



(Part No : 15, Page No: 163)

Winning a bet

(Part No : 15, Page No: 164)

The ruling on placing a bet

Fatwa no. 436:

Q: I had a discussion with a Muslim brother about the impermissibility of swearing by anyone other than Allah. The discussion went as follows: I said: According to what I have learned in my studies, swearing by anyone other than Allah is minor Shirk (minor for of associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) as mentioned in the book of Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Abdul-Wahhab, who said: Swearing by anyone other than Allah is minor Shirk and the same applies to saying to a person 'I depend on Allah and on you' or 'I resort to Allah and you' etc. My Muslim brother said, 'It is permissible to swear by the Qur'an as it is an Attribute of Allah (may He be Exalted)'. Some other Muslim brothers held his view. Now, we need to be enlightened by the opinion of your respectable Committee of Ifta' because we know that the Committee relies upon authentic Hadith. We appreciate your advice. It should be noted that we have bet on the issue we are asking about. So we hope that you will also declare in your Fatwa whether it is permissible to place a bet on religious issues or not.

A: With regards to swearing by anyone other than Allah and saying to another person "What Allah wills and you will", "I depend on Allah and on you" and the likes of these sayings, they need an explanation. If they are said out of ignorance, then the person who swears by anyone other than Allah and glorifies what he swears by, should be informed of the ruling on this. If he persists, whether out of ignorance or not, he is committing major Shirk (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship).

(Part No : 15, Page No: 165)

The same applies to saying to another person "What Allah wills and you will" or "But for Allah's Help and your help." If the person says these things out of ignorance and with inner belief that the person he addresses is equal to Allah and nothing happens except by both Allah's Will and that person's will, he should be informed of the ruling. If he persists, he is committing major shirk, whether out of ignorance or not. If he swears by anyone other than Allah, out of ignorance, even if he does not glorify what he swears by or if he says to another person "What Allah wills and you will" or "But for

Allah's Help and your help," he should be informed of the ruling. If he persists, he is committing minor Shirk whether out of ignorance or not. The fact that it is only minor Shirk does not mean that a Muslim should ignore it because minor Shirk is in the second rank after major Shirk in terms of its gravity. [Ibn Mas'ud](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "To me, it is less evil to swear a false oath by Allah than to swear a truthful oath by anyone other than Him." However, a false oath by Allah is one of the gravest major sins, the gravity of swearing by anyone other than Allah made [Ibn Mas'ud](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) consider it graver than a false oath by Allah. The basic ruling is that swearing implies the glorification of what you swear by. With regard to saying to another person "What Allah wills and you will" and the likes of these sayings, the word "and" implies that the addressed person is an equal peer to Allah, while Allah (May He be Glorified and Exalted) says, ﴿ [There is nothing like Him; and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.](#) ﴾

(Part No : 15, Page No: 166)

In regard to swearing by the Qur'an, it is not considered swearing by anyone other than Allah because the Qur'an is the word of Allah and His word is one of His Attributes. It is permissible to take oath by Allah, one of His Names or Attributes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ﴿ [Whoever has to take an oath should swear by Allah or remain silent. \(i.e. He should not swear by anyone other than Allah.\)](#) ﴾ Related by [Al-Bukhari](#) on the authority of [Ibn 'Umar](#). In regard to placing a bet on a religious issue, it is a type of lawful competition aiming at achieving a religious purpose. Shaykh-ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah be merciful with him) said, "The permissible competition is lawful if it serves a religious purpose as in the bet placed by Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him). This is one of the two opinions in this issue." Al-Ba'ly after quoting the view of Shaykhul-Islam (Ibn Taymiyyah) in his book *Al-Ikhtiyarat Al-Fiqhiyyah*, said, "I say: The apparent meaning of this view is that it is permissible to place a bet on religious issues according to the view of the Hanafy school because religion is based upon Jihad (fighting/striving in the Cause of Allah) and religious knowledge. In regards to the bet of Abu Bakr, it is authentically reported in Musnad Ahmad and [Al-Tirmidhy](#) and others that: ﴿ [When Persians and the Romans fought against each other and the news of the defeat of the Romans reached the people of Makkah at the advent of Islam, the polytheists rejoiced because the Magians were closer to them than the People of the Book. This saddened the Muslims because the People of the Book were closer to them than the Magians. Abu Bakr \(may Allah be pleased with him\) told Allah's Messenger \(peace be upon him\) about this. Then Allah \(may He be Exalted\) revealed to him: ﴿ Alif-Lâm-Mîm. \[These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'ân, and none but Allâh \(Alone\) knows their meanings\]. ﴾ The Romans have been defeated. ﴾ In the nearest land \(Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine\), and they, after their defeat, will be victorious.](#) ﴾

(Part No : 15, Page No: 167)

Therefore, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them) went out and placed a bet with the polytheists that if the Romans were victorious within some years, he would win the bet, and if the Romans were defeated, the polytheists would win the bet. ﴾ The point here is that [Al-Siddiq](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) placed a bet and the Messenger (peace be upon him) knew and approved of it. Had not it been permissible to make a bet, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have explained this. It is not permissible for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to delay explanation of an issue when there is need for this. Accordingly, placing a bet is permissible. Putting a bet on a scientific issue falls under this category of lawful betting, for either case aims at achieving a religious purpose. There was a religious benefit in the bet which Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) placed with the polytheists as it proved that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) was truthful when he had mentioned that the Romans would be victorious afterwards. It also involved another religious benefit, that is the victory of the closer party to the Muslims. Similarly, putting a bet on the issue under

question serves a religious purpose as it stresses the issue of Tawhid-ul-Uluhiyyah (Oneness of Worship) and

(Part No : 15, Page No: 168)

knowledge of Allah, which is the best of Knowledge. It is not permissible that the amount of the bet be paid by one of the people who took part in the bet. It should be paid by a person who has not participated in it. May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions!

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