

The specific tawassul through the Prophet is a request in acknowledgement of his standing as the chief intercessor for the Community before Allah, and it is a request for Allah's blessing as effected by Allah in the person of His Prophet and His saints -- not as effected by the latter without Allah, which is the belief those who oppose tawassul falsely impute to those who maintain it. Allah has said of His Holy Prophet, Peace be upon him:

He is anxious about what you do, and merciful with the believers. (9:128)

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 (4:64)

And if they had had patience till thou camest forth unto them, it had been better for them. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (49:5)

If only they had been content with what Allah and His Apostle gave them, and had said, "Sufficient unto us is Allah! Allah and His Apostle will soon give us of His bounty: to Allah do we turn our hopes!" (9:59)

They swear by Allah to you (Muslims) in order to please you: But it is more fitting that they should please Allah and His Apostle, if they are Believers. (9:62)

Allah has mentioned all this about His Prophet because it is through His Prophet that He Himself has shown His greatest mercy and most comprehensive forgiveness, and it is by coming to the Prophet that the believers seek to obtain these from Allah. This is clear evidence, both now as it was then, that the mediation of the Prophet -- for that is the meaning of intercession -- can be sought to obtain forgiveness from Allah. The first hadith Imam Ahmad related from Anas ibn Malik in his Musnad Anas is: "The whole Community of the people of Madina used to take the hand of the Prophet and rush to obtain their need with it." [16]

The Mufti of Mecca at the time of the spread of the Wahhabi heresy, al-Sayyid Ahmad Ibn Zayni Dahlan (d. 1304) said in *Khulasat al-kalam*:

Tawassul (using means), tashaffu` (using intercession), and istighatha (asking help) all have the same meaning, and the only meaning they have in the hearts of the believers is that of tabarruk (using blessings) with the mention of Allah's beloved ones, since it is established that He grants His mercy to all His servants for the sake of His beloved ones, and this is the case whether they are alive or dead, because in either case the actual effecting agent and true executor is Allah Himself, and these beloved ones are only ordinary causes for His mercy. Like any other secondary causes, they have no effective power of influence in themselves.[17]

The early and late Imams of the Community have said clearly and unequivocally that tawassul through the Prophet is highly desirable and recommended for every person. Following are some of their words to this effect.

Imam Malik was asked the following question by the Caliph Abu Ja`far al-Mansur: "Shall I face the Qibla with my back towards the grave of the Messenger of Allah when making du`a (after salams)?" He replied:

How could you turn your face away from him when he is the means (wasila) of your and your father Adam's forgiveness to Allah on the Day of Resurrection? Nay, face him and ask for his intercession (istashfi` bihi) so that Allah will grant it to you as He said: "If they had only, when they were wronging 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 (4:64)."

It is cited by al-Qadi `Iyad in al-Shifa (2:92-93) with a sound (sahih) chain, and also cited by Samhudi in Khulasat al-Wafa, Subki in Shifa' al-siqam, Qastallani in al-Mawahib al-laduniyya, Ibn Jama`a in Hidayat al-salik, and Haytami in al-Jawhar al-munazzam and Tuhfat al-zuwwar. See also Ibn `Abd al-Hadi in al-Sarim al-munki p. 244. Ibn Jama`a says in Hidayat al-salik (3:1381): "It is related by the two hafiz Ibn Bashkuwal and al-Qadi `Iyad in al-Shifa' after him, and no attention is paid to the words of those who claim that it is forged purely on the basis of his idle desires."

The words "he is the means (wasila) of your and your father Adam's forgiveness to Allah" are confirmed by the verses whereby the Prophet is witness over all communities and people including their Prophets (2:143, 3:81, 4:41, 33:7), as well as the sound hadith of his intercession over all Prophets on behalf of all believers in Sahih al-Bukhari (Kitab al-tawhid). Furthermore, it is also established from the verse "And Adam received words from his Lord and He relented towards him" (2:37) that Adam has been forgiven.

Imam Ahmad made tawassul through the Prophet a part of every du`a according to the following report: `Ala' al-Din al-Mardawi said in his book al-Insaf fi ma`rifat al-rajih min al-khilaf `ala madhhab al-Imam al-mubajjal Ahmad ibn Hanbal (3:456):

The correct position of the [Hanbali] madhhab is that it is permissible in one's supplication (du`a) to use as one's means a pious person, and it is said that it is desirable (mustahabb). Imam Ahmad said to Abu Bakr al-Marwazi: yatawassalu bi al-nabi fi du`a'ih -- "Let him use the Prophet as a means in his supplication to Allah."

The same report is found in Imam Ahmad's Manasik as narrated by his student Abu Bakr al-Marwazi.

Similarly the lengthy wording of the tawassul according to the Hanbali madhhab as established by the hafiz Ibn `Aqil in his Tadhkira was cited fully by Imam Kawthari in his appendix to Shaykh al-Islam Taqi al-Din al-Subki's al-Sayf al-saqil included in Kawthari's edition of the latter.

The Prophet said on the authority of `Umar: "When Adam committed his mistake he said: O my Lord, I am asking you to forgive me for the sake of Muhammad. Allah said: O Adam, and how do you know about Muhammad whom I have not yet created? Adam replied, O my Lord, after You created me with your hand and breathed into me of Your Spirit, I raised my head and saw written on the heights of the Throne: