

Swearing in Islam

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1. Swearing should be in the name of Allah

To swear is to make some declaration in which we call God to be our witness. It means we are making God as our witness for our statement.

In this article we will analyze how the word 'yameen' (يَمِين) is used in Quran for swearing. Some other words that have been used in Quran in the sense of swearing are:

- 'قسم' used 33 times in 31 Ayah of Quran
'حلف' used 13 times in 12 Ayah of Quran
'الو' used 37 times in 37 Ayah of Quran

Literal meaning of the word 'yameen' is 'right hand or right side'. Quran uses this word in different sense:

YAMEEN = Right hand or right side i.e. to swear.

ASHAB UL YAMEEN = People of the right side; i.e. people of paradise

MA MALAKAT AIMANOKUM = Those whom your right hand possess i.e. slaves.

Quran guides that swearing should be done **in the name of Allah**.

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, [O believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation **while you have made Allah, over you, a witness**. Indeed, Allah knows what you do. Quran 16:91

2. Swearing not to be used for wrong reasons

Swearing should not be for wrong reasons. One should not swear for deception or for any wrong reason.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَلِيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong. Nor take your oaths to practice deception between yourselves, lest one party

should be more numerous than another: for Allah will test you by this; and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to you (the truth of) that wherein ye disagree. Quran 16:92

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا **أَيْمَانَكُمْ** دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا السُّوَاءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُمْ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And take not your oaths, to practice deception between yourselves, with the result that someone's foot may slip after it was firmly planted, and ye may have to taste the evil (consequences) of having hindered (men) from the Path of Allah, and a Mighty Wrath descend on you. Quran 16:94

One should avoid swearing that hinders doing righteous deeds or that weakens the bond of brotherhood.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً **لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ** أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons; for Allah is One Who hears and knows all things. Quran 2:224

3. When oath should be broken?

Unreasonable or an oath that does not make any sense can be broken. If you were in anger or out of mind and then you swore something, for which you did not have intention, then you can break it.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي **أَيْمَانِكُمْ** وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing. Quran 2:225

Permission of breaking of oath in some cases:

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ **أَيْمَانِكُمْ** وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah has already ordained for you, (O men), the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases): and Allah is your Protector, and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom. Quran 66:2

4. Expiation for breaking an oath [KAFFARA]

If you swore in anger or without any intention or you swore something absurd then there is no need to fulfill it. However, if you intentionally swore something reasonable and later you broke it then you need to give *kaffara* or compensation.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ فَكَفَّارَتُهُ إِطْعَامُ عَشْرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn. But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His signs, that ye may be grateful. Quran 5: 89

5. Walk the talk instead of swearing

One very important observation from Quran is that nowhere does the Quran encourage believers to swear. In Quran 5:106-107 Quran makes those people swear who are accused of wrong doings.

Whenever Quran refers to swearing by Allah then it refers to 'other people' who swear by Allah. Mostly those who swear by Allah are described as people -

- Who do not keep their words
- Who lie
- Who deceive people by swearing.

Emphasis of Quran is on doing right action rather swearing.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ قُلْ لَا تُفْسِمُوا طَاعَةٌ مَعْرُوفَةٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that if you ordered them, they would go forth [in Allah 's cause]. Say, "Do not swear. [Such] obedience is known. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with that which you do." Quran 24:53

However, Quran gives guidelines that if you swear then keep your words.

6. Conclusion

- Swearing should be done only in the name of Allah. He is made witness.
- Overall it is not encouraged.
- One should not swear for wrong purpose like for breaking harmony or for disturbing peace.
- Unintentional swearing will not be accounted.
- If swearing was done but it's an absurd one then it can be broken.

F. If swearing is broken then *kaffaara* i.e. expiation should be made as per Quran's guidelines.

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