

Imam Husain –Intercessor of The Nation

فَقَالَ : وَ عَلَيْكَ السَّلَامُ يَا وَلَدِي وَ يَا شَافِعَ أُمَّتِي قَدْ أَذِنْتُ لَكَ

My father replied, "Peace be upon you too, O my son and intercessor of my people. I allow you."

The Holy Prophet (SA) returns back the greetings of his grandson Imam Husain (AS) by stressing that he is his “son” as he did with his brother Hasan. Furthermore, he refers to Husain as **يا شافع أمّتي** “intercessor of my people”. As we know, the Prophet (SA) himself will have the right of intercession over his nation and this is authentically narrated in both Sunni and Shi’a narrations.

The Qur’an confirms the validity of the concept of Shafa’at (intercession) where the Prophet (SA) can seek forgiveness of others on their behalf, by virtue of his excellence and proximity to Allah (SWT):

“And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.” (4:64)

To seek a medium or an intermediate for your affairs is not only logically acceptable but is very practical in our mundane matters. Seeking proximity towards Allah (SWT) via an intermediate is no different and Allah (SWT) approves that in this holy verse,

“O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek an intermediate (Al-Wasilah) unto Him...” (5:35)

Both scholars Raghīb Isfahani and 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i are of the opinion that *Al-Wasilah* means to reach a certain goal through desire, inclination or willingness, and in fact *wasilah* towards God means observance of His path with knowledge and worship through adherence to the Shari'ah. In other words, *wasilah* is a means of communication and spiritual link between mankind and God.

It is not only Prophet Muhammad (SA) who attains the privilege of intercession, it is also other prophets and messengers as well as divine guides whom Allah (SWT) has preferred over creation due to their piety and excellence. The purified household of the Prophet (SA) also share in the honor of having the liberty to exercise intercession in this life and in the Hereafter. Imam Husain (AS) is notably one of the members of the Prophet's family who has earned a great status in the eyes of Allah (SWT) and one of the rewards which He (SWT) has bestowed him is the intercession of the Muslim nation.

The story of "Fitrus the angel" clearly demonstrates how Imam Husain (AS) was granted the honor of intercession since he was a baby in his cradle. When Imam Husain (AS) was born, Allah (SWT) sent down the angel Jibrael (AS) to congratulate the family of the Prophet (SA). On the way down from the heavens, Jibrael (AS) passed by an island on which the Fitrus was sent to by Allah (SWT) because he had delayed in executing a command. As a punishment, Fitrus also had his wings taken away by Allah (SWT).

When Fitrus saw Jibrael (AS) he asked him where he was going. Jibrael (AS) told him that he was going to congratulate the Holy Prophet (SA) and his family on the birth of Imam Husain (AS). Fitrus asked if he could join him and Jibrael (AS) agreed with the permission of Allah (SWT) and so carried him down to earth. When the angels reached Prophet Muhammad (SA) and congratulated him and his family, the Prophet (SA) told Fitrus to go to Imam Husain (AS). When Fitrus touched Imam Husain's (AS) cradle, his wings were miraculously given back to him by Allah (SWT) who had forgiven him.

The moral of this story is to demonstrate the permissibility of intercession in general, and specifically for Imam Husain (AS) whose blessings were manifested from the moment he was born. It is interesting to note that angel Fitrus was instructed to seek blessing by rubbing his wing on the cradle of Imam Husain and not Imam Husain himself.

Why was that the case?

It is as if Allah (SWT) intentionally tailored this detailed to demonstrate to us that the object (in this case the cradle) which was associated with a holy and divine personality has attained such honor and sanctity such that it became the manifestation of miracle and blessings. Hence, we should be cognizant of the fact that certain items or physical signs can attain the status of sanctity and we should treat such relics with veneration due to the fact that this relic is associated with the original source of sanctity – in this case, the infallible guide.

If such miracles and blessings are attained by seeking intercession from a holy item, then one can imagine the abundant blessings that one can attain by seeking intercession from a personality who is the original *source* of sanctity – like Imam Husain (AS).

The divine intermediate is certainly closer to Allah (SWT), so if we wish to secure for ourselves a higher percentage of acceptance or guarantee of our prayers, then logically speaking, we should seek those who are closer to Allah (SWT) who can speak on our behalf and raise our needs.

This is similar to our practice in mundane matters such as getting a recommendation for a job or reaching out to a connection in our network that may accelerate our application process or grant us acceptance of our need by virtue of our close association with the source whom we are targeting.

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