above proves that the one who is being addressed, in this poem is none other than the Prophet of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

Also, the poem asks for forgiveness and this does not have to be specifically directed to Allah. If 'Amir has used these words of praise for the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), it does not go against the spirit of Islam. To ask the pious for help directly is not shirk as 'Amir asked help from the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). The real meaning of 'Amir's seeking help, was to ask the Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), to supplicate on his behalf. In the same way when an ordinary Muslim asks help from the pious, their real meaning is also the same as 'Amir's. The help comes through the pious's supplication's so metaphorically we say - the pious is helping us - when in fact, everything comes from Allah.

Q: Some people argue that once the pious have died – their ability to help anyone ceases. So, why do people still go to their graves to seek help?

A: We, the Ahl as-Sunna wa'l Jama say that when the pious die, their ability to help others does not diminish and end. They are alive in their graves and the power of their souls become stronger than when they were alive. If you cover a living person with a blanket, he would not be able to recognise those who pass by, but it has been proved from narrations that the deceased can recognise and hear the footsteps of those who pass by the grave. A living person cannot understand what the birds are saying, but the deceased can hear and understand exactly what they are saying. Also, a living person cannot travel millions of miles faster than the blink of an eye, but the deceased can travel many millions of miles faster than the blink of the eye. An example of this is when one sleeps, one can travel many miles and break the physical laws of this world. In the same way the deceased can break the laws of this world, as their spiritual bodies are stronger.

Hafidhh Ibn al Qayyim writes that the deceased are pleased with those people who attend the funeral or those who stand at his grave. When people pass the grave and convey their salaams, he [the person in the grave] returns the salaams and also recognises the person who has conveyed the salaam. When the birds praise Allah - most High, the person in the grave also understands the birds' praises (i.e. what the birds are saying).

The martyrs' souls are in heaven, and when people convey their salaam to them at their graves, they come back to their grave and return the salaam.

The ordinary souls at the very highest of the seven skies are at a place called Illiyin and when someone greets them with salaam, they come back to their grave, answer the salaam and also recognise the person. As in the case with people who are alive – some are strong and some are weak. In the same way, some souls are stronger than others like in the case of the pious. The more pious the person is, the stronger the soul. There could be some people who do not believe in what has been written, but Allah - most High has created those people who believe this and their hearts verify it. Every Muslim should believe that the deceased soul meets other souls, in the same way that the living people meet each other and this is proved in the Qur`an. Allah - most High says in the Qur`an, in Surah az Zumr Verse 42:

Allah takes away the souls at the time of their death and of those who don't die during their sleep. Then He with holds that against which He has decreed death and sends back the other until an appointed time

Imam Sudayy says that Allah takes souls when people are asleep, and the deceased souls and people who are alive come together and discuss issues in their dreams. The deceased souls can give the living information that other people do not know. Sometimes they can inform people when people are going to die. In different matters, they guide the living.

There were two companions of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), called Salman Farsi and Abd Allah bin Salam, May Allah be well pleased with them both. They both said that whoever dies first, he would inform the other what had happened to him. Abd Allah bin Salam died first and appeared in Salman Farsi's dream. Abd Allah then informed Salman Farsi that out of all of his good deeds, Allah - most High liked one particular deed the most, which was perfect reliance of God, so Salman continued having unshakable trust in Allah.

Ibn Sirin, may Allah be pleased with Him, appeared in his friend's dream and said that Allah, most High has given him paradise. The dreamer asked him about Hasan al Basri. He said Allah has given him a higher status than himself. There was another companion called Mas'ar and he used to appear in people's dreams and inform them to attend dhikr gatherings since Allah was pleased with this act. Similarly, many people have seen Hafidhh ibn Taymiyya in their dream, and they have asked him very complex fiqh questions, and Hafidhh ibn Taymiyya has answered them and satisfied them all

Some people might say that these are only dreams and we don't know whether they are right or wrong so how can we trust them? But they should know that when the deceased gives news about a person who is going to die at a particular time; or says that on a particular day rain will fall; or there will be famine; or the enemy will attack; or there will be trouble; or if he gives that kind of news that nobody knows except him, these will become reality. These types of facts are only ignored by a person who is unaware of the power of the spirits. It is also a fact that if many Muslims see a similar dream, this becomes evidence like Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), said to his companion: all of your dreams show that the Night of Power (Laylat al Qadr) will be on the last ten days of Ramadan.

What I have written is not all from the dreams. The Power of Souls, I have proved from the Qur'an and Sunna in the last chapter.

[Kitab ar Ruh, a summary of chapters 1, 2, 3 and 15, Hafidhh ibn al Qayyim]

On this Topic I have written everything to the best of my knowledge. May Allah The Most High and Merciful, accept this, and if in any way I have made any errors, May Allah The Most Generous, The Most Kind and the Most Merciful. Forgive me. Amin.