

The Concept of Intercession in Islam

The Concept of Intercession in Islam- Part 1

The matter of intercession is of great importance because it is part of the Islamic Faith or 'Aqidah. To reach a proper understanding of this matter, one must first study all the verses of the Gracious Quran and the authentic Hadiths that speak about it. Adopting an opinion according to a specific text without taking into consideration the other texts may lead to misunderstanding.

Definition

Al-Shafa'ah (intercession) is an Arabic term taken from al-Shaf' which means two, even or couple. Two antonyms of al-Shaf' (couple) are single and odd. It may be defined as speaking to or asking someone to bring about benefits or to save or protect another one from harm. If the intercession is accepted, this becomes a sign of the high status the intercessor enjoys in the eye of the person who accepts it.

Scanning the verses of the gracious Quran, one finds out that there are some verses that negate al-Shafa'ah (intercession) while there are other verses that confirm it. Of course, there is no problem here as scholars provide some ways of reconciliation between the two apparently contradictory kinds of verses.

Some verses which absolutely negate al-Shafa'ah(intercession):

There are some verses that deny intercession. It will be sufficient to quote a few of them.

1. Allah says, "Then be ever fearful of a Day (Hereafter) when no soul shall indemnify any other soul against anything (from God). Nor shall any intercession be accepted from it (for its salvation). Nor shall any compensation be taken from it (in atonement for its sins). Nor shall they (who have disbelieved) ever be helped (against God's Judgment)." (Quran 2:48)

2. “O you who believe! Spend (charitably) out of what We have provided you, before there comes a Day (Hereafter) in which there shall be no (gainful) trade nor (availing) friendship, nor intercession. Then (as to) the disbelievers (who embrace false gods) _ it is they who are the wrongdoers, (godless in heart).” (Quran 2:254)

3. “Hence, forewarn with (this Quran all) those who fear being gathered before their Lord (that) they have no patron apart from Him, nor any intercessor, so that they may become God-fearing.” (Quran 6:51)

As for intercession to take place, there are some conditions regarding all the parties involved. The above mentioned verses can be understood to refer to the people who do not meet the requirements necessary for them to intercede on behalf of others or have others intercede on their behalf.

Some other verses which confirm intercession:

On the other hand, the following verses mention some prerequisites so that the intercession can be accepted. Allah’s permission and pleasure are but a few examples. A few examples of these verses will also be sufficient.

1. Allah says, “Who is it that shall intercede with Him, except by His permission?” (Quran 2:255)

2. “So all those that they call upon apart from Him hold no (power of) intercession. Excepted are those (of God’s servants whom He permits to intercede, and) who bear witness to the truth and they know well “from Him for whom it may be made).” (Quran 43:86)

3. “For how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession is of no avail (to anyone) in anything until God grants permission to whomever He so wills and is pleased with.” (Quran 53:26)

Ways to reconcile between the two types of verses:

1. The matter of intercession is entirely in the Hands of Allah (Glory be to Him). Allah says, “(Then) say (to them): Intercession is altogether for God (alone to permit)!” (Quran 39:44)

2. There is no intercession in favor of the disbelievers. Allah says, “So forewarn them of the Impending Day when hearts go up into choking throats – (when) there shall be no intimate friend for the wrongdoers, nor any intercessor to be heeded.” (Quran 40:18)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, Abraham will meet his father (on the Day of Resurrection) and will say, ‘O my Lord You promised me that You would not let me in disgrace on the Day when people will be resurrected.’ Allah will say, ‘I have forbidden Paradise for the disbelievers.’” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

However, Abu Talib, Prophet Muhammad’s uncle, may be regarded as an exception. Although the intercession of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will not save him from the Hellfire, the torment of the Hell-fire will be alleviated for him. This is because he used to defend and protect Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Moreover, Abu Talib did not use to call people to disbelief even though he was a disbeliever.

Narrated `Abdullah bin Al-Harith bin Naufal:

Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib said, “O Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ)! Did you benefit Abu Talib with anything as he used to protect and take care of you, and used to become angry for you?” The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Yes, he is in a shallow place of Fire. But for me he would have been in the lowest part of the Fire. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

3. The intercessor can intercede only by Allah’s permission. Allah says, “Who is it that shall intercede with Him, except by His permission?” (Quran 2:255)

4. The intercessor can intercede only on behalf of those whom Allah is pleased with. Allah says, “He (alone) knows what lies before them and what lies behind them. Nor do they intercede (with God) – except on behalf of those with whom He is pleased.” (Quran 21:28)

5. Idols, the sun, the moon and all the other things that were worshipped apart from Allah do not intercede with Allah on behalf of their worshippers. Allah says,

“Thus (all) those whom you call upon apart from Him hold no authority even over (so much as) a seed coat. If you call them, they do not hear your call. And were they to hear, they could not answer you. Thus, on the Day of Resurrection, they will utterly disavow your association of them (as gods) with God. And there is none to tell you (of the events of that Day) like the One who is all-aware. (Quran 35:14)

The Greatest Intercession – Part 2

If you read our previous Part-1, you will learn that Islam does not deny intercession. We have provided evidence to the contrary. However, in the Hereafter, making intercessions with Allah requires some prerequisites the most important of which is Allah’s permission.

Permission must first be granted to the intercessor so that he or she can intercede on behalf of those who deserve it, namely, those who get permission confirming that they deserve it.

On the other hand, Intercessions, in general, may be divided into three kinds: intercessions made in the Hereafter, living persons making intercessions on behalf of the departed, and intercessions made in this life. Let us consider these kinds in some detail.

The kinds of Intercessions

A. Intercessions made in the Hereafter

1. The Greatest Intercession

As for the Greatest Intercession, the intercessor with Allah will be only Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) after obtaining Allah’s permission.

On the Day of Resurrection, people will suffer anguish and affliction to the extent that they will not be able to bear. They, then, will ask some of the prophets (peace be upon them) to intercede to alleviate their sufferings. Praying to Allah, Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) will be granted the right of the Greatest Intercession. Moreover, he will have the right to admit some people into the Paradise and save others from the Hellfire.

The Hadith that tells the story of this Great Intercession.

Abu Huraira reported:

“Meat was one day brought to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and a foreleg was offered to him, a part which he liked. He sliced with his teeth a piece out of it and said:

“I shall be the leader of mankind on the Day of Resurrection. Do you know why?”

The setting of this real, yet unseen story

Allah would gather in one plain the earlier and the later (of the human race) on the Day of Resurrection. Then the voice of the proclaimer would be heard by all of them and the eyesight would penetrate through all of them and the sun would come near.

People would then experience a degree of anguish, anxiety and agony which they shall not be able to bear and they shall not be able to stand. Some people would say to the others:

“Don't you see in which trouble you are? Don't you see what (misfortune) has overtaken you? Why don't you find one who should intercede for you with your Lord?”

Prophet Adam (peace be upon him)

Some would say to the others: “Go to Adam”.

And they would go to Adam and say: “O Adam, thou art the father of mankind. Allah created thee by His own Hand and breathed in thee of His spirit and ordered the angels to prostrate before thee. Intercede for us with thy Lord Don't you see in what (trouble) we are? Don't you see what (misfortune) has overtaken us?”

Adam would say: “Verily, my Lord is angry, to an extent to which He had never been angry before nor would He be angry afterward.

Verily, He forbade me (to go near) that tree and I disobeyed Him. I am concerned with my own self. Go to someone else; go to Noah.”

Messenger Noah (peace be upon him)

They would come to Noah and would say: “O Noah, thou art the first of the Messengers (sent) on the earth (after Adam), and Allah named thee as a ‘Grateful Servant’, intercede for us with thy Lord. Don’t you see in what (trouble) we are? Don’t you see what (misfortune) has overtaken us?”

He would say: “Verily, my Lord is angry today as He had never been angry before, and would never be angry afterwards. There had emanated a curse from me with which I cursed my people. I am concerned with only myself, I am concerned only with myself; you better go to Ibrahim (peace be upon him).”

Allah’s Beloved Friend and Messenger, Abraham (peace be upon him)

They would go to Ibrahim and say: “Thou art the apostle of Allah and His Friend amongst the inhabitants of the earth; intercede for us with thy Lord. Don’t you see in which (trouble) we are? Don’t you see what (misfortune) has overtaken us?”

Ibrahim would say to them: “Verily, my Lord is today angry as He had never been angry before and would never be angry afterwards. And (Ibrahim) would mention his lies (and then say): I am concerned only with myself, I am concerned only with myself. You better go to someone else: go to Moses.”

Messenger Moses (peace be upon him)

They would come to Moses (peace be upon him) and say: “O Moses, thou art Allah’s messenger, Allah blessed thee with His messengership and His conversation amongst people. Intercede for us with thy Lord. Don’t you see

in what (trouble) we are? Don't you see what (misfortune) has overtaken us?"

Moses (peace be upon him) would say to them: "Verily, my Lord is angry as He had never been angry before and would never be angry afterwards. I, in fact, killed a person whom I had not been ordered to kill. I am concerned with myself, I am concerned with myself. You better go to Jesus (peace be upon him)."

Messenger Jesus (peace be upon him)

They would come to Jesus and would say: "O Jesus, thou art the messenger of Allah and thou conversed with people in the cradle, (thou art) His Word which He sent down upon Mary. And (thou art) the Spirit from Him; so intercede for us with thy Lord. Don't you see (the trouble) in which we are? Don't you see (the misfortune) that has overtaken us?"

Jesus (peace be upon him) would say: "Verily, my Lord is angry today as He had never been angry before or would ever be angry afterwards." He mentioned no sin of his. (He simply said:) I am concerned with myself, I am concerned with myself; you go to someone else. You better go to Muhammad (ﷺ)."

The Last Messenger, Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace)

They would come to me and say: "O Mahammad, thou art the messenger of Allah and the last of the apostles. Allah has pardoned thee all thy previous and later sins. Intercede for us with thy Lord; don't you see in which (trouble) we are? Don't you see what (misfortune) has overtaken us?"

I shall then set off and come below the Throne and fall down prostrate before my Lord; then Allah would reveal to me and inspire me with some of His Praises and Glorifications which He had not revealed to anyone before me. He would then say:

"Muhammad, raise thy head; ask and it would be granted; intercede and intercession would be accepted." I would then raise my head and say:

“O my Lord, my people, my people.”

It would be said: “O Muhammad, bring in by the right gate of Paradise those of your people who would have no account to render. They would share with the people some other door besides this door.”

The Prophet then said: By Him in Whose Hand is the life of Muhammad, verily the distance between two door leaves of the Paradise is as great as between Mecca and Hajar, or as between Mecca and Busra. (Muslim).

Answers to the claims of those who deny intercession

Intercession is true

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

Answers to the claims of those who deny intercession

Now, let us answer some of the so-called evidences that those who deny intercession try to put forward:

1-The following is stated in verse 44 of the chapter of az-Zumar: “Say: “To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) Intercession.” Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by putting forward the verse above. According to them, the verse above attributes all intercession to Allah and refuses the existence of the other beings who can intercede.

We answer as follows: In verse 139 of the chapter of an-Nisa, the clause “all honor is with Allah” attributes all honor to Allah like the attribution of all intercession to Allah. In verse 8 of the chapter of al-Munafiqun, it is stated that honor belongs to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the believers: “But honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers.”

That is, it is stated in verse 139 of the chapter of an-Nisa that all honor belongs to Allah but it is also stated in verse 8 of the chapter of al-Munafiqun that honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the believers. It means honor belonging to Allah does not deprive the Prophet and the believers of honor.

The two verses that seem to be opposite can be reconciled as follows: All honor belongs to Allah Almighty. The honor of the Prophet and the believers are in question when Allah gives them honor. The honor of Allah

is essential but the others receive honor when Allah gives them honor; their honor does not contradict the fact that all honor belongs to Allah.

The same thing is valid for intercession. That all intercession belongs to Allah does not mean that nobody will have the power of intercession. It can be explained as follows: All intercession belongs to Allah. The intercession of others depends on the permission and consent of Allah. That is, nobody can intercede without the permission and will of Allah.

We can liken it to the following situation: If nobody has any money except us and if we give some money to the people who are in need, and if we say, “all money belongs to us”, it does not mean we will not give money to anybody; it means the money that other people have also belongs to us and that they own the money when we give it to them.

To say “all intercession belongs to Allah” is similar to the example above. That is, anyone who has been authorized to intercede is given the power of intercession by Allah; he can intercede by the permission of Allah and to the people whom Allah permits.

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

2- The following is stated in verse 48 of the chapter of al-Baqara: “Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her.” Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by showing the verse above as evidence.

We answer as follows: It is a big mistake to interpret the Quran without knowing the reasons why the verses were sent down. It is necessary to know the reasons why the verses were sent down first and the verses need to be interpreted accordingly. If it is not done, there will be misunderstandings like the verse above.

The reason why the verse above was sent down is the following incident mentioned in the interpretations of Nasafi and Ruh al-Bayan: Jews said, “We are the grandchildren of Hz. Ibrahim and Ishaq (Peace be upon them). Therefore, Allah will accept their intercession for us. They will save us from hellfire.” The verse above was sent down to refuse those claims of Jews. It means the verse above was sent down for unbelievers.

That is, it is not possible to intercede for unbelievers. For instance, Hz. Nuh (Noah) will not be able to intercede for his wife, who died as an unbeliever and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) will not be able to intercede for his uncles who died as unbelievers.

It means the clause “nor shall intercession be accepted for her” in the verse has nothing to do with those who die as Muslims. However, those who do not know the reason why the verse was sent down make wrong interpretations by looking at the apparent meaning of the verse; due to their wrong interpretations, they refuse intercession, about which there are several verses and hadiths.

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

3- The following is stated in verse 48 of the chapter of al-Muddaththir : “Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.” And the following is stated in verse 18 of the chapter of al-Mumin: “On that day, no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.” Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by putting forward verses like the ones above.

We answer as follows: Those verses do not refuse intercession; on the contrary, they prove it. For, “Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them” proves the existence of intercessors. Since intercessors are mentioned, it means there are intercessors. If there were not intercessors, it would be meaningless to mention them. Besides, to say, “no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have” means “there will be intimate friends and intercessors for believers.”

Then, the meaning of the verses above does not refuse the existence of intercession; it means as follows: O unbelievers! You are in such a difficult situation that intercession, which will be useful for everybody, will not be useful for you. You are deprived of the intercession of intercessors.

It is similar to the following case: If we point to a person who got cancer and who has no hope of surviving and say, “Doctors will be of no use to him”, it does not mean to reject doctors; it means the illness is severe and to accept the fact that doctors will be of no use to that patient any longer. That is, they have despaired of him; and no doctor can heal him. This is what it means.

“Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.” “On that day, no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.” The verses above have the same meaning. In the verse, the existence of intercessors is not refused; it is stated that the unbelievers will be deprived of the intercession of the intercessors due to their unbelief and they will not be able to benefit from it. Besides, we agree that the people whom Allah Almighty is not pleased with will not be interceded. The people mentioned in those verses are those who belong to these groups.

In conclusion, those verses prove the existence of intercession, not its non-existence. Since the verse mentions intercessors, it means they exist. If they did not exist, they would not be mentioned. Then, we add these verses to the ten verses we quoted related to the existence of intercession and use them as evidence for the existence of intercessors.

Let us summarize our statements regarding the issue in items:

1- Intercession is true and real with the indication of the verses and hadiths we have quoted.

2- Intercession can take place only with the permission and consent of Allah. This is what “all intercession belongs to Allah” means. Nobody has the right to intercede acting upon his own decision.

3- Intercession will not be useful to unbelievers and those whom Allah is not pleased with; they will be deprived of this bounty of Allah’s. All of the verses of the Quran stating that there is no intercession are about these people.

4- It is not appropriate for people to trust in intercession by acting lazily to perform fard deeds and to attribute their salvation to intercession despite committing haram deeds. A person can expect intercession but he cannot abandon fard deeds by trusting in it. Intercession is a station of hope.

5- The reason why Allah Almighty gives the right of intercession to some of His slaves and saves His sinful slaves from Hell through those people is their exemplary lives in the world. Their taqwa, worshipping, asceticism, love and other attributes are the reasons for attaining such a position.

May Allah Almighty enable us to benefit from the intercession of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), the Quran and other intercessors! May He protect us from being among those who are deprived of intercession by denying intercession! Amin!

Intercession on Judgment Day

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Intercession on Judgment Day (part 1 of 2)

Description: First of two lessons that discusses the Islamic concept of ‘intercession.’

Objectives

- To understand the meaning of intercession.
- To understand the types of intercession on the Day of Judgement.
- To understand the four types of intercession specific to the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, and three types of intercession granted to Prophet Muhammad and others.

Arabic Terms

- Shariah – Islamic Law.
- Sunnah – The word Sunnah has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- Ummah – Refers to the whole Muslim community, irrespective of color, race, language or nationality.
- Hadith – (plural – ahadith) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

Hajj – A pilgrimage to Mecca where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able.

Meaning

In the simplest of words, “intercession” means to act as a mediator on behalf of someone to get them some benefit or ward off harm from them.

Intercession on the Day of Resurrection is of two types:

1. Accepted Intercession: This is intercession which is proven in the texts of Shariah. More details will be given below.

2. Rejected Intercession: This is intercession which according to the texts of the Quran and Sunnah is invalid and ineffective as will be explained in Part 2.

There are two types of Accepted Intercession that will take place in the Hereafter:

A. Intercession Exclusive to the Prophet

The first type is an exclusive intercession that which will be granted only to Prophet Muhammad and no one else will share it with him. It is of various kinds:

1. The Greatest Intercession also known as *maqam-mahmood* or the ‘station of praise and glory.’ The earlier and later generations will ask the Prophet to intercede for them with their Lord so that He might relieve them of the horrors of the Day of Judgement. This is the ‘station of praise and glory’ which Allah has promised to him in the Quran:

“And in some parts of the night (also) offer the prayer with it (i.e. recite the Quran in the prayer) as an additional prayer for you (O Muhammad). It may be that your Lord will raise you to *maqam-mahmood*.” (Quran 17:79)

The Prophet Muhammad will intercede for all of mankind so that the reckoning can begin. In a narration it states that mankind will be distressed and anxious and will reach a point where they can no longer bear the lengthy wait and will say, “Who will intercede for us with our Lord so that He will pass judgement among His slaves?” So people will come to the prophets, each of whom will say, “I am not suitable for this position,” until they come to our Prophet, who will say, “I am able to do it.” So he will intercede for them that judgement may be passed.

This intercession belongs exclusively to the Prophet Muhammad.

There are many other reports that speak of this intercession: “The people will fall on their knees on the Day of Resurrection, each nation following its prophet, saying, ‘O So and so, intercede!’ until intercession is granted to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). On that Day Allah will resurrect him to a station of praise and glory.”[1]

2. Intercession of the Prophet Muhammad that the believers be granted permission to enter Paradise.

The Messenger of Allah said: “I will come to the gate of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection and will ask for it to be opened. The gatekeeper will say, ‘Who are you?’ I will say, ‘Muhammad.’ He will say, ‘I was commanded not to open it for anyone before you.’”[2]

According to another report narrated by Muslim, “I will be the first one to intercede concerning Paradise.”

3. Intercession of Prophet Muhammad for his paternal uncle Abu Talib, so that the torment of the Fire be reduced for him. This applies only in the case of the Prophet and his paternal uncle Abu Talib.

Once, Abu Talib was mentioned in the presence of the Messenger of Allah. He said, “Perhaps my intercession will benefit him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will be placed in a shallow part of the Fire which will come up to his ankles and cause his brain to boil.”[3]

4. Intercession that some people of his Ummah may enter Paradise without being brought to account.

This kind of intercession was mentioned by some of the scholars, who quoted as evidence the lengthy hadith which states:

“Then it will be said, ‘O Muhammad, raise your head; ask, it will be given to you; intercede, your intercession will be accepted.’ So I will raise my head and say, ‘My Ummah, O Lord; my Ummah, O Lord; my Ummah, O Lord.’ It will be said, ‘Admit those among your Ummah who are not to be brought to account through the right-hand gate of Paradise. They will share the other gates with the people of other nations.’”[4]

B. General Intercession

Another type of intercession for those who committed sins will be granted to Prophet Muhammad and other prophets, as well as to angels, martyrs, scholars and righteous people. Even a man’s good deeds may also intercede

for him. But the Prophet Muhammad will have the greatest share of intercession.

It is of various kinds:

1. Intercession for believers, who committed major sins, to be taken out of Hell.

The Messenger of Allah said: “My intercession will be for those among my Ummah who committed major sins.”[5]

“By the One in Whose hand is my soul, none of you can be more insistent in asking Allah to restore his right against his opponent than the believers who will ask Allah on the Day of Resurrection (to grant them the power of intercession) for their brothers who are in the Fire. They will say, ‘Our Lord, they used to fast with us and pray and perform Hajj.’ It will be said to them, ‘Bring out those whom you recognize, so the Fire will be forbidden to burn them.’ So they will bring out many people... and Allah will say: ‘The angels have interceded, the prophets have interceded, and the believers have interceded. There is no intercession remaining save that which belongs to the Most Merciful.’ Then He will seize a handful of the inhabitants of Hell who never did anything good.”[6]

2. Intercession for people who deserve Hell, that they may not enter it.

The Prophet said: “When any Muslim dies and forty men, who associate nothing with Allah, pray the funeral prayer for him, Allah will accept their intercession for him.”[7]

This intercession happens before the deceased enters Hell as Allah accepts their intercession.

3. Intercession for some believers who deserve Paradise for their status to be raised in Paradise. For example, the Prophet prayed for Abu Salamah: “O Allah, forgive Abu Salamah and raise his status among those who are guided, and take good care of his family that he has left behind. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the Worlds, make his grave spacious for him and illuminate it for him.”[8]

Footnotes:

[1] Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

[2] Saheeh Muslim

[3] Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

[4] Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

[5] Tirmidhi

[6] Saheeh Muslim

[7] Saheeh Muslim

[8] Saheeh Muslim

Intercession on Judgment Day (part 2 of 2)

Description: The second lesson further discusses the concept of Islamic ‘intercession.’

Objectives

- To understand the three conditions of intercession.
- To understand whose intercession will not be accepted on the Day of Judgement.
- To understand the wisdom of intercession.

Arabic Terms

- Tawheed – The Oneness and Unique^{ness} of Allah with respect to His Lordship, His Names and Attributes and in His right to be worshipped.
- Hadith- (plural – ahadith) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- Mushrik – (plural – mushrikoon) one who ascribes divinity to person(s) or thing(s) besides Allah.
- Shirk – a word that implies ascribing partners to Allah, or ascribing divine attributes to other than Allah, or believing that the source of power, harm and blessings comes from another besides Allah.

Conditions of Intercession

One of the most important matters to understand is that Allah and Allah alone 'owns' intercession. No human being 'owns' intercession.

Intercession in the Hereafter will only happen if the following conditions are met:

1. Allah must approve of the person for whom intercession is made.
“...and they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased”
(Quran 21:28)

One for whom intercession is made must be a believer in Tawheed because Allah is not pleased with the mushrikoon (polytheists).

It was said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, who will be the most blessed of people by your intercession of the Day of Resurrection?’ The Messenger of Allah said:

“O Abu Hurayrah, I thought that no one would ask me about this hadith before you because I have seen how keen you are to learn hadith. The people who will be most blessed by my intercession on the Day of Resurrection are those who say La ilaha illa Allah sincerely from the heart.”

2. Allah must give permission to intercede.
“Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission?”
(Quran 2:255)

3. Allah must approve of the intercessor.
“...whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He wills and is pleased with” (Quran 53:26)

Rejected Intercession

The Rejected Intercession is one that does not meet the conditions required for permission from Allah or His being pleased (with the intercessor or the one for whom intercession is made), such as the intercession which the people of shirk believe that their gods will be able to do for them. Many of them only worship their gods because they believe that they will intercede for them with Allah, and that they are middle men between them and Allah. Allah says:

“Surely, the religion is for Allah only. And those who take protectors besides Him (say): ‘We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.’ Indeed, Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they

differs. Truly, Allah guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever” (Quran 39:9)

Allah tells us that this kind of intercession is ineffective and of no benefit:

“So no intercession of intercessors will be of any use to them” (Quran 74:48)

“And fear a Day (of Judgement) when a person shall not benefit another, nor will intercession be accepted from him nor will compensation be taken from him nor will they be helped.” (Quran 2:48)

“O you who believe! Spend of that with which We have provided for you, before a Day comes when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession. And it is the disbelievers who are the wrongdoers.” (Quran 2:254)

Hence, Allah did not accept the intercession of His Khaleel[1] Ibrahim for his father Azar who was a pagan. The Prophet said:

“Ibrahim will meet his father on the Day of Resurrection, and Azar’s face will be dark and covered with dust. Ibrahim will say to him, ‘Did I not tell you not to disobey me?’ His father will say, ‘Today I will not disobey you.’ Ibrahim will say, ‘O Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonoring my father?’ Then Allah will say, ‘I have forbidden Paradise to the disbelievers.’ Then he will be addressed, ‘O Ibrahim, what is beneath your feet?’ He will look and there he will see a dhabh (an animal,) blood-stained, which will be caught by the legs and thrown into the Fire.”[2]

Wisdom of Intercession

The point of intercession is to honor the person interceding. It is Allah’s way of making the person stand out in front of His creation. That is the reason why Prophet Muhammad and the prophets will be allowed to intercede as detailed above.

Furthermore, intercession should not make a person complacent about sins. A person must never think that he can rely on intercession and sin all he wants! For, he is not guaranteed that Allah will allow someone to intercede for him. Furthermore, his sins might lead him into outright disbelief in which case no one’s intercession will benefit him. Lastly, he might receive punishment before he is interceded for and released.

Footnotes:

[1] The word Khaleel indicates the purest, highest form of love. In this context, Khaleel would mean, 'one whom Allah has chosen for His love.'

[2] Saheeh Al-Bukhari

Answers to the claims of those who deny intercession

Intercession is true

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

Answers to the claims of those who deny intercession

Now, let us answer some of the so-called evidences that those who deny intercession try to put forward:

1-The following is stated in verse 44 of the chapter of az-Zumar: "Say: "To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) Intercession." Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by putting forward the verse above. According to them, the verse above attributes all intercession to Allah and refuses the existence of the other beings who can intercede.

We answer as follows: In verse 139 of the chapter of an-Nisa, the clause "all honor is with Allah" attributes all honor to Allah like the attribution of all intercession to Allah. In verse 8 of the chapter of al-Munafiqun, it is stated that honor belongs to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the believers: "But honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers."

That is, it is stated in verse 139 of the chapter of an-Nisa that all honor belongs to Allah but it is also stated in verse 8 of the chapter of al-Munafiqun that honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the believers. It means honor belonging to Allah does not deprive the Prophet and the believers of honor.

The two verses that seem to be opposite can be reconciled as follows: All honor belongs to Allah Almighty. The honor of the Prophet and the believers are in question when Allah gives them honor. The honor of Allah is essential but the others receive honor when Allah gives them honor; their honor does not contradict the fact that all honor belongs to Allah.

The same thing is valid for intercession. That all intercession belongs to Allah does not mean that nobody will have the power of intercession. It can

be explained as follows: All intercession belongs to Allah. The intercession of others depends on the permission and consent of Allah. That is, nobody can intercede without the permission and will of Allah.

We can liken it to the following situation: If nobody has any money except us and if we give some money to the people who are in need, and if we say, “all money belongs to us”, it does not mean we will not give money to anybody; it means the money that other people have also belongs to us and that they own the money when we give it to them.

To say “all intercession belongs to Allah” is similar to the example above. That is, anyone who has been authorized to intercede is given the power of intercession by Allah; he can intercede by the permission of Allah and to the people whom Allah permits.

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

2- The following is stated in verse 48 of the chapter of al-Baqara: “Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her.” Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by showing the verse above as evidence.

We answer as follows: It is a big mistake to interpret the Quran without knowing the reasons why the verses were sent down. It is necessary to know the reasons why the verses were sent down first and the verses need to be interpreted accordingly. If it is not done, there will be misunderstandings like the verse above.

The reason why the verse above was sent down is the following incident mentioned in the interpretations of Nasafi and Ruh al-Bayan: Jews said, “We are the grandchildren of Hz. Ibrahim and Ishaq (Peace be upon them). Therefore, Allah will accept their intercession for us. They will save us from hellfire.” The verse above was sent down to refuse those claims of Jews. It means the verse above was sent down for unbelievers.

That is, it is not possible to intercede for unbelievers. For instance, Hz. Nuh (Noah) will not be able to intercede for his wife, who died as an unbeliever and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) will not be able to intercede for his uncles who died as unbelievers.

It means the clause “nor shall intercession be accepted for her” in the verse has nothing to do with those who die as Muslims. However, those who do not know the reason why the verse was sent down make wrong interpretations by looking at the apparent meaning of the verse; due to

their wrong interpretations, they refuse intercession, about which there are several verses and hadiths.

The so-called evidences put forward by those who deny intercession

3- The following is stated in verse 48 of the chapter of al-Muddaththir : “Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.” And the following is stated in verse 18 of the chapter of al-Mumin: “On that day, no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.” Those who deny intercession refuse intercession by putting forward verses like the ones above.

We answer as follows: Those verses do not refuse intercession; on the contrary, they prove it. For, “Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them” proves the existence of intercessors. Since intercessors are mentioned, it means there are intercessors. If there were not intercessors, it would be meaningless to mention them. Besides, to say, “no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have” means “there will be intimate friends and intercessors for believers.”

Then, the meaning of the verses above does not refuse the existence of intercession; it means as follows: O unbelievers! You are in such a difficult situation that intercession, which will be useful for everybody, will not be useful for you. You are deprived of the intercession of intercessors.

It is similar to the following case: If we point to a person who got cancer and who has no hope of surviving and say, “Doctors will be of no use to him”, it does not mean to reject doctors; it means the illness is severe and to accept the fact that doctors will be of no use to that patient any longer. That is, they have despaired of him; and no doctor can heal him. This is what it means.

“Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.” “On that day, no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.” The verses above have the same meaning. In the verse, the existence of intercessors is not refused; it is stated that the unbelievers will be deprived of the intercession of the intercessors due to their unbelief and they will not be able to benefit from it. Besides, we agree that the people whom Allah Almighty is not pleased with will not be interceded. The people mentioned in those verses are those who belong to these groups.

In conclusion, those verses prove the existence of intercession, not its non-existence. Since the verse mentions intercessors, it means they exist. If they did not exist, they would not be mentioned. Then, we add these verses

to the ten verses we quoted related to the existence of intercession and use them as evidence for the existence of intercessors.

Let us summarize our statements regarding the issue in items:

1- Intercession is true and real with the indication of the verses and hadiths we have quoted.

2- Intercession can take place only with the permission and consent of Allah. This is what “all intercession belongs to Allah” means. Nobody has the right to intercede acting upon his own decision.

3- Intercession will not be useful to unbelievers and those whom Allah is not pleased with; they will be deprived of this bounty of Allah’s. All of the verses of the Quran stating that there is no intercession are about these people.

4- It is not appropriate for people to trust in intercession by acting lazily to perform fard deeds and to attribute their salvation to intercession despite committing haram deeds. A person can expect intercession but he cannot abandon fard deeds by trusting in it. Intercession is a station of hope.

5- The reason why Allah Almighty gives the right of intercession to some of His slaves and saves His sinful slaves from Hell through those people is their exemplary lives in the world. Their taqwa, worshipping, asceticism, love and other attributes are the reasons for attaining such a position.

May Allah Almighty enable us to benefit from the intercession of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), the Quran and other intercessors! May He protect us from being among those who are deprived of intercession by denying intercession! Amin!

Allah Knows Best.