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Discourse 35: Apologizing to Others and Accepting an Apology

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ مَنْ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ الْعُذْرَ مِنْ مُتَنَصِّلٍ صَادِقًا كَانَ أَوْ كَاذِبًا لَمْ
يَنَلْ شَفَاعَتِي.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! My intercession shall not reach the person who does not accept the apology from another person – whether the apology is truthful or untruthful.”

Asking forgiveness and also accepting the apology of a person who has come to you are both ethical and Islamic values.

There are many people who perform wrong actions, however in their eyes, it is shameful to ask for forgiveness and they actually consider this as being a defect in their character! However, at the same time, they will be the first one to order others for the same thing and this is a major flaw in a person's character.

If a person was to do something inappropriate, what is wrong in him that, just as he feels grief inside him and also asks forgiveness and turns back to Allah (SwT), that he also seek pardon from the creations of Allah (SwT) as well?

If people truly had a spiritually expansive heart, and possessed bravery and valor to ask for forgiveness when they err, without doubt, many problems would be solved at the first stage (without having to take issues further).

Sometimes discussions, debates and arguments which serve no purpose come up in regards to some trivial issue and thus, the smallest issue becomes a major event.

For example, something may happen on the road while driving and all of a sudden, the driver of one car may – either intentionally or out of his own negligence – swerve on the road. However, he would signal to the other driver, apologizing to him, and the other driver would accept his apology.

However, if the person who was cut off while driving became upset and screamed out, “What is wrong with you – are you not paying attention? Do you think you own the road?” at this time, the drivers of both cars may stop and get out of their cars. One person may grab the other and then who knows what would happen – sometimes a person may even be killed over this type of minor incident!

We know that it is very easy to kill someone and sometimes this act happens over trivial and unimportant issues. However if you say something and then you also ask for forgiveness for that and if in asking forgiveness, you show your bravery and courage, then definitely a minor mistake would not be transformed into a major issue and as it is said that you would have immediately put out the flames with that (small) glass of water.

However if that same fire was to spread to all other areas then even a large number of firemen would not be able to come and put out the fire and calm the situation!

This is the same within families as if an inappropriate action is done, if either side was to ask forgiveness for what had happened, then the incident would end right there. If this was not to happen, then the smallest things would turn into a major issue which may end up destroying the family!

Does the person who is not ready to ask forgiveness think himself to be infallible? Without doubt, everyone (with the exception of those who have been kept free from sins – the Prophets and the Ahlu'l Bayt) make mistakes. Therefore, if a person commits an error, then his asking pardon and forgiveness for his acts is actually proof of his greatness and excellence!

Asking for Pardon is a Sign of the Spiritual Expanse of one's Heart

Do those who have little patience, a spiritual constriction in their hearts and do not possess the trait of a spiritually expansive heart assume that by asking pardon and seeking forgiveness that they are lowering their status!? Obviously, they are negligent of the fact that asking pardon actually proves the greatness in their character and personality and grants them a high nature!

My belief is that if we are truly impartial and equitable in regards to an issue – even in trivial things, and if in the face of the other person, no matter who he is – either a common person (who does not know the teachings of the faith) or one with knowledge – if we were to ask forgiveness (when we make a mistake), then this would be the key to a healthy life. Therefore, this act of apologizing is actually one of the valuable ethical traits.

As for the second issue – and this is something which also takes greatness of character and a spiritually expansive heart to carry out – it is to accept the apology of another person.

If a person comes to you and asks to be forgiven, then one must accept the apology.

In the tradition under review, it is stated that even if a person had intentionally done something and then comes and wishes to place himself under the covering of your forgiveness, you must show your greatness of character and not let your ego get the best of you.

In addition, one must even accept the apology of a liar – of course there are certain times and circumstances which are an exception to this rule and are separate from this discussion (which we will not discuss). However if one was not to accept the apology of another person, then slowly the veils of inhibition and shame would be removed from all people!

If someone comes and apologizes and one was to reply, “No, you are lying, you are not sorry for what you did” then that person may actually begin to act even worse and may reply, “It is my heart which wanted me to lie (to you and to try and fool you that I was sorry...)” At this point, what road would you take to stop this person's obstinacy?

In the Du'a of Abu hamza ath-Thumali we read:

أَمَرْتَنَا أَنْ تَعْفُوَ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمْنَا وَ أَنْتَ أَوْلَى بِالْعَفْوِ وَ قَدْ ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا...

“You have ordered us to forgive the person who oppresses us, however You are much more worthy to forgive us who have been oppressive to our own selves...”

In reality, the meaning of this line of the Du'a is that whereas we are not ready and prepared to forgive others for the sins and misdeeds which they have done to us, however we expect Allah (SwT) to forgive the great number of our sins! Therefore, in order for us to earn the pardon of Allah (SwT), we must be ready to forgive at least one sin from another person and accept their apology.

In addition, in the Du'a of the month of Rajab we say:

يُعْطِي مَنْ سَأَلَ...

“You give to the person who asks You...”

However in addition to this, we see that later on in this Du'a, Allah (SwT) not only gives to those who ask Him, but also those who have not recognized Allah (SwT) for their entire lifetime! These people are still

covered and included in the mercy of Allah (SwT) (see the rest of the Du'a of the Month of Rajab).

It is Allah's i mercy that is such an All-Encompassing Mercy that it does not deprive a single person, not even the one who do not ask Him for a single thing – He even gives to them!

The word used in the end of the tradition under review is “منتصل” which means a person who wishes to exonerate or absolve himself of something which he has done – meaning that he wishes to apologize for his actions.

In relation to this, the Prophet (S) has said, “The person who does not accept the apology of the individual who has come to him asking forgiveness – whether the apology is truthful or untruthful – shall never have the benefit of my intercession since my intercession is specifically reserved for those who make mistakes and errors.

You (who will not accept the apology of another person) – see how you have acted with this person who has made a mistake and has then come to you with the hopes that you shall forgive him of his error where as you too would like to be forgiven for your mistakes and errors! Is it not a fact that the rewards of Allah (SwT) are commensurate to the actions which a person performs!? Even if I make a mistake I expect to be forgiven, so that I too am interceded for from my mistakes.”

In any case, apologizing after making a mistake and accepting the apology is the key to happiness, the key to penetrating into the thoughts, minds and hearts of the people and is one of the things that leads to spiritual progress in life.

At this point of the tradition, we see the topic of discussion between the Prophet (S) and Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) switches to intercession. Therefore, we present a brief portion of our discussion on intercession which has been mentioned in Tafsir-e-Namuna for those who wish to know more about this issue.¹

The Qur'an and Intercession

Without doubt, the punishments of Allah (SwT) – whether they are in this world or the next, do not take on the form of revenge. Rather, all punishments are in place to safeguard the continuation of obedience to Allah (SwT) and the following of His rules and regulations.

These punishments are actually in place to advance the civilization and to permit humanity to reach perfection. Therefore, anything done to weaken the beliefs in the punishment of Allah (SwT) must be stopped so that the people do not gain the impudence to perform sins.

From another point of view, the doors of turning back to Allah (SwT) and correcting ones' self must not be closed to those who sin. Rather, people must be given the opportunity to correct themselves and the chance to make their way back towards Allah (SwT), a consciousness of Him and to cleanse their soul.

Intercession, in its correct understanding is the act of protecting the balance between the act of unintentionally sinning and not losing hope in the forgiveness of Allah (SwT). It is the means through which the sinners and those who have polluted their souls can return back to Allah (SwT). However, in its incorrect understanding and interpretation, it actually leads to an encouragement and the overconfidence in a person to commit more sins!

The person who has not correctly understood the various dimensions of intercession and its true meaning may become completely opposed to it and may actually go forth to explain it as a form of patronage as is carried out by the kings and oppressive rulers! Sometimes, just like the Wahhabis believe, people may take the following verse which reads:

لَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ

“His intercession shall not be accepted.”²

and without paying attention to other verses on this issue, will deny all forms of intercession!

In any case, the arguments that the opponents of intercession bring up are as follows:

1. The belief in intercession makes the spirit of struggle and striving (for Paradise) weak in a person;
2. The belief in intercession is actually a principle which stems from the backwards feudalistic and tribal societies of the past.
3. The belief in intercession actually encourages people to commit sins and strips them of any sort of responsibility.
4. The belief in intercession is a form of polytheism and the worship of more than one God and goes against the teachings of the Qur`an.
5. The belief in intercession means that the rules of Allah (SwT) are overturned and that His (SwT) intentions and wishes are altered by His creations.

However as we will see, all of the objections which people bring up in regards to intercession stem from the fact that the meaning of intercession given in the Qur`an has been confused with the corrupt meanings of intercession which are common amongst the general public!

Intercession has its own particular importance associated with both the act and understanding of it and thus, we must clearly explain the meaning of intercession, the philosophy of intercession, intercession as mentioned in the Qur`an and the traditions and other areas so that through this discussion, all of the ambiguities are removed from the minds of the people.³

The True Meaning of Intercession

The word intercession (الشفاعة) comes from the root “شفع” which means “to pair” and “merge one thing with something like it”. The opposite of this word is “وتر” which means solitary and single. Thus, the word intercession means, 'one thing that is greater or more powerful accompanying something which is weaker or lower in status.'

This word has two meanings associated with it amongst the common people and the religious legislations in the meaning of intercession.

Definition of Intercession in the General Usage of the Word

In the general use of the word, it means that a person makes use of his own position, character and influence in interceding for another person.

In our daily life, this definition of the word can be best seen when a powerful or strong person intervenes to stop the torture of people who are not as powerful as him.

Sometimes a person in a high position may make use of his influence or the fear which he may be able to instil in other people, to influence them. Sometimes this intervention takes on the form of raising empathetic issues and by influencing the other side through compassionate and sympathetic grounds, while at other times it takes the form of changing the way the other side thinks and sees the sins of the guilty person and his worth.

In summary, according to this interpretation, intercession does not bring forth any type of change in the temperament and thought pattern of the guilty person (the thought of remorse or grief over what he has done). The effect and change (in the heart) is related to that person who has the power and ability to forgive and pardon the guilty person. (Pay attention to this point.)

In the religious discussions, this form of intercession has absolutely no basis or meaning to it since neither does Allah (SwT) make a mistake such that He would need to change His opinion, nor is the meaning of influencing Allah's emotions in the same meaning as that of another human being such that it could be said that He has become emotionally charged. In addition, there is no influence from another party whom He (SwT) is scared or frightened from, nor is there any issue of a reward or punishment which revolves around anything other than Justice.

Another Meaning of Intercession

This meaning revolves around the individual who will be interceding for another to alter his position (in regards to that person). By this we mean that the person who is going to intercede brings forth the necessary prerequisites so that the individual who is coming to him in a bad state and is facing

punishment would, through having a connection and link to the one who is interceding for him, be placed in a good state such that he would be worthy and deserving of forgiveness.

Just as will be seen, faith in this form of intercession is the noblest form of training (of a person) and is the way in which a sinful, polluted person may correct himself and wake up from his negligence and become spiritually aware.

In the logic of Islam, intercession is of this type and just as we will see, all of the complaints, attacks and accusations that are brought forth are in relation to the first form of intercession and not the second definition, as it is completely in line with the logical and intellectual understanding of this philosophy.

Intercession in the Physical World

That which we mentioned in regards to intercession and the correct and logical interpretation of it can be seen in many instances in the physical world around us (in addition to being present in the World of Legislation).

We see that forces that are more powerful within the world assist the weaker forces and help to guide them to the goals which they have been created for. The sun shines, the rain falls down and the seeds planted deep within the ground are assisted so that they may be able to make use of their own internal energies. Through this help, they may be able to show the first growth of life. The covering around the seed tears apart and the seed makes its way out from the darkness of the dirt, progressing towards the heavens from where it acquired its power and energy...

The Credentials Needed for Intercession

At this point, we introduce the main credentials needed for one to intercede.

In the Noble Qur'an, the issue of intercession in the way which we have described in this section in its correct and true understanding and definition has been mentioned approximately thirty times. Of course it can be seen that other discussions and allusions to this topic have been given in the Qur'an without the use of the word, 'intercession'.

These verses are divided into the following categories:

The First Group: Verses which completely deny the issue of intercession of any sort:

أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةَ وَلَا شَفَاعَةَ

“...spend out of what We have given you before the day comes in which there is no bargaining,

friendship nor intercession...”4

وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ

“...neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted...”5

In these verses, there is no path that can be conceived for salvation for the guilty people, except true faith and the performance of righteous deeds – not even by giving up their material wealth, through having a previous affinity with another person or through the power of intercession!

In relation to some sinful, guilty people, we read the following:

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ

“So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them.”6

The Second Group: These are verses in which intercession is limited to only Allah (SwT):

مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

“Other than Him you have no protector, nor any assistant...”7

In another verse we are told:

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعاً

“Say with Allah alone is the intercession...”8

The Third Group: These are verses which mention that intercession is only possible by the permission of Allah (SwT):

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

“Who is there that can intercede in His presence except by His permission?”⁹

وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ

“And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits.”¹⁰

The Forth Group: These verses that list the conditions necessary for the person who is going to intercede. Sometimes these conditions are mentioned as being the tacit approval and pleasure of Allah (SwT):

وَلَا تَنْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْتَضَى

“...and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves...”¹¹

According to these verses, the intercession of the intercessors is only limited to those who have reached the status of being the ones whom He (SwT) approves of.

Sometimes, the condition for the intercession is the one who has acquired a promise or covenant from Allah (SwT) as mentioned in the verse of the Qur`an:

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا

“They shall not control intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent Allah.”

Sometimes, the authority to intercede for a person who is a sinner is taken away such as in the instance in which the impermissibility of intercession of those who are oppressors:

مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ

“...the unjust shall not have any compassionate friend nor any intercessor who should be obeyed (in his intercession – meaning that his intercession shall not be accepted).”¹²

In this way we see that having a promise or pact with Allah (SwT) – meaning that one possessing true faith and reaching to the level of one who has earned the pleasure of Allah (SwT) and who himself has kept away from sins such as oppression and tyranny, are some of the necessary prerequisites to being

able to intercede.

Various Other Conditions for Intercession

In summary, the verses of the Qur`an which speak about intercession clearly show us that from the point of view of the logic of Islam, intercession is not without its limits, restrictions and conditions. Rather, there are conditions and restrictions attached to it applicable both upon the criminal and also the person who wants to perform the intercession and this is the perimeter with which the true face of intercession and its¹ philosophy is made clear.

For example, sins such as oppression are completely out of the scope and view of intercession and the Qur`an clearly tells us that, “Those who are oppressors shall not be able to benefit from those intercessors whose intercession is accepted (for other things).”

If we take the word oppression in its widest definition, just as we will shortly see in some of the traditions, then intercession would only be limited to those guilty sinners who have felt grief at their own actions, repented, and then have tried to make up their negative actions and correct themselves! It is at this time that the intercession will have credit to it from the repentance and grief of the sin.

As for some people who believe that by simply repenting and having grief for the sin performed that there is no need for intercession, they are severely wrong and the reply to such a belief shall be mentioned shortly.

From another point of view, according to the 28th verse of Suratul Anbiya (21) we read, “The only people who shall be forgiven through the act of intercession is the one who has reached to the level of one who has gained the pleasure of his Lord” and according to verse 87 from Surat Mariam (19), is a person who has a “pledge or contract with Allah (SwT)” will be the one who can intercede.

Thus, these two issues, just as has been understood from the lexical meaning of the word and also from the meaning given to us in the traditions which explain these verses of the Qur`an, show us that true faith in Allah (SwT), the accountability and the scale of deeds, the rewards and punishments, the confession of good deeds and bad deeds (the goodness of good deeds and the badness of bad deeds) and the bearing witness to all of the issues of the faith which have been sent down by Allah (SwT).

A type of faith which is first infused in the mind and thoughts of the person and are then manifest in the life of the individual and are a sign, reverberation and expression of such faith, are characteristics which are not present in the oppressive tyrants (those who are oppressive to themselves and others) who do not officially recognize any of these sacred principles. Thus, these sorts of individuals are removed from the scope of intercession and by reviewing their own life and activities, continue on their own path...

In regards to the forgiveness of sins in the shade of intercession, the Qur`an mentions:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولَ لَوَجَدُوا
اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

“And only if those people who had wronged their own souls had come to you (Muhammad) and had asked Allah for forgiveness and the Messenger too (Muhammad) had asked forgiveness for them surely you would have found Allah to be oft–turning back (in forgiveness), Merciful.”¹³

In this verse, turning back to Allah (SwT) and repentance of the guilty sinners is considered as the precursor to the intercession of the Prophet (S) while in another verse of the Qur’an we read:

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْنَا ذُنُوبَنَا أَيُّهَا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ. قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ
هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“They said: ‘O our father! ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners.’ He said: ‘I will soon ask for you forgiveness from my Lord; surely He (SwT)s the Forgiving, the Merciful.’”¹⁴

In these verses as well, we see the effects of remorse and grief for the sins in the way that the brothers of Yusuf (as) requested their father to forgive them.

In relation to the intercession of the Angels, we read in the Qur’an that their forgiveness and intercession is only for those of true faith, those who follow the path of Allah (SwT) and the followers of the truth:

وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا
وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

”(Those who bear the power and those around Him celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him) and ask protection for those who believe: ‘Our Lord! You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant protection to those who turn (to You) and follow Your way, and save them from the punishment of the hell.’”¹⁵

At this point, the following question comes up: with the existence of turning back to Allah (SwT) in repentance and the following the path of Allah (SwT) and traversing the path of the truth, what need is there for intercession? The answer to this question will be given in the discussion of the “Reality of Intercession”.

In regards to those who will be performing the intercession, the Qur’an has also mentioned that the

person must be a witness to the truth:

إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ

“...except for he who bears witness of the truth...”¹⁶

Thus, the person who wishes to receive the intercession must have a connection and affinity with the one who is permitted to intercede – an affinity through his connection with the truth and bearing witness to the truth through his actions and his words. This is another of the ways to formulate and gather together one's energy to traverse the path of the truth.

The Islamic Traditions in Regards to Intercession

In the Islamic narrations, there are various phrases which complete the understanding given in the above mentioned verses of the Qur`an and sometimes even much more straightforwardly discuss this issue. Of these traditions, we mention the following:

1. In Tafsir al-Burhan, it has been narrated from Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kazim (as) that Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) said, “I heard the Prophet (S) say:

شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي...

“My intercession is for the people from my nation who perform the major sins...”¹⁷

The narrator of the tradition, Ibne Abi 'Umair says, “I asked Imam al-Kazim (as) how it is possible that the people who perform the major sins will gain intercession where as Allah (SwT) has stated:

وَلَا تَنْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْضَى

“...and they do not intercede except for him (the sinner) whom He approves...”¹⁸

Ibne Abi 'Umair continued and said, “It is clear that whoever performs the major sins would not be one with whom Allah (SwT) is happy and pleased with?”

The Imam replied, “Anyone who has true faith however performs a sin, would definitely have grief and remorse for his act and as the Prophet (S) has said that, 'Feeling remorse after committing a sin is a

form of repentance.¹ In addition, the person who does not feel grief and remorse is not a true believer and thus, he shall never have intercession. His actions will be an act of oppression and as Allah (SwT) Himself has said that 'The oppressors shall have no friend nor intercessor.'¹⁹

The main theme in this tradition is that intercession shall reach those who perform the major sins, however the sub-theme of this tradition is clear that the first condition for the acceptance of the intercession is that the person who needs the intercession is one who has true faith which would lead the guilty person towards the stage of grief, remorse and the correcting of his own self and his actions and to refrain from oppression, revolt and the breaking of the laws of Allah (SwT). (Pay attention to this point)

2. In the book, al-Kafi, it has been narrated that Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) wrote a letter to his companions in regards to gathering of their wealth and stated:

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَنْفَعَهُ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ، فَلْيَطْلُبْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَرْضَى عَنْهُ.

“One who wants to benefit from the intercession of those who are permitted to intercede in the presence of Allah must petition Allah that he is one of those whom He (SwT)s pleased with.”²⁰

The tone of this tradition shows us that in order to correct the errors in the understanding of the issue of intercession which some of the companions of the Imam may have had and which the general Muslim community also had, he wrote this letter and clearly stated and nullified the belief of intercession for those people who continue on performing sins.

3. In a powerful tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) it is stated:

إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ، بَعَثَ اللَّهُ الْعَالِمَ وَالْعَابِدَ، فَإِذَا وَقَفَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قِيلَ لِلْعَابِدِ: إِنِّطَلِقْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَقِيلَ لِلْعَالِمِ: قِفْ، تَشْفَعُ لِلنَّاسِ بِحُسْنِ تَأْدِيبِكَ لَهُمْ.

“When the Day of Judgement comes about, Allah will raise up a Scholar (‘Alim) and a Worshipper (‘Abid). Both of these people will stand in the presence of Allah, the Noble and Grand and it will be said to the Worshipper, “Go towards Paradise” and it will be said to the Scholar, “Stop and intercede for the people whom you trained and brought up.”²¹

In this tradition, we see the relationship between the task of training which the Scholar carried out and his ability to intercede for his students – those people who were present in his classes and lessons! This tradition casts light upon many ambiguous issues in the discussion of intercession.

In addition, limiting the status of intercession to the scholar and denying this to the worshipper is another sign that the ability to intercede for others in the logic of the faith of Islam, is not something which has been appointed and prearranged or is a patronage appointment to specific, named individuals. Rather, it belongs to the status of training and upbringing others in this world that will have a manifestation in the next world as well!

The Philosophy of Intercession

Now that we have been acquainted with the meaning of intercession and its evidences – which made clear its meaning, we see that it is not difficult to realize the various philosophies of this act – both the societal philosophy and the individual's spiritual state.

In general, by paying attention to the general principle of intercession we are able to develop the following effects within ourselves.

Struggle against the Feeling of Despair

A person who has perpetrated major crimes and sins is, from one point of view, overcome with a feeling of grief and remorse within his conscience. From another point of view, he is also struck with the feeling of despair and hopelessness in the forgiveness of Allah (SwT).

Since such a person feels that the path of turning back to Allah (SwT) has been shut, from a practical point of view, he is not ready to accept any change in his beliefs and opinions. By him viewing his future as being bleak, it is possible that he may actually stretch forth his hand to perform even more acts of rebellion and revolt against the laws of Allah (SwT)!

Through this, he may actually feel that he now has complete freedom in his actions and that there is no need to follow the rules and regulations of Allah (SwT). Thus, such a person would resemble one who is sick and has lost all hope in his recovering from his sickness and may actually transgress the boundary of keeping away from things which may make him even more sick since he thinks that he is going to die anyways and there is no need to refrain from harmful things.

Sometimes, mental uneasiness that stems from these sorts of crimes and sins leads to mental dysfunctions, or may lead to the need to seek revenge from the society which has “polluted” the person. In this way, the sinner actually becomes a dangerous ingredient and the focal point of irritation for the entire society.

Thus, the firm belief in intercession opens the doors to a brighter future for the person and to hope in forgiveness for one's sins.

This belief also helps control a person and allows one to change his opinion of the world around him and even encourages one to be able to make up for past mistakes.

The feeling of revenge is also not stirred up and thus the mental ease and tranquility that he gains permits him to change himself into a stable and righteous part of the society.

Therefore, if we say that the correct understanding of intercession is actually the force behind causing a positive shift in one's actions and keeping one away from the impermissible and is that thing which would permit a sinner to turn into a righteous individual, then we have not been extravagant in our speech!

It is for this reason that we see people who are serving life sentences in prison, however since there is the light of intercession and forgiveness in the various laws of the transient world still open to them, they do not accept that there is no hope. If this was the case, then it would lead to a very dangerous mental complex within the prisoners and therefore, it is the laws of the transient world that cause them to not fall victim to mental dysfunctions...!

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1. Refer to vol. 1, pg. 2, vol. 4, 17, 22, and 25
 2. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 48
 3. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 1, pg. 223 to 224
 4. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 253
 5. Ibid., verse 48
 6. Surat al-Mudatthir (74), verse 48
 7. Surat al-Sajdah (23), verse 4
 8. Surat al-Zumr (39), verse 44
 9. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 255
 10. Surat Saba (34), verse 23
 11. Surat al-Anbiya (21), verse 28
 12. Surat al-Ghafir (40), verse 18
 13. Surat al-Nisa (4), verse 64
 14. Surat Yusuf (12), verses 98 and 99
 15. Surat al-Ghafir (40), verse 7
 16. Surat al-Zukhruf (43), verse 86
 17. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 8, pg. 30
 18. Surat al-Anbiya (21), verse 28
 19. Ibid.
 20. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 8, pg. 53
 21. Ibid., vol. 2, pg. 16

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