

MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

By

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Al-Baqarah

(Ayaat 260-286)

وَاذْ قَالِ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْ كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتٰى قَالْ اَوْلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالْ بَلٰى وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْطِئَ قَلْبِيْ قَالْ فَخُذْ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يٰاٰتِيْنٰكَ سَعِيًّا وَاغْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٢٦٠﴾

(260) And when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead." Allah said: "Don't you believe? Ibrahim said: "Why not! But in order to reassure my heart". Allah said: "So take four birds; then tame them to your call; then put on every mountain a cut-piece of them; then call them on, they will come to you quickly. And be sure that Allah is Mighty, Wise."

Prophet *Ibrahim* (AS) asked his Lord to show him how He will resurrect the dead in the Hereafter. As we mentioned in the previous *ayah*, the Prophets asked Allah (SWT) for these types of miracles, not because they did not believe in the resurrection, but to make their faith stronger by personal observation. *Ibrahim* (AS) took four birds as commanded by Allah (SWT), slaughtered them, mixed them together and placed those pieces on different hilltops. Then, when he called out to them, their blood and flesh flew to each other till they all came back to life by Allah's will and came flying to him at fast pace. After witnessing this miracle, it became crystal clear to *Ibrahim* (AS) that Allah does whatever He wills without any hindrance, because He is the All-Mighty, All-Wise.

Now we return to the subject of spending in Allah's cause, which began with *ayah* 245 of this *surah*, where Allah (SWT) has exhorted the believers to spend in His way if they really have faith in Him and the Last Day.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ اَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِيْ كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِّائَةٌ حَبَّةٍ وَاللّٰهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاءُ وَاللّٰهُ وَاَسْعٰ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٤٥﴾

(261) The example of those who spend their belongings in the way of Allah is like the example of a grain that sprouts into seven ears, each bearing one hundred

grains; and Allah gives manifold increase for whom He wills because Allah is the All-Embracing, Ever-Knowing.

In this *ayah*, Allah (SWT) gives an example of those believers who spend in His cause i.e. for Allah's *Deen*[72] that whatever they spend in the way of Allah (SWT) out of what He has provided them, will be returned to them multiplied by seven hundred folds in this world and the Hereafter. This *ayah* indicates that Allah (SWT) grows the good deeds of a believer just like He grows a plant for whoever sows it in a fertile land. And Allah (SWT) gives abundance to whomsoever He wills, as He is the Munificent and All-Knowing.

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٦٢﴾

(262) *Those who spend their belongings in the cause of Allah, then do not follow their charity with reminders of their generosity or injure the feeling of the recipient, for them is their reward with their Lord; no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.*

This *ayah* indicates that charity should be only for the sake of Allah (SWT) and the donor should neither expect a reward in this world in return, nor remind the recipient of the charity or cause any harm to him. He should refrain from any such acts or words, as even a mention of any favor may put the concerned person to shame or humiliation in the eyes of others. In sum, one should not follow one's spending with taunts and insults. Allah (SWT) promises such believers rewards in the Hereafter and guarantees that they will have no fear on the Day of Judgment and will not regret anything they would have done in the path of Allah (SWT).

قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَذًى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٣﴾

(263) *Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Ever Forbearing.*

A person spends in Allah's cause for self-purification, but if it causes injury to the recipient, his charity becomes meaningless. Instead, Allah (SWT) exhorts His servants to be kind and gentle in their speech and forgive any shortcomings on the part of the beneficiaries. They should know that "Allah is Self-Sufficient, Ever Forbearing" i.e. He does not need their charities to give provision to His servants, because He is not in need of His creation; instead, all the creatures are in need of Him. So a kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي 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 ﴿٢٦٤﴾

(264) *O you who believe! Do not make your charity worthless by reminders of your*

generosity or by injury to the recipient's feelings, like the one who spends his belongings to show off before people and believes neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. So his example is like a hard barren rock covered by soil; then a heavy rain falls thereon leaving it just a bare stone. They are not capable to (gain) anything out of what they have earned. And Allah does not put on the right path the disbelieving folk.

Such is the behavior of a hypocrite who does not spend for the pleasure of Allah (SWT) but only for men to see, so that he can earn their pleasure and get worldly rewards from them. He neither expects any reward from Allah (SWT) nor believes in the Hereafter. "So his example is like a hard barren rock covered by soil; then a heavy rain falls thereon leaving it just a bare stone. They are not capable to (gain) anything out of what they have earned. And Allah does not put on the right path the disbelieving folk." Just as a heavy rain leaves a hard rock completely barren and bare, Allah (SWT) will completely erase the deeds of the hypocrites who give charity just to show off. Neither will Allah (SWT) guide them nor will they have any reward in the Hereafter. They shall gain nothing from their deeds.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَغْيِينًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكْثَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٥﴾

(265) And the example of those who spend their belongings to seek the pleasure of Allah and strengthen their souls, is like a garden on a hill whereon a heavy rain falls, thereupon it yields its produce twofold; or if the heavy rain does not fall, then a drizzle (is sufficient). And Allah is Watchful of whatever you do.

Allah (SWT) gives another parable for those believers who spend in His cause only to attain His pleasure and for the purification of their souls. The good deeds of a believer, performed with good intentions and devotion, never become barren just like a garden on a hill-side which is always fertile and even if there is no rain, a little moisture is sufficient for it i.e. a believer produces good works, gives charity and is satisfied with what Allah (SWT) has given him, even in lean times.

أَيُّدٌ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّجِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَةٌ ضَعْفَاءٌ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

(266) Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines and streams flowing underneath and he has all kinds of fruit therein, and he is stricken with old age and has feeble offspring, then a whirlwind with fire therein strikes it (garden) and it gets burnt? Thus Allah makes His Ayaat clear to you so that you may ponder.

Allah (SWT) gives yet another parable in this *ayah* which explains the condition of a person who enters the life after death without any provision for it. Suppose a person plants a garden full of fruits, with streams gushing through, so that it would give him provision in his old age. How unfortunate then is he when his beautiful garden is reduced

to rubble towards the end of his days, just when he stands in greatest need of it and does not have the strength to build another one because of his old age. Similar will be the condition of a disbeliever on the Day of Judgment, who upon returning to Allah (SWT), will suddenly find out that all his earnings are left behind in the world. And there will be no chance for him to earn anything for the Hereafter; just like the old man who has lost his garden and his children are also unable to do anything because of their tender age. Thus Allah (SWT) makes plain to us His revelations, so that we may give thought.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَبَسُوا بِحَيْثُ مِنْهُ تَنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِأَخِيذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغِضُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٧﴾

(267) O you who believe! Spend of the good things which you have earned and of that which We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and aim not at the bad to spend thereof, while you would not take it yourselves unless you close your eyes in (receiving) it. And keep it in mind that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.

In this important *ayah*, Allah (SWT) enjoins on the believers to spend from the pure and the best things in His way that they have earned honestly and lawfully and from the produce of the earth i.e. from the fruits and the vegetables grown from the land. And He (SWT) prohibits them to give for charity those worthless things which they do not even accept for themselves, as Allah (SWT) is independent of all wants and most worthy of all praise.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَخْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَجِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضلاً وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾

(268) Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you indecency whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from His own and bounty. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

Satan holds the children of Adam (AS) from spending in the way of Allah (SWT) because of false fear of poverty and encourages indecency and immoral acts. On the other hand, Allah (SWT) calls them to the way of forgiveness and prosperity, instead of the evil towards which Satan prompts them. Allah (SWT) is the Munificent and All-Knowing.

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَدْرَأُونَ إِلَّا أَلْوَالًا أَتَابًا ﴿٢٦٩﴾

(269) He grants wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever is granted (real) wisdom, then of course he has been granted the abundant good but none observe the advice except men of intellect.

The Arabic word 'Hikmah', translated into wisdom, means the knowledge to differentiate between the truth and the falsehood. Anyone who has wisdom follows the path of Allah (SWT) and after fulfilling his basic needs from what he has earned, he spends whatever is left in the path of Allah (SWT) and does not follow the ways of Satan who tells him to gather more and more wealth instead of giving it in charities