

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 6 – August 17

Topic: (C) Charity

As a basic principle of Islam:

See **2:177** from page 2 of Study for Fast 5:

“...righteous is the one who ... gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and gives the due charity...”

4:36 — “And serve Allah, and do not set up any partner with Him,¹ and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour,² and the companion in a journey³ and the traveller⁴ and those whom your right hands possess⁵.”

Notes:

1 The fundamental teaching of Islam, which is to worship God only and none else, is immediately followed here by commands to do good to a wide range of people. This is the concept of ‘charity’ taught by Islam.

2 *The neighbour of kin* may mean *a neighbour who is a relative or a Muslim neighbour*, and *the alien neighbour* is either *a neighbour not related* or *a neighbour of an alien religion*. Thus the charity of Islam is not limited to one’s own people or one’s own co-religionists, but is extended to others also.

3 The companion in a journey or the traveller, mentioned after neighbours, could belong to any people or any religion. Indeed, the parents, near of kin, orphans and needy mentioned at the beginning could also be non-Muslims and it would be a Muslim’s duty to do good to them regardless of their religion.

4 Islam requires Muslims to do good to persons who are travelling. This, of course, includes not exploiting them, but providing them with necessary assistance. People travelling are often a captive market vulnerable to commercial exploitation.

Requiring Muslims to do good to those travelling obviously means that to cause harm to travellers by attempting to kill or injure them by acts of terrorism is absolutely contrary to the teachings of Islam.

5 *By those whom your right hands possess* are meant *all those with whose care you are entrusted*, so that it includes even animals over which one has control.

Note also that while dealing with the rights of women in chapter 4, the Quran generalizes the law of doing good to others, so much so that it requires goodness to be extended even to a fellow-traveller. If even companions whose company is so short-lived are to be treated generously, how generous must a man be to her who is the companion of his whole life!

Chapter 2:

262 Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, their reward is with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.¹

263 A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.²

264 O you who believe, do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day.³

267 O you who believe, spend (on good works) out of the good things that you earn and out of what We bring forth for you from the earth, and do not aim at the bad to spend from it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you turned a blind eye to it.⁴

Chapter 76:

8 And they [the righteous] give food, out of love for Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive.

9 We feed you, for Allah's pleasure only — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.⁵

Notes:

1 Donations, whether given in the cause of national or individual suffering, must not be accompanied by any interested motives; hence the donor is forbidden even to mention them afterwards, so as not to hurt the feelings of the recipients.

2 It is better simply to offer a word of sympathy, without giving any money, than to give charity in material form and then remind the recipients of what you did for them.

3 This conveys a very strong disapproval of giving charity to be seen by people, making it utterly hateful in the sight of true believers.

4 Muslims are here enjoined to give in charity *good things*, things which they love, and not to even think of giving bad things, things which they themselves would not accept from others. Elsewhere it is said: "You cannot attain to righteousness *unless you spend out of what you love*" (3:92).

5 The feeding of the poor spoken of in verses 8 and 9 is in relation to the service of humanity. The words *for Allah's pleasure* clearly show that it is of the love of God that these verses speak. Man worships Allah for the love of Allah, but the Quran requires him to serve humanity also for the love of Allah.