



Ramadan Daily Quran Study, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2023

Adapted and edited from *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
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Fast 15: The oneness of God — Various forms of *shirk*

- The various forms of *shirk* mentioned in the Holy Quran are an indication of the ennobling message underlying the teaching of Divine Unity. These forms are summed up in the verse:

Fast 15

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أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

“...that we shall serve none but Allah and that we shall not set up any partner with Him and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah.” — 3:64

These are really three forms of *shirk* — a fourth will be mentioned separately later on.

- The most obvious form of *shirk* is to worship anything besides God, such as stones, idols, trees, animals, tombs, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, or human beings who are supposed to be demi-gods or gods or incarnations of God or sons or daughters of God.

Fast 15

2



- The Quran condemns not only idolatry in its gross form, but also in the refined form in which the idol worshipper claims that an idol is used only as a medium to enable a worshipper to concentrate his attention on God. The Quran says:
 - “And those who choose protectors besides Him (they say): We serve them only that they may bring us nearer to Allah.” — 39:3.
- The fact is that the worshipper’s attention is centered, not on God, but on the idol. The material object, which is supposed to be the means of reaching God, acquires a God-like sanctity and sacredness itself.



- Refuting nature worship, the Quran says:
 - “And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not adore the sun nor the moon, but adore Allah Who created them...” — 41:37
- The second kind of *shirk*, which is less obvious, is the setting up of partners with God, that is, to suppose that other things and beings possess the same attributes as God Himself. Examples of beliefs which come under this kind of *shirk* are:
 - that there are three persons combined in God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) who are eternal and equal in being God,
 - that there is a Creator of Evil along with a Creator of Good,
 - that material things and souls are co-eternal with God, and are self-existing like God.



- The third kind of *shirk* is that in which some people take others for their lords, meaning that they blindly obey their religious leaders in what they declare as right or wrong, or what they say is commanded or forbidden by God.
- The fourth kind of *shirk* is referred to in the verse:
 - “Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?” — 25:43, 45:23Here blind submission to one’s own desires is described as “taking them for god”.
- It can be seen that a Muslim too may be guilty of the third and fourth kinds of *shirk*.



- Blindly obeying religious leaders without caring to know what Islam actually teaches, or obeying them through fear, constitutes *shirk*. To take one’s desires as god, and submit to and worship them as the goal of life, is a common kind of *shirk*.
- Thus belief in the Unity of God means that true obedience is due to God alone, and whosoever obeys either anyone else, or his own low desires, in preference and opposition to the Divine commandments, is really guilty of *shirk*.
- The various kinds of *shirk* mentioned in the Holy Quran show that, in the doctrine of Unity (*Tauḥīd*), it gives to the world an ennobling message of advancement all round.



- Human beings are freed not only from slavery to animate and inanimate objects, but also from subservience to the great and wondrous forces of nature which they can subdue for their benefit. The Quran also delivers mankind from that greatest of slaveries: *slavery to other humans*. It does not allow to any mortal the dignity of Godhead, or of being more than a mortal; for the greatest of mortals, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, is commanded to say: “I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God.”

— 18:110 قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ

- The doctrine of the Unity of God also carries another significance: the idea of the unity of the human race. God is *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* — the Lord of all the nations. →

Fast 15

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→ This signifies that all the nations of the world are, as it were, the children of one Father, and that He takes equal care of all, bringing all to their goal of completion by degrees.

- We further find that the Holy Quran upholds the idea that God, being the God of all nations, deals with all of them alike. He listens to the prayers of all, whatever their religion or nationality. He is equally merciful to all and forgives the sins of all. He rewards the good deeds of the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike. We are further told in the Quran that He created them all alike, in the Divine nature:

فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا^ط

- “...the nature made by Allah in which He has created mankind.” — 30:30

Fast 15

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