

The Quran and its Message

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Joseph A Islam www.quransmessage.com

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

INTERCESSION AND THE PROPHET'S HELP

Joseph A Islam

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This is by far one of the most dangerous beliefs which do cause many Muslims to put faith in another authority to protect them on the Day of Judgment. This belief can singularly counter the very essence of the scriptural message which is to 'submit' and completely 'surrender' to the will of **one God** and His authority without associating partners to Him. That He alone has power to do anything He so chooses and that He alone should be the **One** through which **help** is to be sought.

Surah Fateha (Opening Chapter)

001:005

You alone (Arabic: iyyaka) we worship (Arabic: na'budu') and You Alone (Arabic: wa-iyyaka) we ask for help (Arabic: nasta-in)

The belief of a 'known entity' as being representative of a people or having 'the power of intercession' on the Day of Judgment (such as a Prophet or Saint) is extensively and consistently countered by the Quran. Yet sadly, support is garnered from [Islamic secondary sources](#) with desperate usage of isolated Quranic verses torn from their context and meaning. This will be dealt with further below.

The Quran's message is clear. No soul will benefit another on the Day of Judgement unless God wills. All power of intercession will be with God or for Him to grant if He so pleases. Whether He will grant intercession or not is not confirmed. To 'whom' or what kind of species such an intercession will be granted has equally not been elaborated in any way whatsoever in the Quran.

However, many Muslims continue to rely on the untenable belief that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) **'will be'** and **'has authority to be'** their saviour on the Day of Judgement. This has much resonance with the Christian notion that 'Jesus Christ' will be their saviour on the Day of Judgement.

082.017-19

"And what will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is? Again, what will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is? (It will be) **The Day when no soul shall have power (to do) anything for another: For the command, that Day, will be (wholly) with God"**

046:009

"Say: I am not the first of the messengers, and I do not know what will be done with me or with you: I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me, and I am nothing but a plain warner"

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ^(pbuh) CANNOT HELP ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

007:188

"Say: **"I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as God wills. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith."**

011:031

"I tell you not that with me are the treasures of God, nor do I know what is hidden, nor claim I to be an angel. **Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise that God will not grant them (all) that is good: God knows best what is in their souls: I should, if I did, indeed be a wrong-doer."**

010:049

"Say: **"I have no power over any harm or profit to myself except as God wills. To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)."**

072:025

"Say: **"I know not whether the (Punishment) which ye are promised is near, or whether my Lord will appoint for it a distant term"**

The Quran further captures the essence of the above verses

039:019

"**What! as for him then against whom the sentence of chastisement (doom) is due: What! can you save him who is in the fire?"**

The context of the narrative of the above verse makes it absolutely clear that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) cannot save anyone on whom doom has been ordained. Yet many Muslims believe that Prophet

Muhammad (pbuh) will have the ability to save his people from the fire, even when such a doom has been pronounced.

POWER OF INTERCESSION ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT IS ONLY WITH GOD

The Arabic word for intercession is 'Shafa'a'

002:048

“And be on your guard against a day when one soul shall not avail another in the least, **neither shall intercession (Arabic: Shafa'a) on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped**”

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ

Shafa'a

Illustration - Joseph Islam

person is one of higher station than the latter :
(Er-Rághib, TA :) or the *speaking of the شافع*
[or intercessor] to the king [or some other person]
respecting some object of want which the speaker
asks for another person : it is also expl. as signi-
fying the *passing over without punishment*, or the
[forgiving, [or rather the asking, or requesting,
the passing over &c.,

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

(TA.) The saying in the K̄ur [ii.
117], *وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ* [Nor shall intercession
profit it] means that it shall have no شافع [or
intercessor] for his شَفَاعَةٌ [or intercession] to
profit it; being a denial of the شافع; (Ibn-

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [2]

002:123

“Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall compensation be accepted from it nor **shall intercession profit it nor shall anyone be helped (from outside)**”

002:254

“O ye who believe! Spend out of (the bounties) We have provided for you, before the Day comes **when no bargaining (Will avail), nor friendship nor intercession.** Those who reject Faith they are the wrong-doers”

002:255

“God! There is no God but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. **Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permits?** He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)”

- Note the rhetorical question “**Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permits?**” No one is mentioned. This verse is better understood in light of all the other verses of the Quran that deal with this theme of intercession. Thus, the Quran clearly rejects the popular belief of assigning prerogative 'intercession' rights to specific individuals or entities such as dead saints or prophets. It is clear from all the verses that God's omniscience requires no 'mediator' and that He remains ultimate authority to do whatever He so chooses.

006:051

“Give this warning to those in whose (hearts) is the fear that they will be brought (to judgment) before their Lord: **except for Him they will have no protector nor intercessor:** that they may guard (against evil)”

010:018

“They serve, besides God, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say: **“These are our intercessors with God.”** Say: “Do ye indeed inform God of something He knows not, in the heavens or on earth?- Glory to Him! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!”

- What knowledge can an intercessor add of which God already does not have knowledge?

010:003

“Indeed your Lord is God, who created the Heavens and the Earth in six 'ayyamin' (days/periods) and is firmly established on the throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. **No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave.** This is God your Lord; Therefore serve Him. Will you not receive admonition?”

- Who can intercede unless God permits? Note the similarity of the rhetoric with verse 2.255. After all, God makes it clear that all intercession and the right to grant it (if He so wills) is with Him. Note that no person, group of people or species has been mentioned as possessing the power of intercession in the Quran apart from one who may bear the truth.

043:086

"And those to whom they cry instead of Him possess no power of intercession, **except one who testifies to the Truth knowingly**"

019:087

"None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission (or promise) from (God) Most Gracious."

039:044

"Say: **To God belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession:** to Him belongs the dominion of the Heavens and the Earth: In the end, it is to Him that you shall be brought back."

032:004

"It is God Who has created the Heavens and the Earth, and all between them, in six 'ayyamin' (days/periods) and is firmly established on the Throne (of Authority): **you have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you):** will you not then receive admonition?"

021:028

"He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His (Glory)."

040:018

"Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the hearts will (come) right up to the throats to choke (them); No intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrong-doers have, who could be listened to."

A COMMON ARGUMENT UTILISED BY THOSE THAT RELY ON OTHERS TO HELP THEM

039:003

"Is it not to God that sincere devotion is due? But those who take for protectors other than God (say): "We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer to God." Truly God will judge between them in that wherein they differ. But God guides not such as are false and ungrateful."

POPULAR ARGUMENT - GOD ASKS TO SEEK THE PROPHET FOR FORGIVENESS WHICH QUALIFIES INTERCESSION

The following verse is used as support for the Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) right of intercession on the Day of Judgement. Quite apart from the purport of the verse being completely misunderstood, what becomes apparent is the somewhat sheer desperation of many to make use of isolated verses to support a theological concept that emanates not from the Quran but is only supported by [Islamic Secondary Source Literature](#)

004:064

"We sent not a messenger, **but to be obeyed**, in accordance with the will of God. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee (Muhammad) and asked God's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God indeed Oft returning, Most Merciful"

- There is no mention of 'Shafa'at' in this verse. (No intercession). It is only an implication made by many Muslims.
- If this verse is read within context of the previous verses (4:61), one clearly notes the addressees as hypocrites who lived at the time of the Prophet. If they had obeyed the Prophet (Like all Prophets were meant to be obeyed) and asked for God's forgiveness and the Prophet had asked forgiveness for them, they would have indeed found God merciful. However, they chose not to. This does not mean however, that by virtue of a hypothetical situation that is context specific, intercession is proved.

On the contrary, we note a very powerful verse which negates the Prophet having any effect on an outcome decreed by God no matter how many times the Prophet asked for forgiveness. If his ability to ask for forgiveness was tantamount to qualified intercession, this verse clearly proves the opposite.

009:080

"Whether you (Muhammad) ask for their forgiveness, or not: **if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God will not forgive them: because they have rejected God and His Messenger: and God guides not those who are perversely rebellious.**"

Therefore verse 4.64 is conditional per context.

Also believers (including the Prophet) are barred to pray even for their close ones, if they were 'Mushrikeen' (idolaters / pagans) and yet, continued to reject the message after it was made clear to them and later became 'disbelievers'.

009:113

"It is not fitting, for the Prophet and those who believe, that they should pray for forgiveness for Pagans, **even though they be of kin**, after it is clear to them that they are companions of the Fire"

The same arguments that are used to justify 4:64 as an intercession verse are found in the following two verses where it is clear that the Prophet's forgiveness would not matter. Again, the theme is the same as in verse 4:64 where disbelievers would not come to the Prophet for forgiveness. Either way they would not be forgiven.

063:005

"And when it is said to them, "Come, the Messenger of God will pray for your forgiveness", they turn aside their heads, and thou would see them turning away their faces in arrogance"

063:006

“It is equal to them whether you (Muhammad) pray for their forgiveness or not. God will not forgive them. Truly God guides not rebellious transgressors”

Once again, the above narratives show that verse 4:64 is context driven and is in no way indicative of proof of Prophetic intercession rights on the Day of Judgment.

Also, it is useful to note that a Prophet of God asking for forgiveness is not exclusive to Prophet Muhammad.^(pbuh) The Prophet Abraham also asked for forgiveness for all believers on the Day of Judgment (14:40-41).

FINAL THOUGHTS

From the above narratives, the understanding that a 'particular person, creation or group' has qualified / prerogative rights for intercession on the Day of Judgment (such as Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh), a saint, or a religious man) is a view unsupported from the Quranic verses.

All rights of intercession belong to God. The Quran makes no mention of whether intercession will indeed be granted as a rule or partially and if so, to whom other than who testifies to the truth knowingly (43:86). The Quran furnishes no specific information nor does it deem it necessary for mankind's guidance.

A worshipper's only true hope for salvation is to put all their hope and trust in God's own perfect justice and mercy.

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 4, Page 1571

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] Ibid.

[Joseph Islam](#)

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