



By Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab ibn Sulayman al-Tamimi Al Najd

(1703–1792 C.E., 1115–1206 A.H.) May Allah have mercy on him.

The Four Foundations is a short matn. A matn is a short Islamic text that teaches the main points of a subject in an organized way. This matn teaches us about four important foundations that help us understand Tawheed and Shirk. We study these foundations so we can protect our Tawheed, worship Allah correctly and stay far away from Shirk. Tawheed means the oneness of Allah. Allah alone is worthy of worship and we must single out Allah alone in all of our worship. Shirk means giving any act of worship that belongs to Allah to someone or something besides Allah. These lessons are taught upon The Qur'aan & Sunnah as Understood by the Salaf (Pious Predecessors) of this Ummah.

Introduction to Tawheed

Tawheed is the most important knowledge we can learn. It is the greatest and noblest subject to study because it teaches us about Allah and how to worship Him correctly. A person who truly believes in Tawheed and lives according to it will be saved from Jahannam by the mercy of Allah. Allah created the jinn and mankind for Tawheed which means that we were created to worship Allah alone. Tawheed is a cause of success in this life and in the Hereafter. The scales were created, the sky was raised and the earth was spread for Tawheed and the worship of Allah alone.

What Is Tawheed?

The Arabic root letters of Tawheed are:

و ح د

The word **وَحَّدَ** means to make something one or to single something out.

Linguistically: Tawheed means to make something one without giving it any equal and to single something out.

Technically: Tawheed means to single out Allah alone in everything that belongs only to Him. This includes His Lordship, worshipping Him alone and His Names and Attributes. So Tawheed means believing that Allah alone is our Lord, Allah alone deserves all worship and Allah has His perfect Names and Attributes.



Three Categories of Tawheed

1. Tawheed of Lordship (تَوْحِيدُ الرَّبُّوبِيَّةِ): This means believing that Allah alone is the Creator, Provider and Controller of everything. For example, Allah alone created the heavens and the earth. Allah alone gives life and death and Allah alone provides for His creation.
2. Tawheed of Worship (تَوْحِيدُ الْأَلُوهِيَّةِ): This means singling out Allah alone in all acts of worship. For example, we pray to Allah alone, make Dua to Allah alone, rely upon Allah and worship Him alone. We do not direct acts of worship to anyone besides Allah.
3. Tawheed of Allah's Names and Attributes (تَوْحِيدُ الْأَسْمَاءِ وَالصِّفَاتِ): This means believing in the Names and Attributes of Allah that are mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah in the correct way. For example, Allah is Ar-Rahman (الرَّحْمَنُ), the Most Merciful and Allah is As-Sami (السَّمِيعُ), the All-Hearing. Tawheed was not invented by later scholars. It is the message that Allah sent all the Prophets with. Scholars use these three categories to organize and explain what is already taught in the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore Tawheed and Shirk must be understood from the Quran and Sunnah and not from personal opinions.

Is Tawheed Mentioned in the Quran?

Ibn al-Qayyim explained that every Surah in the Quran contains Tawheed. In fact every verse in the Quran contains Tawheed, gives proof for Tawheed or calls people to Tawheed.

1st Type: Some verses give us information about the Names and Attributes of Allah or the Actions of Allah. This is called Tawheed of knowledge and information. We must believe everything Allah has told us about Himself.

2nd Type: Some verses call us to worship Allah alone without giving Him any partners and to leave everything that is worshipped besides Allah. This is the Tawheed of worshipping Allah and seeking Him alone.

3rd Type: Some verses contain commands and prohibitions. They teach us to obey Allah's commands and stay away from what Allah has prohibited. These are from the rights of Tawheed.

4th Type: Some verses tell us about the people of Tawheed and obedience and the rewards Allah has prepared for them.



5th Type: Some verses tell us about the people of Shirk, what can happen to them in this life and about their punishment in the next life.

Therefore the whole Quran includes these types of Tawheed. [Madaarij As-Salikeen, Vol. 3, Page 450]

Words That Show Tawheed

Words in the Quran such as **أَحَدٌ** and **وَاحِدٌ** teach us about Allah being One.

First Verse: Allah says:

"Or were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They said, 'We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God. And we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.'" [Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 133]

Ibn Katheer explained the words **إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا**, "one God", to mean that Allah is made One in worship. In simple words, Allah alone must be worshipped.

Second Verse: Allah says:

"And Allah has said, 'Do not take for yourselves two deities. He is but one God, so fear only Me.'" [Surah An-Nahl, verse 51]

Imam At-Tabari explained the words **إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا**, "one God", to mean that Allah is made One in His worship and His Lordship. This means Allah alone is our Lord and Allah alone deserves our worship. [Jami' al-Bayaan fi Ta'weel Al-Quran]

Third Verse: Allah says:

"They have certainly disbelieved who say, 'Allah is the third of three.' And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment." [Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 73]

This verse teaches us that Allah is One. Allah has no partners and no one else deserves to be worshipped with Him.



Is Tawheed in the Sunnah?

Yes. Tawheed is also clearly taught in the Sunnah.

Sunnah means: The statements and actions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, things that happened in front of him that he approved of and his physical and personal qualities.

1. Hadeeth of Ibn Abbas: Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما reported that when the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Muadh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه to Yemen he told him:

"You will go to the People of the Book. Let the first thing that you call them to be to make Allah One."

يُوحِدُوا اللَّهَ

[Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

The words "make Allah One" come from the same Arabic root as Tawheed. The Arabic word used here is a present tense verb. This teaches us that making Allah One is not something that has a time limit. A Muslim must always worship Allah alone.

2. Hadeeth of Ibn Abbas: Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما also reported that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم told Muadh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه:

"You are going to the People of the Book. When you come to them call them to the oneness of Allah."

[Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

This teaches us that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told Muadh رضي الله عنه to begin by calling people to Tawheed.

3. Hadeeth of Ibn Umar: Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهما reported that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"Islam is built upon five: that Allah is made One, establishing the prayer, paying the Zakah, fasting Ramadan and Hajj."

[Saheeh Muslim]

This narration directly connects Islam with making Allah One.



4. Hadeeth of Ibn Umar: Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهما reported that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"Islam is built upon five: testifying that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, establishing the prayer, paying the Zakah, performing Hajj to the House and fasting Ramadan."

[Saheeh Al-Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim]

The first foundation mentioned is لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ, Laa ilaaha illa Allah: There is no one worthy of worship except Allah.

5. Hadeeth of Ibn Umar: Another narration from Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهما mentions that Islam is built upon five and begins with worshipping Allah and rejecting everything worshipped besides Him.

[Saheeh Muslim]

From these narrations we understand that worshipping Allah alone is Tawheed.

Tawheed in the Statements of the Salaf

The Salaf are the Companions and the early generations of Muslims who came after them.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"The best of you are my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them."

[Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

Their understanding of Tawheed came from the Quran and Sunnah.

Jaabir ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه: Jaabir described the Hajj of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and explained that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم began his Hajj by declaring Tawheed in the Talbiyah:

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ كَلْبِيَّكَ، لَبَّيْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ كَلْبِيَّكَ، إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالْبُحْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ، لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

"Here I am, O Allah, here I am. Here I am. You have no partner. All praise, blessings and the kingdom belong to You. You have no partner."

[Saheeh Muslim]



Jaabir رضي الله عنه used the word Tawheed to describe what the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was saying and doing. This shows that the Companions understood that declaring that Allah has no partners is Tawheed.

Hadeeth of the Delegation of Abdul Qais: A group from Abdul Qais came to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded them to believe in Allah alone and asked:

"Do you know what is meant by believing in Allah alone?"

They replied:

"Allah and His Messenger know best."

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained:

"To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger."

[Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

This teaches us that believing in Allah alone includes believing that only Allah has the right to be worshipped.

Ataa ibn Abi Rabah

Ataa ibn Abi Rabah was from the Tabi'un. The Tabi'un were Muslims who learned from the Companions. He was also a Mufassir which means a scholar who explains the Quran.

Allah says:

"And whoever denies the faith, his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." [Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 5]

Ataa ibn Abi Rabah explained that faith or Iman in this verse means Tawheed.

[Tafseer At-Tabarani]



How the Scholars Explained Tawheed

The scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah explained Tawheed through the statement:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Laa ilaaha illa Allah

There is no one worthy of worship except Allah.

Imam Ad-Darimi said that the explanation of Tawheed in this Ummah is:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

Laa ilaaha illa Allah, Muhammadur Rasulullah. There is no one worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. [Naqd or Ar-Rad ala Bishr al-Mirrisi, Vol. 1, Page 152]

Imam Al-Ajuri said that Tawheed is to say:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Laa ilaaha illa Allah with certainty in your heart. [Kitaab Ash-Shariah, Vol. 2, Page 553]

Having certainty means you truly believe it in your heart without doubt.

Why Do We Study Tawheed?

1. Allah created us to worship Him alone. We were created to single out Allah alone in our worship. We pray to Allah alone, make Dua to Him alone and direct our worship to Him alone.
2. Allah does not accept worship without Tawheed. Our worship must be sincerely for Allah alone and cannot be mixed with Shirk.
3. Tawheed is a cause of entering Jannah. A person must learn Tawheed, believe in it and live according to it. A person who dies upon true Tawheed will enter Jannah.
4. Tawheed is a cause of increasing the reward of good deeds. The stronger a person's Tawheed and sincerity to Allah are, the greater the blessings and rewards in their good deeds can be.
5. Tawheed is a cause for sins to be forgiven. Allah may forgive sins because of a person's sincere Tawheed and faith in Him.



6. Tawheed is a cause of guidance and security. Those who truly believe in Allah and protect their Tawheed from Shirk are promised guidance and security.

7. Tawheed is a cause of peace in the heart. Allah places peace and calmness in the hearts of the believers. True belief in Allah helps a believer remain firm and turn to Allah during easy and difficult times.

8. Tawheed is a cause of receiving the Prophet's ﷺ intercession. By the mercy and permission of Allah, the people of sincere Tawheed may receive the intercession of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Two Conditions for Correct Worship

Correct worship requires two conditions:

1. Sincerity to Allah (الإخلاص): All worship must be sincerely for Allah alone. The opposite of sincerity is Shirk. For example, when a person makes Dua they must make Dua to Allah alone and not direct their Dua to someone besides Allah.

2. Following the Prophet (المتابعة) ﷺ: We must worship Allah in the way that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught us. The opposite is inventing acts of worship that the Prophet ﷺ did not teach. For example, we pray Salah according to the way the Prophet ﷺ taught us. We do not invent a new type of Salah and call it part of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever does a deed which has not been ordered by us, then it is rejected." [Saheeh Muslim, Hadeeth 1718]

Sincerity without following the Sunnah is not enough. For example, a person may sincerely want to worship Allah but invent a new act of worship that the Prophet ﷺ never taught. Their good intention does not make the invented worship correct. Following the outward Sunnah while directing worship to someone other than Allah is also not enough. For example, a person may perform an act in the correct outward way but direct that worship to someone besides Allah. Both conditions are required. The worship must be sincerely for Allah alone and it must follow the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ is the only person Muslims must completely follow in the religion.



Why We Must Learn About Shirk

We must learn about Shirk so we can recognize it and stay away from it. Allah did not prohibit Shirk without explaining it. The Quran and Sunnah explain its meaning, types and dangers. Shirk is the opposite of Tawheed. Generally, Shirk means giving someone or something a share in something that belongs only to Allah. In worship it means directing an act of worship to someone or something besides Allah. Shirk is divided into Major Shirk and Minor Shirk.

Major Shirk (الشِّرْكُ الْأَكْبَرُ)

Major Shirk is directing an act of worship to someone or something besides Allah. It takes a person outside of Islam. For example, making Dua to the dead and asking them for something that only Allah can do is Major Shirk. Sacrificing an animal as an act of worship for someone besides Allah is another example. Major Shirk causes misguidance, removes security and destroys a person's deeds. If a person dies upon Major Shirk without repenting from it, Allah will not forgive it. It prevents the person who dies upon it from entering Paradise and leads to the Fire. Major Shirk is also the greatest injustice.

Minor Shirk (الشِّرْكُ الْأَصْغَرُ)

Minor Shirk does not take a person outside of Islam but it is still a serious sin. It makes a person's Tawheed and faith weaker and it can become a path that leads towards Major Shirk. One example is showing off in worship. For example, a person begins praying sincerely for Allah but then makes their prayer look better because they notice other people are watching them. This showing off can destroy the part of the worship in which it happens. Another example of Minor Shirk is swearing by someone or something besides Allah such as saying, "I swear by my father." A Muslim should swear by Allah or remain silent.

Hidden Shirk (الشِّرْكُ الْخَفِيُّ)

Shirk can also be hidden because it may be connected to what is inside a person's heart and may not be clear to other people. Showing off in worship is an example. A person may look like they are worshipping Allah while secretly wanting people to see them, praise them or think they are very religious. A Muslim should never feel completely safe from Shirk. Even Ibrahim عليه السلام asked Allah to protect him from Shirk.



Allah says:

"And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this city [Makkah] secure and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols.'" [Surah Ibrahim, verse 35] If Ibrahim عليه السلام feared Shirk and asked Allah to protect him from it then we should also fear Shirk, learn about it and ask Allah to protect us from it.

The Prophet ﷺ also taught us to say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from associating partners with You knowingly and I seek Your forgiveness for what I do not know." [Musnad Ahmad] This teaches us to ask Allah to protect us from the Shirk we know about and the Shirk we may not recognize.

Final Summary

Tawheed means to single out Allah alone. We believe that Allah alone is our Lord, we worship Allah alone and we believe in Allah's Names and Attributes. Tawheed has three categories: Tawheed of Lordship, Tawheed of Worship and Tawheed of Allah's Names and Attributes. The Quran teaches Tawheed from beginning to end. It teaches us about Allah, calls us to worship Him alone, teaches us to obey His commands, tells us about the rewards for the people of Tawheed and warns us about Shirk. The Sunnah also teaches Tawheed. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called people to worship Allah alone and taught his Companions to begin their call to others with Tawheed. For worship to be correct it must be sincerely for Allah alone and it must follow the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. We also learn about Shirk so we can recognize it and stay far away from it.

The meaning of Tawheed is clearly shown in:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no one worthy of worship except Allah. upon The Qur'aan & Sunnah as Understood by the Salaf (Pious Predecessors) of this Ummah,



Bismillah

Bismillah means “In the Name of Allah.”

We begin with Bismillah for four reasons:

1. Following the Quran

Allah begins the Quran with Bismillah. This teaches us to begin with the Name of Allah.

2. Following the Prophet ﷺ

When the Prophet ﷺ wrote letters to kings and rulers, he began his letters with Bismillah. We follow his example by beginning with the Name of Allah.

3. Following the scholars

The scholars of Islam followed this practice and began their books and writings with Bismillah. We follow their example when beginning Islamic writings and lessons.

4. Seeking Allah’s blessing

We begin with Bismillah to seek Allah’s blessing in what we are doing. Saying Bismillah reminds us that all blessings come from Allah and that we depend upon Him.

When we say Bismillah before doing something, the action is understood even if we do not say it. For example, if we say Bismillah before drinking, it means, “In the Name of Allah, I drink.” This teaches us to begin good actions with Allah’s Name and seek His blessing.

The Basmalah contains three Names of Allah:

1. Allah: The One who alone deserves to be worshipped.
2. Ar-Rahman: The One whose mercy is vast and reaches all of creation.
3. Ar-Raheem: The One who gives special mercy to His believing servants.

We can see Allah’s mercy through the many blessings He gives us such as rain, food, water and everything we need for life.



The Opening Dua

The author asks Allah, the Most Generous and Lord of the Great Throne, to: 1) protect the student in this world and the Hereafter, 2) make them blessed wherever they are, 3) make them thankful when given, 4) patient when tested and 5) seeking forgiveness when they sin. The last three are called the signs of happiness. Beginning with dua for the student teaches good manners in teaching and reminds us that dua is worship. Allah says: “And when My servants ask you concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the call of the caller when he calls upon Me.” Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:186. The Prophet ﷺ said: “If you ask, ask Allah and if you seek help, seek help from Allah.” Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi, 2516. He ﷺ also said: “Supplication is worship.” Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi, 2969.

Allah’s Protection

In this world, Allah supports believers through guidance, beneficial knowledge, righteous actions and helping them remain upon the correct path. In the Hereafter, Allah’s greatest support is entering the believer into Paradise, where there is no fear, illness, old age or misery. Allah brings believers from darkness into light. Darkness includes Shirk, disbelief and misguidance while light means faith, beneficial knowledge and righteous actions. The Awliya of Allah are believers who combine faith with righteousness.



Barakah

Barakah means blessing, growth and increase in goodness. When Allah places Barakah in something, much good can come from it. A person can be blessed through beneficial knowledge, good actions and helping others. Barakah is only sought in ways Islam allows. Allah has given special virtue to places such as Al-Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah and the Prophet's Masjid ﷺ in Madinah. We cannot claim that an object or place has special blessing without evidence.

Three Signs of Happiness

1. Thankfulness when given: Allah's blessings include life, health, family, food, knowledge, worship and provision. Blessings can also be a test because Allah tests us to see whether we will be thankful or unthankful. Thankfulness is shown in three ways. With the heart, we know that the blessing came from Allah and not only from our own strength, intelligence or ability. With the tongue, we praise Allah and thank Him for His blessings. With our actions, we use the blessings Allah gave us to obey Him and not to disobey Him. Allah promises to give more to those who are thankful.
2. Tests are a part of life. Allah says: "Do people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe and they will not be tested?'" (Surah Al-Ankabut, 29:2). Allah also tells us that people may be tested with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and loss of life. The Prophets were tested the most, followed by those who were most like them. A believer should not lose hope when facing difficulties because even the best people were tested. There are four levels when facing a test: being angry and unhappy with Allah's decree, which is forbidden; being patient, which is required; being satisfied with Allah's decree, which is recommended; and being thankful during the test, which is the highest level mentioned. Patience does not mean that you cannot feel sadness or pain. It means controlling yourself, trusting Allah and continuing to obey Him. A hypocrite may be pleased when life is easy but turn away when tested while a believer tries to remain firm during both ease and difficulty.



3. Seeking forgiveness when you sin: No human being is completely free from sin. The Prophet ﷺ taught that the best of those who sin are those who repent. (Jami at-Tirmidhi, 2499). Never lose hope in Allah's mercy or think that Allah will not forgive you because Shaytan may use these thoughts to make you give up. Allah says: "Do not despair of the Mercy of Allah." (Surah Az-Zumar, 39:53). The Prophet ﷺ regularly asked Allah for forgiveness, teaching us that we should repent often. A person is usually in one of three situations: when given a blessing, they should be thankful; when facing difficulty, they should be patient; and when they sin, they should repent and ask Allah for forgiveness. Responding correctly in these three situations is a path to true happiness.

Haneefiyyah

The author says, "Know, may Allah guide you to His obedience." Obedience means following Allah's commands and staying away from what He has prohibited. Haneefiyyah is the religion of Ibrahim عليه السلام. In the Arabic language, Haneefiyyah means turning away from something. Islamically, it means turning away from Shirk towards Tawheed, worshipping Allah alone and making all worship sincerely for Him. Without sincerity to Allah, Haneefiyyah is incomplete. Ibrahim عليه السلام was an Imam, meaning an example and leader to follow. He was also an Ummah, meaning an outstanding leader in obedience to Allah.

The Prophets who came after Ibrahim عليه السلام were from his descendants, including Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through Prophet Ismail عليه السلام. All the Prophets had the same foundation, which was Tawheed and worshipping Allah alone. Some detailed laws were different for different nations but the foundation of belief never changed. When Allah replaced an earlier law with a later law, the people had to follow the new law but Tawheed was never replaced. Allah sent a Messenger to every nation calling the people to worship Allah alone and stay away from false gods. Allah says: "I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me." (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:56). Allah created mankind and jinn to worship Him, not because He needs food, wealth or anything from us. Allah is free of all need and we are the ones who need Him. Food, drink and other things in this world help us live so that we can worship Allah. We were not created simply to eat, drink, enjoy ourselves and collect wealth. Allah commanding us to worship Him is from His mercy because we are the ones who benefit through His guidance and reward in this world and the Hereafter.



First Foundation

The Mushrikeen whom the Prophet ﷺ was sent to already believed that Allah was the Creator, Provider and Controller of everything. Allah says: “Say: Who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who controls the affairs? They will say: Allah.” (Surah Yunus, 10:31).

This is Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah (تَوْحِيدُ الرُّبُوبِيَّةِ), which means believing that Allah alone is the Creator, Provider and Controller of everything. For example, Allah alone created us, gives us food, gives life and death and controls everything. The Mushrikeen believed this but this belief alone did not make them Muslims. The Messengers also called people to Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah (تَوْحِيدُ الْأُلُوهِيَّةِ), which means worshipping Allah alone. The Mushrikeen did not follow this because they worshipped others along with Allah. If they believed that Allah alone created them and provided for them, they should have worshipped Allah alone. The important rule is simple: If Allah alone created us, provides for us and controls everything, then Allah alone deserves our worship. It is not enough to only say, “Allah created everything.” We must also worship Allah alone.

Second Foundation

The Mushrikeen gave two main reasons for worshipping others besides Allah. First, they wanted to become closer to Allah. They said: “We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah.” (Surah Az-Zumar, 39:3). They did not believe that these people created everything. Instead, they believed that worshipping them would help bring them closer to Allah. For example, they might direct an act of worship to a righteous person believing that this person could bring them closer to Allah.

Second, they wanted intercession, meaning they wanted someone to speak for them before Allah. They said: “These are our intercessors with Allah.” (Surah Yunus, 10:18). They believed that these people could speak for them before Allah and help them get what they wanted. They knew that their Awliya, meaning righteous people they respected and followed, could not create, provide, give life or control everything by themselves. They believed that Allah was the Creator and Provider. However, they thought, “We are sinful and these righteous people are closer to Allah.” Because of this, they used them as intermediaries, meaning go-betweens between themselves and Allah. They directed acts of worship such as vows and sacrifices to them. Allah rejected both of these excuses. Having a good intention does not make a wrong act of worship correct. For example, a person may say, “I only want to become closer to Allah” but they still cannot direct worship to someone besides Allah. Worship belongs to Allah alone and must be done in the way He commanded.



Intercession – Shafa'ah

Shafa'ah (الشَّفَاعَةُ) means intercession. It means speaking for someone so they can receive something good or be protected from something harmful. There are two types of intercession:

1. Negated Intercession (الشَّفَاعَةُ الْمُنْفِيَّةُ): This is intercession that Allah does not allow. It includes asking someone besides Allah for something that only Allah can do or believing that someone can intercede with Allah without His permission. For example: a person goes to the grave of a righteous person and asks the dead person to intercede for them with Allah. Another example is believing that a Prophet or righteous person can intercede whenever they want without first receiving Allah's permission. Allah says: "So now we have no intercessors." (Surah Ash-Shu'ara, 26:100). The people of Shirk will not benefit from the intercession they depended upon.

2. Affirmed Intercession (الشَّفَاعَةُ الْمُثَبِّتَةُ): This is intercession that Allah allows. It has two conditions:

First condition: Allah must give permission to the person who will intercede. For example: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ cannot begin interceding on the Day of Judgement whenever he chooses. Allah must first give him permission. Allah says: "Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:255).

Second condition: Allah must be pleased with the person receiving the intercession. For example: a person cannot receive intercession simply because they want it. Allah must be pleased with the person receiving it. Allah says: "And they cannot intercede except for whom He is pleased with." (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:28).

No one controls intercession by themselves. Even Prophet Muhammad ﷺ must receive Allah's permission before interceding on the Day of Judgement. Some types of intercession are especially for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The great intercession on the Day of Judgement is when he ﷺ will intercede for the Judgement to begin. His intercession concerning his uncle Abu Talib will result in Abu Talib receiving a lighter punishment. His intercession for the gates of Paradise to be opened means he ﷺ will intercede for the gates of Paradise to be opened.



There are also other types of intercession. Raising the level of believers means that some believers may be raised to a higher level in Paradise through intercession. Preventing some believers from entering the Fire means that some believers who deserved punishment may be protected from entering it through intercession that Allah allows. Removing some believers from the Fire means that some believers who entered the Fire because of their sins may later be removed through intercession that Allah allows. Asking a living person for normal help is different. For example: you may ask your brother to help you carry a heavy table because he is alive and able to help. You may also ask a living Muslim, "Please make Dua for me." The person must be alive, able to help and present or reachable. They are only a means and Allah is the One who controls the final result. Allah says: "Say: To Allah belongs all intercession." (Surah Az-Zumar, 39:44). This teaches us that no Prophet, angel or righteous person controls intercession by themselves. All intercession belongs to Allah and only happens when He allows it.

Waseelah

1. Correct Waseelah (الْوَسِيلَةُ الشَّرْعِيَّةُ): This means seeking nearness to Allah through obedience and through the ways Allah has allowed. There are different examples of correct Waseelah. Through Allah's Names and Attributes: You can call upon Allah using His beautiful Names. For example: you can say, "O Ar-Rahman, have mercy on me" or "O Al-Ghafoor, forgive me." Through your good deeds: You can mention a sincere good deed when asking Allah for help. For example: a person may say, "O Allah, if I did this good deed sincerely for You, then please make this difficulty easy for me." Through obedience to Allah: You become closer to Allah by doing what He commanded. For example: praying Salah, fasting, making Dua, reading the Quran and giving charity are ways of becoming closer to Allah. Asking a living Muslim to make Dua for you: You may ask a living Muslim to make Dua to Allah for you. For example: you may say to your mother, "Please make Dua to Allah that He makes my exam easy for me." The person is not being worshipped. They are simply making Dua to Allah for you.



2. Incorrect Waseelah (الْوَسِيلَةُ غَيْرُ الشَّرْعِيَّةِ): This means using a way to become closer to Allah that Allah did not allow. It includes placing created beings between yourself and Allah and directing acts of worship to them. For example: a person goes to the grave of a righteous person and makes Dua to that person because they believe the righteous person will bring them closer to Allah. Another example is making a sacrifice or vow to someone besides Allah hoping that this will bring them closer to Allah. This is not a correct way of seeking closeness to Allah. The earlier Mushrikeen used this same excuse. They did not always claim that the people they worshipped created the heavens and the earth. Instead, they said that they used them to become closer to Allah. Correct Waseelah brings a person closer to Allah through obedience. For example, making Dua directly to Allah, praying and doing good deeds bring a believer closer to Allah. Shirk does the opposite. Directing worship to someone besides Allah does not bring a person closer to Allah. This shows why we must understand Islamic terms correctly and learn their meanings from the Quran and Sunnah.

Third Foundation

Different Things the Mushrikeen Worshipped

The Prophet ﷺ met people who worshipped angels, Prophets, righteous people, Jinn, stones, trees, the sun and the moon. He ﷺ did not accept one type of Shirk while rejecting another because in every case worship was being directed to someone or something besides Allah. Allah says: “And fight them until there is no more Fitnah and the religion is entirely for Allah.” (Surah Al-Anfal, 8:39). Here, Fitnah means Shirk. This teaches us that worship must be for Allah alone. Some people worshipped the sun and moon. Allah says: “Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon but prostrate to Allah who created them.” (Surah Fussilat, 41:37). The sun and moon are great creations but Allah created them so we worship the Creator, not the creation. Some people worshipped angels. Angels are honoured servants of Allah but they do not deserve worship. Allah says: “Nor would he order you to take angels and Prophets as lords.” (Surah Ali Imran, 3:80). Some people worshipped Prophets such as Isa ibn Maryam عليه السلام. Allah says: “O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you ever ask the people to worship you and your mother as gods besides Allah?” (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:116). Isa عليه السلام will reject this because the Prophets called people to worship Allah, not themselves. Some people worshipped righteous people but Allah explains that these righteous people themselves seek closeness to Allah, hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. (Surah Al-Isra, 17:56-57). This shows that righteous people are servants of Allah who need Him and do not deserve worship.



Some people also worshipped Jinn. Some of these Jinn later became Muslims and worshipped Allah but the people continued calling upon them. This teaches us that Jinn are also created servants of Allah and do not deserve worship. People also worshipped stones and trees. The book mentions Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. These were famous things worshipped by the Arabs but they could not create, provide, give life or save themselves. The Third Foundation teaches us that the status of the thing being worshipped does not change the issue. A Prophet is better than a stone and an angel is better than a tree but none of them deserve worship. All worship belongs to Allah alone.

Story of Dhat Anwat

Abu Waqid Al-Laythi رضي الله عنه reported that some new Muslims travelled with the Prophet ﷺ to Hunayn. The Mushrikeen had a tree called Dhat Anwat where they hung their weapons seeking blessings. Some new Muslims asked the Prophet ﷺ to make a Dhat Anwat for them too. The Prophet ﷺ strongly rejected this and compared their request to the people of Musa عليه السلام who said: “Make for us a god as they have gods.” (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:138). The Companions did not understand how serious their request was and they stopped after the Prophet ﷺ corrected them. This teaches us to learn Tawheed, avoid copying practices of Shirk, not seek special blessings from stones or trees without proof and accept correction when we learn that something is wrong. Hadith Reference: Jami at-Tirmidhi, 2180. Imam at-Tirmidhi graded it Hasan Sahih.

Fourth Foundation

The Fourth Foundation teaches that the later Mushrikeen were worse in Shirk than the earlier Mushrikeen in this particular matter. The earlier Mushrikeen committed Shirk during easy times but when they faced serious danger, they called upon Allah alone. Allah says: “And when they board a ship, they supplicate Allah, sincere to Him in religion. But when He delivers them to the land, at once they associate others with Him.” (Surah Al-Ankabut, 29:65). For example, when they were in danger at sea and feared death, they called upon Allah alone because they knew that only Allah could save them. When Allah brought them safely back to land, they returned to Shirk. The later Mushrikeen continued their Shirk during both easy and difficult times. Allah also says: “And who is more astray than he who invokes besides Allah those who will not respond to him until the Day of Resurrection and they, of their invocation, are unaware.” (Surah Al-Ahqaf, 46:5). For example, they would call upon others besides Allah when life was easy and would continue calling upon them during sickness, fear or serious hardship. The earlier Mushrikeen committed Shirk during ease but called upon Allah alone during severe hardship while the later Mushrikeen continued their Shirk during both ease and hardship.