60041 - The hadith about Adam’s tawassul by the Prophet, and the meaning of the verse “And seek the means of approach to Him”

the question

I hope that you can explain to me the meaning of the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. And seek the means of approach to Him” [Al-Maa’idah 5:35]
That is so that we may refute what the Sufis say about tawassul, because some of them interpret it as meaning that it is permissible to seek to draw close to Allah by the Prophets and awliya’ (“saints”). With regard to the hadith about Adam committing a sin, they say that al-Bayhaqi classed the hadith as saheeh, and that al-Dhahabi praised his book.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The hadith about Adam committing a sin and seeking to draw closer to Allah by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is a fabricated hadith which is falsely attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and to Adam (peace be upon him).

We have stated that in the answer to question no. 34715, where we quoted the scholars’ comments on the falseness of this hadith. These scholars include Imam al-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him).

Al-Bayhaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) did not narrate this hadith in his Sunan, rather he narrated it in Dalaa’il al-Nubuwwah (5/489), where he classed it as da’eef (weak). After quoting the hadith, he said: “It was narrated only by ‘Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam, and he is da’eef.”

What makes it most likely that the text is false is the fact that the du`a by which Allah accepted Adam's repentance is what is mentioned in Soorat al-A'raaf, where Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"They said: 'Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers'" [Al-A'raaf 7:23]

This is the supplication of Adam and Hawwa', in which they called upon Allah alone, and sought to draw close to Him (tawassul) by His names and attributes, and by mentioning their situation. These are words which Adam received from his Lord, then he said them and Allah accepted his repentance, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Then Adam received from his Lord Words. And his Lord pardoned him (accepted his repentance). Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful" [Al-Baqarah 2:37]

Secondly:

What is meant by the word waseelah [means of approach] in the verse, (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. And seek the means of approach to Him, and strive hard in His Cause (as much as you can), so that you may be successful" [Al-Maa'idah 5:35]

is the way of reaching Allah, and there is no way of reaching Him except the way that Allah loves and is pleased with, which is by obeying Him and not disobeying Him.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah commands His believing slaves to fear Him (taqwa). When this word is accompanied by mention of obedience, it means refraining from haraam things. After that Allah says, "And seek the means of approach to Him". Sufyaan al-Thawri said, narrating from Talhah, from 'Ata', from Ibn 'Abbas: i.e., drawing close to Him. This was also stated by Mujaahid, Abu Waa'il, al-Hasan,

Qataadah, ‘Abd-Allah ibn Katheer, al-Saddi, Ibn Zayd and others. Qataadah said: i.e., draw close to Him by obeying Him and doing that which pleases Him, and Ibn Zayd recited (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those whom they call upon [like ‘Eesa (Jesus) - son of Maryam (Mary), ‘Uzayr (Ezra), angels and others] desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord (Allah)” [Al-Isra’ 17:57]

There is no difference of opinion among the mufassireen concerning what these imams said.

Means of approach or means of access means that by means of which one reaches one’s goal."(Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/53, 54).

Al-Shanqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Note that the majority of scholars are of the view that what is meant by waseelah here is drawing close to Allah by obeying His commands and avoiding that which He has forbidden, in accordance with the teachings brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), doing that sincerely for the sake of Allah alone, because this is the only path that leads to the pleasure of Allah and attaining what is with Him and what is good in this world and in the Hereafter.

The basic meaning of the word waseelah is a path that brings one near to something. Here it means righteous deeds, according to scholarly consensus, because there is no other way of drawing close to Allah apart from following the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Based on this, there are many verses which explain the meaning of waseelah, such as the following (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it” [Al-Hashr 59:7]

“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): ‘If you (really) love Allah, then follow me’” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:31]

“Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger” [Al-Noor 24:54]

And there are other similar verses.

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that what is meant by waseelah is need.

Based on this, the words narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas, “Seek with Him al-waseelah” mean, seek your needs from Allah, for He alone is the one who is able to meet them. This is further explained by the verses in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, those whom you worship besides Allah have no power to give you provision, so seek your provision from Allah (Alone), and worship Him (Alone)” [Al-‘Ankaboot 29:17]

“and ask Allah of His Bounty” [Al-Nisa’ 4:32]

And by the hadith: “If you ask, then ask of Allah.”

Then al-Shanqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The correct view concerning the meaning of waseelah is that of the majority of scholars, that it means drawing closer to Allah by worshipping Him alone, in accordance with the teachings of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The tafseer of Ibn ‘Abbas comes under this heading, because calling upon Allah (du`a) and praying humbly to Him when asking for one’s needs is one of the greatest forms of worship which is waseelah or seeking to draw closer to Him and attain His pleasure and mercy.

From this it may be understood that what many of the heretics and followers of ignorant men who claim to be Sufis say, which is that what is meant by waseelah in the verse is the Shaykh who has the power of mediation between him and his Lord, is ignorance, blindness and obvious misguidance; it is toying with the Book of Allah. Taking intermediaries is the essence of the kufr of the kaafirs, as Allah clearly stated when He said concerning them (interpretation of the meaning):

“[They say:] We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah” [Al-Zumar 39:3]

“and they say: ‘These are our intercessors with Allah.’ Say: ‘Do you inform Allah of that which He knows not in the heavens and on the earth?’ Glorified and Exalted is He above all that which they associate as partners (with Him)!” [Yoonus 10:18]

Every one who is accountable must understand that the way to attain the pleasure of Allah and His

Paradise and His mercy is to follow His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Whoever deviates from that has gone astray from the straight path.

“It will not be in accordance with your desires (Muslims), nor those of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), whosoever works evil, will have the recompense thereof” [Al-Nisa’4:123]

The meaning of waseelah that we have explained here is also the meaning in the verse where Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those whom they call upon [like ‘Eesa (Jesus) - son of Maryam (Mary), ‘Uzayr (Ezra), angels and others] desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord (Allah) as to which of them should be the nearest” [Al-Isra’ 17:57]

Another meaning of waseelah is the status in Paradise which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us to ask Allah to grant to him, and we hope that Allah will give it to him, because only one person will be entitled to it, and he hoped that he would be the one."(Adwa’ al-Bayaan, 2/86-88)

And Allah knows best.