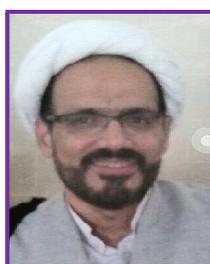




## TIME WITH THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN-PART TREE (3)

QUR'AN 2: 261-274

TOPIC: Doing Charity



**By: Dr. Mohsen Maarefi, IUCG President**

*In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful!*

*May Allah's Salutations and Peace be Upon the Noble Prophet and His Household.*

Before our commentary discussion, I would, like always, want us to look at a passage from Khutbat as-Sha'abaniya (Sha'abaniya sermon) and briefly discuss the lessons therein. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) says:

**"Hunger and thirst of this fast should remind you of the hunger and thirst of the Day of Resurrection. Treat your elders with respect and your children with kindness. Give charity to the poor and destitute."**

The Holy Prophet having mentioned some advantages of the month of Ramadan in the previous paragraph, went on to discuss the need to engage oneself in some exercises which involve "the mind", "behavioural changes" and "forecasting into, and planning for the future". This is to help one derive the full benefit of the month.

In respect of the mind, we are expected to let the thirst and hunger we endure in the month of Ramadan keep our minds in constant remembrance of the Day of Judgment; and as a foreboding of the intensity of hunger and thirst of that day when

a mother shall not her own child recognise. This is a kind of mental exercise which demands of us to think about what becomes of us after our sojourn here on earth is completed. The month of Ramadan also imbues in us the required discipline for us to pay more attention to some of our habits. Every day, we meet and interact with people who may be older or younger than us. In this month we are required to be more careful in our dealings with people. We must treat the elderly with respect and consideration; and the young, with kindness. This certainly is an exercise in behavioural change. The last sentence: “Give alms to the poor and destitute” is a reminder to us of our obligation towards the needy in our communities.

This statement “Give alms to the poor and destitute” is the preamble for today’s commentary. As you are aware, there are many discussions on charity in the Qur’an. Perhaps the part that discusses the subject matter comprehensively is Surat al-Baqarah, especially the following verses.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سِنْعًا سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (261) الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَدَى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (262) قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَدَى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ (263) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُنْطَلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (264)...(274)

This discussion shall be under the following topics:

- The meaning and importance of charity (*Infaq*)
- Terms and conditions of *infaq*
- Things that can be given out in charity
- Mode of giving charity

If you recall, in our discussion on the conditions for being pious in PART ONE (1), we pointed out that there are two main acts of worship that one must observe, viz: “maintaining prayer at regular times and giving charity of what Allah has blessed one with to the poor.”

We did also indicate that there are some words that are most often mentioned alongside others in the Qur’an. Among these are SALAT and ZAKAT/ INFAQ which are mentioned together about 27 times. Whereas “maintaining prayer”

symbolizes all forms of service to Allah, “giving out charity” represents all other acts that one has to do towards building his relationship with other men.

### The Meaning and Importance of Charity

From this preamble, charity or infaq can be defined as any financial sacrifice meant to benefit other persons. It includes *zakat*, *khums*, *kafarat*, *Waqf*, *Wasiya* among others. There are several verses that discuss the importance of charity. However, for want of time we shall mention only three verses.

Firstly, the verse containing the analogy of seed epitomizes the importance of Infaq. It reads: “The similitude of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which grows seven ears, and in every ear are a hundred grains. Allah multiplies several folds for whomsoever He wishes, and Allah is Oft-bounteous, All-knowing. [Al-Baqarah 261]

This verse records the minimum reward that the benevolent receive for giving charity; that is, 700-fold blessing. The verse continues: “Allah multiplies several folds for whomsoever He wishes”, thus making the exact reward that one receives unknown to any creature. More so, the blessings of charity are both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Secondly, in itemizing the qualities of a ‘muttaqi’ (pious), the Qur’an states; “And those who maintain prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.” By this, infaq is made a criterion for being a pious person. In fact, it is also the decisive factor for being “most pious” as contained in the verses: “most pious is he who gives his wealth to purify himself.” [Al-Layl 17 & 18] The word “atqaa” as used in the verse is the superlative form of pious. This means that by maintaining a healthy and good relationship with people, you attain the highest level of piety.

Thirdly, to signify its (infaq) importance, the phrase “Jihad with property” is mentioned alongside “Jihad with self” in eleven (11) verses of the Quran. However, in ten (10) of those verses, “Jihad with property” is mentioned before “Jihad with self”. For example, “Surely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah’s way with their property and their selves...” [Al-Anfal 72]. This clearly shows how important infaq is.

### Terms and Conditions of Infaq

By terms and conditions, I mean that which will make one’s infaq acceptable by Allah. There are four terms and conditions contained in the verses under discussion:

**First Condition:** The infaq must be in the way of Allah [Al-Baqarah 261, 262 and 264]. The “way of Allah” has a wide meaning in the Qur'an. It is not limited to building of mosques or helping the poor as many people think. It includes working to defend and ensure the safety and security of your country and its vulnerable members, taking care of the home, feeding the poor, etc. [Al-Baqarah 274].

**Second Condition:** It should not be followed with reproachful reminders of favors done, such as: Am I not the one who helped you? Had it not been because of me would you have had anything to eat? Wouldn't you have been poorer? and the like. According to the Qur'an such words nullify one's charity [Al-Baqarah 262 and 264.]

**Third Condition:** It should not be followed with derision or affront. Hurting the feeling of the poor does not only cause the rejection of one's charity by Allah, but also makes one guilty of a great sin. Thus, in a situation where one has nothing to give out, uttering a kind comforting word suffices. Allah says: “An honorable word with pardon is better than a charity followed by affront.” [Al-Baqarah 262, 263 and 264]

**Last Condition:** The fourth condition is to not make a public show of it (Riya'). The Qur'an says if you wish to spend, let it be solely for the sake of Allah and not for praises from the public. The Quran makes a distinction between two types of charity with an interesting and instructive analogy. Imagine that a little soil is gathered on a great rock, and some plants vegetate on the soil. Well, it is known that these plants cannot grow into large trees and be fruitful because they have no strong foundation. Their lives are thus short. If a heavy rain comes, everything is ruined. It washes away the soil as well as the plants. No benefit can be made of it because the land is not suitable. That is the similitude of the person who gives charity just for the public show of it.

The above scenario cannot be compared to someone who `gives charity solely as devotion to Allah. The similitude of he who gives as devotion to Allah is like a fertile well-situated which has constant rainfall. Regardless of the volume of rainfall, the land is irrigated. Heavy rainfall does not cause it any destruction whatsoever. Here, you have plants and a large garden of different fruits. [Al-Baqarah 264, 265].

These two examples clearly show us that any act of benevolence done with the intent of attracting empty praise from people, attracts no blessing in the sight of Allah.

### Things That Can Be Given Out In Charity

For anything to qualify as a charity item and be accepted by Allah it must first of all be a *halal* thing earned through lawful means ( *أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ* ). Secondly, it should be something you are fond of and interested in. The index for measuring this is whether when you're given that same thing you will gladly accept it or do so reluctantly or reject it outrightly. ( *وَلَسْتُمْ بِأَجْدِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُعْمِضُوا فِيهِ* ). This condition is meant to protect the respect and dignity of the poor. Giving out worthless items is considered as insulting to the poor, which is a great sin.

### Mode of Charity

Another Qur'anic Discussion about giving charity is the "Mode of Charity". This refers to how charity is given or should be given. The Quran mentions different modes for different intents and purposes. For example, the Quran says when you want to give alms, it should be moderate [25:67]. Priority must be given to those who have sacrificed in the cause of Allah and got impoverished thereby [2:273], Relatives must be given priority [24:22] and so on. Here, in these verses the Quran makes reference to an important question about the mode and customs of charity. Perhaps this question sometimes comes to your mind. When we want to do charity, is it better to do it in the open or secretly?

Here, and in other cases like [13:22 and 35:19] the Quran praises both ways and indicates that charity (*infaq*) can be given either in secret or openly. Each has its benefits and results, and you can give out in both ways.

While open charity is an invitation and encouragement to people to emulate this kind gesture; secret charity connotes sincerity and purity in giving, and also preserves the dignity of the poor. Since the foundation of religion is sincerity, Allah says that secret charity is more preferred. "If you disclose your charities, that is well, but if you hide them (and give) to the poor that is better for you." [Al-Baqarah 271]

We, therefore, beseech Allah to help us and give us "taufiq" to be among munfiqiin.

PART 3: Doing Charity in Quran

اللَّهُمَّ نَوِّرْ قُلُوبَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَزَيِّنْ أَخْلَاقَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَأَصْلِحْ أُمُورَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَأَشْفِ مَرَضَانَا بِالْقُرْآنِ،  
اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلِ الْقُرْآنَ لَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا قَرِينًا وَفِي الْقَبْرِ مُوَسِّئًا وَأُنَيْسًا

وصل اللهم على محمد وآله الأطهار