

TAWASSUL BY VIRTUE OF GOOD DEEDS



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Tawassul by Virtue of Good Deeds

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Question: Is it permissible to seek Tawassul through one's good deeds or is that Shirk? Will the reward for the deed one seeks Tawassul in decrease due to one asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by virtue of that deed? Can you seek an answer to a Du'ā through Tawassul to achieve multiple, different worldly gains through the same deed?

That's three questions in one. We'll take them individually. The first one is: **Is it permissible to seek Tawassul through one's good deeds or is that Shirk?**

The question is referring to one using his righteous acts, his deeds, as a Wasīlah when making Du'ā. An example would be, someone feels that they performed a sincere 'Ibādah, a sincere worship, a sincere deed sometime in their past, then that person falls into a predicament or trial or they need something, so they ask Allāh سبحانه وتعالى along the lines of, "YāAllāh, I did so-and-so for Your sake, and Your sake only, so grant me this," or "relieve me from that." That's asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى through good deeds and that's called التوسل الى الله بالعمل الصالح. That's permissible. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله تعالى said there is no dispute pertaining to its permissibility, meaning it's an Ijmā' and it's not Shirk because there's proof permitting that. And Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned the two verses,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ

O you who have believed, fear Allāh and seek the means [of nearness] to Him...¹

¹ [5:35]

And the verse,

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ

Those whom they invoke seek means of access to their Lord, [striving as to] which of them would be nearest, and they hope for His mercy and fear His punishment.²

There are many examples in the Ad'iyah verses of the Qur'ān that many pass through without noticing that they're actually this type of Du'ā.

وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."³

In that verse, in that Du'ā, they're seeking Wasīlah through their submission to the orders of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The deed is that they're prepared to carry out what's asked of them without any hesitation. Their submission to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the deed, because they said, "We hear, we obey," مِعْنًا وَأَطَعْنَا. That's the deed they're seeking Wasīlah in. What are they seeking or asking for through that deed? غُفْرَانَكَ — Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's forgiveness. In another verse,

رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا بِمَا أَنزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

² [17:57]

³ [2:285]

Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and have followed the messenger [i.e., Jesus], so register us among the witnesses [to truth]."⁴

The Du'ā of the Hawārīyyīn. They said we believe in what you sent down, Yā Allāh, and we follow the Messenger. That's the deed that they're seeking Tawassul in, what are they asking for?

فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

So register us among the witnesses [to truth].

Write us among those who bear witness, put our names among the names of those who testify to the truth, those who acknowledge Tawhīd, those who believed in the Messengers, those who followed the commands and refrained from the forbidden. There are other opinions on what *فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ* means that the Mufassirīn mentioned it, but it's not our topic here right now. Now our point is that in those verses there's a deed that they asked Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* through, and there are other verses like that.

The Hadīth that everyone knows in Sahīh Al-Bukhāri where the Messenger ﷺ taught us about the three men from among the people before us. They entered a cave and a big rock fell and rolled down, closing the opening of the cave. They told each other that nothing can move this rock except by invoking Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* by means of a righteous deed that they've done for the sake of Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*. That's exactly what Tawassul in good deeds is. One of them said, “Yā Allāh, I provided for my old parents and my family, my children. And I would always provide for my parents before my children, until one day I came home late only to find my parents sleeping.” He said, “I didn't want to provide for

⁴ [3:53]

my family before my parents, so I waited over my parents with a bowl of milk in my hand until they woke up in the morning. Yā Allāh if I did that for Your sake and Your sake only, remove the rock and free us from the cave.” The rock shifted a little bit, but it wasn’t enough for them to leave. The second one said, *“I had a cousin and I loved her dearly and I wanted to have sexual relationship with her, but she refused me until she fell on hard times. I agreed to help her in exchange for a sexual relationship with her.”* He said, *“When I was about to fulfill the desire, she reminded me that it was forbidden.”* So he left her and left the money with her to keep. He said, *“Yā Allāh, if I left that for Your sake and Your sake only remove the rock and free us from the cave.”* So, the rock shifted a little bit, but it wasn’t enough for them to leave. The third one said, *“Yā Allāh, I had employees and one day one of my employees left without taking his wages, so I invested those wages for him and it turned out to be a herd. So he came back asking for his wages.”* He said, *“I told him ‘That entire herd is yours.’”* The employee said, *“Don’t mock me and just give me what you owe me.”* So he ended up giving him the entire herd which was the result of the investment of his simple wages. The employee took the entire herd and left nothing. He said, *“Yā Allāh, if I did that for Your sake and Your sake only, remove the rock and free us from the cave.”* The rock shifted enough for them to leave. So the Hadīth is as clear as can be on permitting Du’ā through righteous deeds that one does. And the deeds that one seeks Tawassul through are not limited to the examples that are mentioned in the Hadīth; it’s any righteous deed that one does, and it could be to attain matters of the Dunyā or matters of the Ākhirah. In fact, among the biggest deeds one can seek Tawassul in is one’s Tawhīd. The verses I mentioned,

رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and have followed the messenger [i.e., Jesus], so register us among the witnesses [to truth].”⁵

⁵ [3:53]

The other verse,

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا ءَامَنَّا فَآغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا

Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins...⁶

And the other verse,

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا

Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)] calling to faith, [saying], 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed.⁷

They ask Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* through the deed of being Muwahiddīn, responding to the call of Tawhīd, and they ask Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* through that deed to forgive them among other things. They said *ءَامَنَّا, فَآمَنَّا*.

One can seek Tawassul through his love of Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* and through the love of the Messenger ﷺ, or deeds like being dutiful to one's parents, the recitation of the Qur'ān, ordaining the good and forbidding the evil and being patient on that, Hajj, Siyām, or Salāh. The mightiest, greatest deed is to seek Tawassul in one being a steadfast stranger on Tawhīd, especially when it's so difficult that it feels worse than one grasping on a red, hot ember. Beloyaling the Muwahiddīn, the Mujāhidīn, and the prisoners whom the entire globe neglected and turned against is not a deed that one should underestimate. It's a mighty deed that one can seek Wasīlah in. Salāh is a mighty deed because it's an 'Ibādah

⁶ [3:16]

⁷ [3:193]

intertwined with many other 'Ibādāt. Salāh includes the recitation of the Qur'ān, Rukū' (bowing), prostration, Du'ā, humility, hope, submission, repentance, and reverence. And after the obligatory Salawāt, Qiyām Al-Layl. Qiyam Al Layl is a mighty 'Ibādah that one can seek Tawassul in because of its honorable status in Islām, and because one abandons his comfort and sleep to stand and bow and prostrate and supplicate to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

When one is in a difficulty or in a trial, may Allāh سبحانه وتعالى save you all from that, and he asks Allāh سبحانه وتعالى through a sincere deed that he did while he was at ease, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى will never let him down. This type of Du'ā is not only permissible, but it's encouraged, and it increases the acceptance of the Du'ā. When the terms are chosen properly, as in the examples that I mentioned, it's actually showing humility to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. It's not a form of showing a favor over Allāh سبحانه وتعالى nor being arrogant.

Will the reward for the deed one seeks Tawassul in decrease due to one asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by virtue of that deed?

The second question under that was: Will the reward for the deed one seeks Tawassul in decrease due to one asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by virtue of that deed? There are scenarios pertaining to this question, and each has a different ruling. One scenario is when one performs an 'Ibādah completely for the Sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى with no hope or thought for any Dunyā return whatsoever. He sees a desperate person who's hungry and he gives him food. He sees someone thirsty, and he gives them water for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. They made Du'ā for oppressed Muslims or imprisoned Muslims — Muslims who the entire globe abandoned or turned against. Or one is a stranger steadfast on Tawhīd enduring harm. All those are deeds. When they did those deeds, they never had any thought or hope of any Dunyā benefit whatsoever. As the days and years go by, that person falls into a calamity or they're in need of something, and then they remember one of those deeds that they did for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, so they say Yā Allāh, I did this deed for Your sake and Your sake only, so cure so-and-

so, or cure me, or grant me this. Yā Allāh I gave a charity to a desperate person. Yā Allāh, I gave it for Your sake and Your sake only, so grant me this or save me from that. The reward in such a scenario is not diminished. Why? Because when the person initially performed the 'Ibādah, he did it totally for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, with no thought to any Dunyā benefit whatsoever.

The second scenario is when one does an 'Ibādah or a righteous deed for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, but he also wants to reap a Dunyā benefit. He intentionally wants to use that deed as a Wasīlah in his Du'ā to attain something in this Dunyā. He gave a charity for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, so later on he can use that in his Du'ā as a Wasīlah for a Dunyā matter. There's no sin because it's an accepted form of 'Ibādah — we established that — and Allāh سبحانه وتعالى doesn't sin for what He permits. But since he gets or wants a Dunyā benefit, the reward is detracted.

Some state that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is too generous to diminish the reward in such a scenario, and we say Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is generous but He's also just. Someone whose initial intention was to do it for the sake of Allāh, and then to use that as a Wasīlah to ask Allāh سبحانه وتعالى for a Dunyā matter is not like someone whose initial intention was to do it for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى completely, without any thought of attaining any Dunyā matter through that deed. This is an established concept, that the reward is diminished in such a scenario. That's similar to one going to Hajj. He's going to Hajj for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, but he also wants to make money by taking items not available in Bilād Al-Haramayn, for example, to sell them there, as they frequently did in the past. When I was there when I was younger, they would allow people to open stalls and sell items. That's permissible, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord [during Hajj].⁸

It's more complete if one didn't do that, but if one does that, the reward is detracted based on the Dunyā benefits he attained.

Another example is Jihād. If his intention is to go to Jihād and return with some booty, the reward is detracted. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى gave him a right in the booty, but Allāh سبحانه وتعالى also diminishes the reward for taking it. There's a Hadīth specifically establishing that as it pertains to a Mujāhid, and it establishes this concept, that the reward is detracted in such scenarios. The Messenger ﷺ said, *"Any troop of soldiers who go to fight for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and get a share of the booty will receive two-thirds of their reward in advance. One-third of their reward will be what remains to their credit in the Ākhirah. If they don't receive any booty they get their full, complete reward."*⁹ And aside from what we used the Hadīth for here, that Hadīth is a horrific Hadīth for those who claim to do Da'wah for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and then charge for seminars, books, counseling, Fatāwā, or to access their sites or access their 'Ilm — if they have any 'Ilm. A Mujāhid's intention is usually among the most sincere, because he's leaving the comfort of his home, he's leaving his family, he's facing nothing but hardships, fear, and trials, and more so, he's putting his life on the line for the sake of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, yet two-thirds of the reward is diminished for taking what Allāh سبحانه وتعالى allowed him to take. One is in the comfort of his home and Masjid, and he hears praise day and night, he may get a big ego, and there's the temptation of attaining followers and fame, so one always needs to work on his Niyyah pertaining to that — yet he takes compensation, or worse than that, *requires* compensation for acts that Messengers said,

وَيَقُومُ لَأَسْأَلَكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا

⁸ [2:198]

⁹ Muslim: 1906

*And O my people, I ask not of you for it any wealth.*¹⁰

We don't take any benefit or any reward. The point is, if the Mujāhid, with all that he faces, gets his reward diminished by two-thirds for taking booty, what would be left for Dā'iyyah who struggles with his Niyyah day and night, sitting in the comfort of his house, accepting payments and benefits, and worse than that, at times *requiring* payments for his Da'wah. And that's not even getting into the issue of whether that's permissible or not.

Can you seek an answer to a Du'ā through Tawassul to achieve multiple, different worldly gains through the same deed?

Now the third question: Can you seek an answer to a Du'ā through Tawassul to achieve multiple, different worldly gains through the same deed? Yes, you can do Tawassul in your Du'ā through the same good deed multiple times. An example of what the question is about is if someone gave a charity, he gave ten dollars for the sake of Allāh at one point in his life. Then he fell upon a hardship in his life. He said, *“Yā Allāh, if I gave those ten dollars in charity for Your sake, then save me from this.”* After years pass by, he wants to get married. He says, *“Yā Allāh, if I gave the ten dollars in charity for Your sake and only for Your sake, then assist me in getting married.”* The years pass by, and then he says, *“Yā Allāh, if you know I gave those ten dollars in charity for Your sake and Your sake only, then cure my illness.”* That's permissible because it's a form of Du'ā that's permitted, and there's nothing that says there's one Du'ā per each deed. Moreso, there are examples in the Qur'ān that permit this. The example of

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا ءَامِنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

¹⁰ [11:29]

Those who say, "Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."¹¹

رَبَّنَا — we believed. O Allāh, we believed. That's the deed, they're seeking Wasīlah in their belief in Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. What are they asking for? فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ. Forgive us, Yā Allāh — وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ. فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا — save us from the punishment of the Fire. So they're asking for two matters in their Wasīlah to Allāh through one deed. That one deed being إِنَّنَا ءَامَنَّا, we believed.

Another example,

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَءَامَنَّا

Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)] calling to faith, [saying], 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed.¹²

They said, “Yā Allāh, we heard the call calling to faith and we believed.” When we heard the call, we believed. The Wasīlah, the deed that they're using as a Wasīlah, is answering the call to the Truth. What are they asking for? They're asking for multiple matters. Around four or five matters.

رَبَّنَا فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and cause us to die among the righteous.¹³

¹¹ [3:16]

¹² [3:193]

¹³ Ibid.

And in the next verse there's more.

رَبَّنَا وَءَاتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ

Our Lord, and grant us what You promised us through Your messengers...

Which means victory in Dunyā and reward in the Ākhirah, that's a fourth one.

وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ

and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, You do not fail in [Your] promise."¹⁴

The Du'ā the Messenger ﷺ taught us,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ظُلْمًا كَثِيرًا، وَلَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، فَاعْفِرْ لِي مَغْفِرَةً مِنْ عِنْدِكَ، وَارْحَمْنِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Allāhumma inni Dhalamtu Nafsī Dhulman Kathīra, wa Lā Yaghfir Adh-Dhunūba illā Ant, Faghfirli Maghfiratan min 'Indik, warhamni Innaka Ant Al-Ghafūr Ar-Rahīm

O Allāh! I have done great injustice to myself and none except You forgives sins, so bestow on me a forgiveness from You, and Have Mercy on me, You are the Forgiver, the Merciful.¹⁵

¹⁴ [3:194]

¹⁵ Bukhāri: 834

That's the deed one is seeking Tawassul in, admitting and confessing their mistake. It's a form of Tawbah, it's an 'Ibādah. What are they asking for through that deed? They're asking for forgiveness and mercy — so bestow forgiveness upon us and have mercy on us.

And I'll mention a personal story that pertains to this, from someone dear to me, may Allāh سبحانه وتعالى grant her Barakah, honor her, protect her, and grant her Firdaws. When she was fourteen years old, her struggling parents gave her a dollar or two — I believe it was one dollar — and she took a walk with her cousin to get some medicine for her uncle, the father of the cousin she's walking with. They pass by a store, so they decided to go in and get a drink because it was a very hot summer day and they were very thirsty. But in the front of the door of the grocery store, there was a pregnant woman who appeared to be in the final weeks of her pregnancy. She was sitting on the floor begging everyone to get her something to drink. Some ignored her and some mocked her. This fourteen-year-old told her cousin, *"I'm spending my dollar on getting her a drink."* She purchased the water and gave it to the lady. The lady began to thank her, and she said, *"May God always answer your prayer."* That occurred many many years ago. This dear person to me told me that, *"Over the years, every time I face a difficulty or a trial, or I need something, I turn to Allāh. I say 'Yā Allāh, you know it was only one dollar that I owned back then, and you know I was thirsty myself, but I quenched her thirst for Your sake and Your sake only, and if you know I did it for Your sake and Your sake only, save me from this or grant me that.'"* She gave an oath by Allāh that not a single Du'ā that she made like that, except that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى answered it, and I am a witness to some of the Du'ā that she made that was answered.