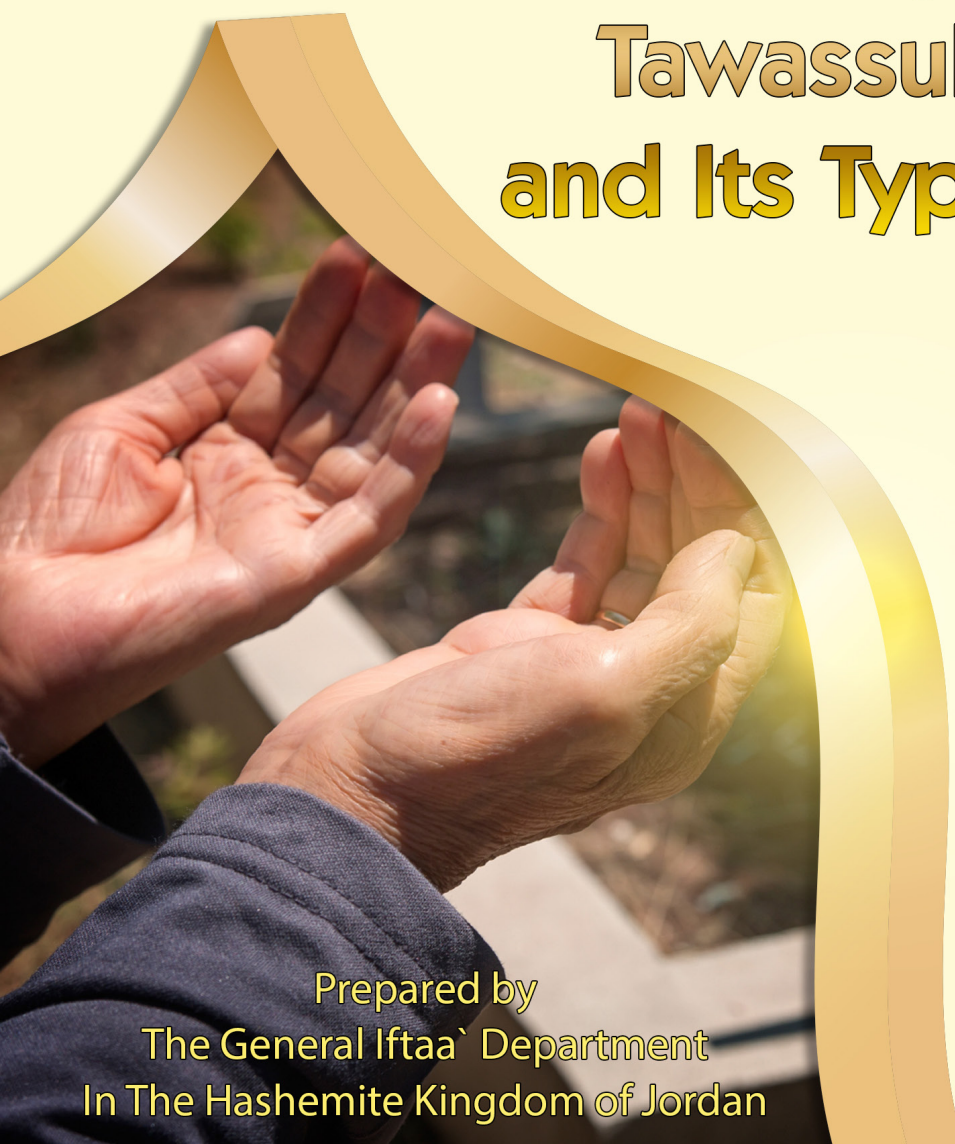


The Ruling on Tawassul and Its Types



Prepared by
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In The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

In The Name Of ALLAH, The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful
All perfect praise be to Allah the Lord of The Worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Mohammad and upon all his family and companions.

This is a pamphlet addressing the most important jurisprudential questions commonly raised regarding the ruling on Tawassul and its types. Its content is derived from authoritative legal rulings (fatāwā) issued by the General Iftaa` Department, drawing upon the established juristic principles documented in the texts of the Shāfi`ī school in particular, and the recognized texts of the four major Sunni schools of thought in general.

The Concept of Tawassul:

Tawassul is the act of making something that holds a status and rank with Allah the Exalted a means (wasilah) for the acceptance of supplication. This entails the one seeking means (mutawassil) asking Allah the Exalted to grant him something or to repel some harm, by virtue of the blessing of the one used as a means (mutawassil bihi) and his status with Allah the Exalted.

Tawassul does not contradict Islamic creed, as Muslims believe that there is no one who can benefit or cause harm except Allah the Exalted alone. They ask Allah, using intermediaries and seeking intercession through those close to Him.

Does Tawassul Contradict Tawhid (Monotheism)?

Tawhid is the belief in the oneness of Allah the Exalted and attributing Lordship and Divinity to Him alone, while denying any partner for Him, glorified be He, in managing creation and administering their affairs. Tawassul is an invocation and a request to Allah, not to the one used as a means. Tawassul is a means and a cause for achieving the objective. Just as food is a means for satiety and medicine is a means and cause for cure, Tawassul is a cause for the acceptance of supplication. Therefore, there is no contradiction between Tawassul and Tawhid, and this is what we presume about Muslims.

Types of Tawassul:

Tawassul has multiple types:

- **First Type: Tawassul by asking someone to supplicate for you. Evidence**

includes the hadith narrated by Abu Dawud (4726): «A Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) and said, People are suffering distress, the children are hungry, the crops are withered and the animals are perishing, so ask God to grant us rain, for we seek you as our intercessor with God and God as our intercessor with you»».

- **Second Type: Tawassul by the Names and Attributes of Allah.** Anas ibn Malik reported that when something troubled the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), he would say: «O Self-Sustaining Sustainer! In Your Mercy do I seek relief (Yā Ḥayyu yā Qayyūm, bi-rahmatika astaghīth)». [Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi (3524)]

- **Third Type: Tawassul by righteous deeds.** This is established in the authentic collections of Al-Bukhari and Muslim from the story of the men in the cave upon whom a rock fell, and they found no escape except by turning to Allah the Exalted and asking Him by the most virtuous deeds they had performed.

- **Fourth Type: Tawassul by invoking Allah due to the status of the one used as a means.** The majority of jurists from the four schools of thought consider this recommended.

The Ruling on Tawassul through the Prophets and the Righteous

The Prophets are the elite and the best of humankind. The righteous among Allah's servants are those close to Allah the Exalted, and their supplication is more likely to be answered due to the proximity and selection Allah has bestowed upon them. Texts from the jurists of the four schools have consistently stated the permissibility of using them as a means (tawassul) and seeking their intercession (shafa'ah) with Allah the Exalted, hoping for the acceptance of the supplication.

The Shariah Evidence for the Permissibility of Tawassul

1. The statement of Allah the Exalted {which means}: «If only they, when they wronged themselves, had come to you and asked Allah for forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked for forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Accepting of repentance and Merciful». [An-Nisa`/64] Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir said in his interpretation of this noble verse: «Allah guides the disobedient and the sinners, if error and disobedience occur from them, to come to the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and seek Allah's forgiveness in his presence,

and ask him to seek forgiveness for them. If they do that, Allah will accept their repentance, have mercy on them, and forgive them».

The well-known story narrated by Al-`Utbi is mentioned by a group of scholars, including Sheikh Abu Nasr ibn Al-Sabbagh in his book «Al-Shamil»: He said, «I was sitting by the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when a Bedouin came and said, «Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah. I heard Allah say {what means}: «If only they, when they wronged themselves, had come to you...» and I have come to you seeking forgiveness for my sin, seeking your intercession with my Lord». Then he recited some poetry. Then the Bedouin left, and I fell asleep and saw the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in a dream. He said, «O `Utbi, catch up with the Bedouin and give him the glad tidings that Allah has forgiven him»».

2. The hadith reported by Imam Al-Bukhari (1475): The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: «On the Day of Resurrection, the sun will draw so close that sweat will reach to the middle of the ears. While they are in that state, they will seek help from Adam, then from Moses, then from Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)». The hadith describes the state of people on the Day of Resurrection when they ask the Prophets for intercession, using the term «seek help» (istaghathu). It is understood from the context that the people did not intend to supplicate to other than Allah, but rather sought intercession from those of high status, namely the Prophets.

3. The hadith of `Uthman ibn Hunayf (may Allah be pleased with him): A blind man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and said, «Ask Allah to heal me». He said, «If you wish, I will delay [and it will be better for you in the Hereafter], and if you wish, I will supplicate». The man said, «Supplicate». So he ordered him to perform ablution and perfect it, pray two rak`ahs, and then supplicate with this prayer: «O Allah, I ask of You and I turn to You by means of Muhammad, the Prophet of Mercy. O Muhammad, I have turned by means of you to my Lord regarding this need of mine so that it may be fulfilled. O Allah, grant him intercession for me». [Narrated by Ibn Majah (1385)]

4. Narrated by Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah in Al-Musannaf (No. 32002) with a sound chain from Abu Salih, from Malik Al-Dar, who was `Umar`s

treasurer for food supplies: « A drought struck the people during the time of `Umar. A man came to the grave of the Prophet (PBUH) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, ask for rain for your Ummah, for they are perishing.' Then the man saw the Prophet (PBUH) in a dream, and it was said to him: 'Go to `Umar, convey to him my greetings of peace, and inform him that you will be given rain. And say to him: "Be prudent, be prudent."' So the man went to `Umar and informed him. `Umar wept and said: 'O Lord, I do not spare any effort except in what I am unable to do'». Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar said, «Its chain is sound».

Statements of the Four Schools of Islamic Thought on the Ruling of Tawassul:

The majority of jurists from the four schools of Islamic thought hold the view that Tawassul, especially through our Master the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), is recommended. Their texts are as follows:

- **Hanafi School:** In «Fath al-Qadir» by Kamal ibn al-Humam (Vol.3/P.181): «He should ask Allah the Exalted for his need, using His noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as a means to Allah... then he should ask the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) for intercession, saying: O Messenger of Allah, I ask you for intercession; O Messenger of Allah, I ask you for intercession and I use you as a means to Allah that I die as a Muslim upon your way and your Sunnah».

- **Maliki School:** Ibn al-Hajj al-Maliki said in «Al-Madkhal» (Vol.1/P.259): «Using him (peace and blessings be upon him) as a means is the place for unloading the burdens of sins and the weight of transgressions... So let the one who visits him be glad, and let the one who did not visit him take refuge in Allah the Exalted through the intercession of His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)... Whoever holds a belief contrary to this is deprived [of mercy]».

- **Shafi'i School:** Imam al-Nawawi said in «Al-Adhkar» (p. 205), while discussing the etiquette of visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): «Then he should return to his initial position facing the face of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), and use him as a means for himself, and seek his intercession with his Lord, glorified and exalted be He».

- **Hanbali School:** Imam al-Mardawi said in «Al-Insaf» (Vol.2/P.456):

«Among them [the issues] is: It is permissible to use a righteous man as a means, according to the correct view of the school. It is also said: It is recommended. Imam Ahmad said: «He uses the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as a means in his supplication».... And using faith in him, obedience to him, love for him, sending prayers and peace upon him, his supplication, his intercession, and the like—whether from his actions or the commanded actions of servants concerning him—as a means deemed permissible by consensus».

Reconciling the Permissibility of Tawassul with the Verse: «And when My servants ask you concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me...» [Al-Baqarah/186]

When we understand the meaning of Tawassul—that it is merely adopting a specific means for an objective—it becomes clear that it does not contradict the meaning of supplication, reliance on Allah, and entrusting matters to Him. This is because Tawassul is essentially a servant's supplication to his Lord, seeking the acceptance of his supplication through those close to Him. This meaning is supported by the statement of Allah {which means}: «O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of approach] to Him...» [Al-Ma'idah/35]. The one performing Tawassul is only supplicating to Allah and seeking Him, communing with his Lord and drawing near to Him. Out of his intense desire to achieve his goal, he seeks intercession through those whom Allah loves from among the Prophets, the righteous, and those close to Him, because that is more likely to get his supplication answered. Thus, there is no contradiction between the directive of the verse and the concept of Tawassul. Confusion only arises from a lack of clarity regarding the meaning of Tawassul through the Prophets, Awliya, and the righteous.

Does the Life or Death of the One Used as a Means Affect the Permissibility of Tawassul?

The correct view, supported by Shariah texts and the statements of jurists, is that it is permissible to use the Prophets and the righteous as a means during their lives and after their deaths. The story of Malik al-Dar mentioned earlier indicates this. There is no difference in the ruling regarding Tawassul between the life or death of the one used as

a means, because the one performing Tawassul does not believe that the one used as a means has any effect in matters; rather, he is only a cause and a means, and the true Actor is Allah the Exalted alone.

Is the Issue of Tawassul Considered a Fundamental of the Religion, and is it Permissible to Declare someone a Disbeliever Due to it?

The issue of Tawassul is considered among the jurisprudential matters open to interpretation (zanniyyah), where differences of opinion are valid. Despite this, we have seen that the majority of Muslim scholars from the followers of the four Sunni schools have stated its permissibility, even its recommendation. Therefore, we find that earlier scholars mentioned this issue in the chapter on the Prayer for Rain (Istisqa`) or the chapter on visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and did not count it among matters of creed. Making this issue one of creed upon which excommunication and declaring others astray is based is from the prohibited extremism and constitutes an entry point for Takfir.

Is the Issue of Tawassul a Shar`i Justification for Stirring Up Fitnah Among Muslims?

The issue is almost agreed upon, but it is among the subsidiary matters in which it is not permissible to issue condemnations and cause division and dispute. It is known that condemnation is not valid in jurisprudential matters open to interpretation. Matters of legitimate difference should be confined to the halls of academic research, while observing the etiquette of dialogue and disagreement. Our advice to enthusiastic students of knowledge is to occupy themselves with issues of fundamental importance to the Ummah and society in this era, and to observe that differences in subsidiary matters should not spoil the unity of the Ummah. And Allah the Exalted knows best.

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